

Council – 24 February 2025

Allocation of seats and appointments to committees and panels

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>Following the events leading up to the by-election to the Bransgore, Burley, Sopley and Ringwood East ward and the election of Cllr Richard Frampton, it is necessary to review the representation of political groups on committees and panels.</p> <p>Having regard to the current number of Members on the Council returning to 48, and applying the necessary principles of proportionality in order, some changes are required to the Council's previously agreed position. Those changes are being considered by Group Leaders and proposals will be reported in advance of the Council meeting.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That the Council:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. considers the allocation of seats to committees and panels in accordance with the principles set out in the report, and in doing so, agrees to the allocation set out in the table in Appendix 1 (to follow); and2. appoints councillors to individual committees and panels, as identified in Appendix 2 (to follow), for the remainder of the four year period ending May 2027.
Reasons for recommendations	To comply with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, relating to the duty to allocate seats to political groups, following a division on the Council.
Wards	All / Bransgore, Burley, Sopley and Ringwood East
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jill Cleary, Leader

Strategic Director	Alan Bethune, Corporate Resources and Transformation (S151)
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Introduction and background

1. In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is necessary to review the representation of political groups on committees, whenever there is a division on the Council. Since the last Ordinary Council meeting, a vacancy on the Council arose, which has since been filled at the recent by-election for Bransgore, Burley, Sopley and Ringwood East. There are now 48 serving councillors with a change in the composition of the Green Group, and a second non-aligned Member. For the purpose of the review, “committees” includes the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Panels but excludes the Cabinet.
2. There are four statutory principles of political balance which have to be applied in filling appointments to committees. These are contained in Section 15(5) of the Act.
3. The principles that have to be applied are as follows:-
 - (a) that not all seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group are a majority of the Authority’s membership;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant Authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that Authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Authority; and

- (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the same number of all seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Authority.
4. Once the Council has determined the allocation of committee places between the political groups, the Council must then appoint the nominees of the political groups to the committees.
 5. Those members who are not members of political groups have no legal entitlement to an allocation of seats on committees. However, once the political groups' entitlement has been reached, any remaining seats may be filled by members not belonging to a political group. Such Members are classed as being non-aligned.
 6. These provisions need not be applied if a different position is agreed without any member of the authority voting against.
 7. It should be noted that, although the legislative position refers to "political" groups, this also includes the Independent Group. Although not affiliated with a political party, the Independent Group have formed a group in accordance with the legislation.

Current position

8. The political balance of the Council now stands as follows:-

Conservative Group	26	(54.17%)
Liberal Democrat Group	14	(29.17%)
Independent Group	4	(8.33%)
Green Group	2	(4.17%)
Labour and Co-operative (Non-aligned)	1	
Non-aligned	1	
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 48	

Appointments to committees and panels

9. There are 84 seats to which appointments should be made under the principles of proportionality.
10. The application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 8 provides for the following allocation of whole seats to political groups across the overall Council position:-

Conservative Group	46
Liberal Democrat Group	25
Independent Group	7
Green Group	4
Unallocated	2
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Total	84

11. Having regard to the overall position outlined at paragraph 10, the application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 8 requires the rounding up or down of calculated figures to give whole numbers on committees. The Council should, as far as practicable, ensure fairness on each committee, including across the wider allocation in making these adjustments, whilst taking into account the proportionality rules in their stated order, as far as practicable.
12. The final recommended allocations will be circulated as an Appendix 1 in advance of the Council meeting, once the political groups have had the opportunity to review the implications for individual committees and panels.
13. At the last review undertaken in December 2024, the Council also resolved to allocate a seat to the non-aligned Member on the Appeals Committee. The Council's Constitution makes provision for the allocation of seats to Members who are not members of a political group, as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of those members on the Council. It is now the case that a seat each can be allocated to the two non-aligned Members, having first complied with the legislative principles for the allocation of seats.
14. The nominees of the political groups to the committees and panels will be circulated to follow at Appendix 2. It should be noted that if Members seek to make any amendments, this may affect the calculations and subsequently the nominees.

Corporate plan priorities

15. The recommendations support the Council in delivering all corporate plan priorities by maintaining the Council's ability to function as a collective body in accordance with relevant legislation.

Options appraisal

16. The Council can choose to agree an alternative allocation that does not satisfy the proportionality requirements, providing that this is agreed without a single Member of the Council voting against.

Consultation undertaken

17. Consultation has been undertaken with the Council's Statutory Officers, the Portfolio Holder (Leader) and all other Group Leaders.

Financial and resource implications

18. There are no financial or resourcing implications arising specifically from this report.

Legal implications

19. The proportionality requirements, as outlined in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 have been followed in reaching the recommendations.

Risk assessment

20. It is not deemed necessary to complete a formal risk assessment in respect of this procedural report.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

21. There are no environmental or climate and nature implications arising directly from the review of political proportionality.

Equalities implications

22. There are no equalities implications arising, although the process of reviewing proportionality ensures that the democratically elected position of the Council is reflected in the Council's approach to committee and panel business.

Crime and disorder implications

23. There are none arising from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

24. There are none arising from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Table of allocations – to follow.

Appendix 2 – Appointments to Committees and Panels (Wishes of the Political Groups) – to follow.

Background Papers:

Local Government and Housing Act 1989