

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships
<b>Relevant Member:</b>	Councillor L Williams, Leader of the Council
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	29 September 2021

## REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE/ APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 The Council will be asked to review the political balance of its committees and consider the membership of those committees, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the Local Government Act 1972. This is following a change in political balance following notification from Councillor Blackburn received on 1 July 2021 that he no longer wished to be treated as a member of the Labour Group on the Council. As the size of some Committees will be affected then their re-appointment is required.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To re-appoint the following Council committees, with powers and duties as previously agreed:

- Scrutiny Leadership Board
- Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee
- Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
- Audit Committee
- Appeals Committee
- Planning Committee
- Standards Committee
- Chief Officers Employment Committee

2.2 To re-appoint a Scrutiny Leadership Board, with a political balance membership of three Labour, four Conservative (to be made up of the Chairs, Vice Chairs of the three Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee) and Cllr Mrs Callow, the non-aligned Independent Member, as Chair of the Committee.

2.3 To agree the political balance attached at Appendix 12(a) and appointments to the above committees at Appendix 12(b).

2.4 To re-appoint the Licensing Committee with the powers and duties as set out in the

Constitution (membership of thirteen and a composition of seven Labour, five Conservative and one Blackpool Independent).

- 2.5 Subject to (2.4) above, to request the Licensing Committee to re-appoint the Public Protection Sub-Committee, including the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 2.6 To agree that any membership changes to committees or sub-committees during the course of the Municipal Year continue to be reported to the Director of Governance and Partnerships by the relevant Group Leader for implementation.
- 2.7 Subject to the approval of the above recommendations, to agree to the memberships of the committees of the Council and their Chairs and Vice Chairs as set out in Appendix 12(b) and that delegated authority is continued to be given to the committees themselves to determine changes to Chairs and Vice Chairs, in line with the principles set out in this report, should the need arise for change during the municipal year.
- 2.8 To note that the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board are not affected.
- 2.9 Subject to the approval of the above recommendations, to agree that the Director of Governance and Partnerships be authorised to amend the Constitution accordingly.

**3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

- 3.1 To enable Council business to be transacted by various committees and for the size of the committees to reflect the current political balance of the political groups on the Council. This will also meet statutory requirements. This in year review is prompted by Councillor Blackburn indicating that he no longer wished to be treated as a member of the Labour Group on the Council.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

There are no other options other than a different or varied set of committees; however, the current committees have been appointed by Council in recent years and help transact the business of Council efficiently.

#### **4.0 Council Priority:**

4.1 The appointment of Council committees will help the Council achieve all its priorities.

#### **5.0 Background Information**

5.1 Following the notification from Councillor Blackburn on 1 July 2021 indicating that he no longer wished to be regarded as a member of the Labour group on the Council for political balance purposes, this has prompted a review of the allocation of seats on committees.

5.2 The political makeup of the Council is currently 21 Labour, 16 Conservative, one group of two independent members - the Blackpool Independents (comprising of Councillors Gary and Debbie Coleman) and three non-aligned independent members – Councillor Cain, Councillor Blackburn and Councillor Mrs Callow.

5.3 Although not subject to political balance rules, it is recommended that the same methodology be applied to the Licensing Committee. There is currently a committee of thirteen comprising seven Labour councillors, five Conservative councillors and one Blackpool Independent group councillor. There is no change to makeup of this committee under the revised political balance calculations.

5.4 The Licensing Committee would also need to appoint one permanent sub-committee - Public Protection - which is subject to the political balance rules and therefore has to be included in the aggregated proportionality calculations.

5.5 A full schedule of updated political balance calculations for all the proposed committees and the permanent sub-committee is attached at Appendix 12(a). These have been allocated by 'political group'. A 'political group' is one, which has been constituted in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and consists of at least two members. Details of such a 'group' are notified to the Director of Governance and Partnerships when the group is formed (it can be at any time but usually after an election). Changes to that 'group' can be made by a notification from the group itself (a majority of) or notification from the member concerned. (This is a separate process to that being a member of a national political party). The three non-aligned independents as they are not part of a political group under these regulations are not automatically entitled to a seat on a committee.

5.6 **Size of committees** – as a result of the updated political balance calculations the size of the three Scrutiny Committees has changed, resulting in a reduction from nine members to eight members. All the other committees remain the same size as that agreed at the Annual Council meeting where adjustments were agreed at that time in order to achieve political balance.

5.7 **Appointment of Chairs** – as this is a review of the political balance of all committees and there has been some change in size of committees, then the appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs needs to be re-visited. The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair for the Public Protection Sub-Committee is a matter for the Licensing Committee to deal with. It is also recommended that the committees be given delegated authority to determine any changes to the Chair or Vice Chair positions where changes are necessary during the course of the Municipal Year, in line with the principles set out in this report.

5.8 It is recommended that as has been previous practice, the following principles be applied:

- the Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board is an Independent Member in line with the recommendations of the North West Employers review of scrutiny in 2018/ 2019.
- the Chair positions in all three Scrutiny Committees be filled by councillors from the largest group and the Vice Chair positions be filled by principal opposition councillors
- the Chair of the Audit Committee is from the principal opposition group and the Vice Chair from the largest group
- the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee be filled by a principal opposition councillor
- all other proposals for Chairs and Vice Chairs are filled by councillors from the largest group.

**List of Appendices:**

Appendix 12(a) - Political balance calculations

Appendix 12(b) - Proposed membership of the Council's committees and the Health and Wellbeing Board

**6.0 Legal considerations:**

6.1 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to review periodically the political composition of the Authority and how this is applied to appointments to Council bodies. The rules for securing political balance on committees and sub-committees appointed by local authorities are contained in sections 15 and 16 of the Act and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations, 1990. See:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1990/1553/regulation/17/made>

**7.0 Equalities considerations:**

7.1 There are no equalities considerations.

**8.0 Financial considerations:**

8.1 Special responsibility allowances for the proposed Chairs and Vice Chairs are met from the Members Allowances' budget.

**9.0 Risk management considerations:**

9.1 Failure to appoint certain committees will hinder the Council in maintaining its statutory duties i.e. consideration of planning applications, hearing of appeals etc.

**10.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

10.1 None.

**11.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

11.1 The Group Leaders put forward nominations for their representatives to serve on the recommended committees.

**12.0 Background papers:**

12.1 There are no additional background papers to this report.