

Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor L Williams, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	30 November 2022

REVISED POLITICAL BALANCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 The Council will be asked to consider the re-appointment of its committees, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the Local Government Act 1972, due to changes in the political make-up following the by-election.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To re-appoint the following Council committees, with powers and duties as set out in the Council's Constitution:

- 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 the powers set out in the Council's constitution and for the Board to continue to have an adjusted 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).

2.3 Subject to 2.2 above, to continue the inclusion of the non-aligned member Councillor Mrs Callow to the Board and to also appoint her as Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board.

2.4 To agree the revised political balance attached at Appendix 6(a) and appointments to the above committees at Appendix 6(b) (the latter will be circulated separately).

2.5 To re-appoint the Licensing Committee with the powers and duties as set out in the Constitution (equating to a revised membership figure of 13 and a composition of seven Labour, five Conservative and one Blackpool Independent).

- 2.6 Subject to (2.5) above, to request the Licensing Committee to re-appoint the Public Protection Sub-Committee, with the powers and duties, as set out in the Constitution including the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 2.7 To agree that any membership changes to committees or sub-committees during the remainder of the Municipal Year be reported to the Director of Governance and Partnerships by the relevant Group Leader for implementation.
- 2.8 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 6(b) (to be circulated separately).
- 2.9 To note the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board, as this is unaffected by political balance arrangements.
- 2.10 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.
- 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 At the annual meeting in May 2022, Council agreed the formation of its committees and their respective powers and duties as set out in the Constitution. The membership of committees was reviewed in September 2022 following changes to the political groups. Following the sad death of Councillor John Wing in August, a by-election was called and duly held on 17 November 2022 resulting in a revised political membership of the Council of 20 Labour, 15 Conservative, 3 Blackpool Independents and 4 non-grouped independent members.
- 5.2 The allocation of seats to committees and the structure agreed at the Annual meeting has been the foundation from which this review of the political balance calculations has been undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the associated regulations.
- 5.3 Although not subject to political balance rules, it is recommended that the same methodology be applied to the Licensing Committee and for a committee to equate to a membership of 13 (as per Annual meeting decision), then there would be seven Labour councillors, five Conservative councillors and one Blackpool Independent group councillor.
- 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 political balance calculations for all the proposed committees and the permanent sub-committee is attached at Appendix 6(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. The 4 non-grouped independents, as they are not part of a political group, are not automatically entitled to a seat on a committee.
- 5.6 As a result of the by-election the Labour group will gain two seats overall and following consultation with the Group Leader the additional seats will be on Appeals Committee and Standards Committee. (These are the two seats the Labour Group lost following a reduction of their group in the September 2022 review). The Conservative Group and Blackpool Independents group allocations stay the same.
- 5.7 **Appointment of Chairs** –Appendix 6(b) (to be circulated separately) lists the notified names of committee members and proposed chair and vice-chair positions. The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair for the Public Protection Sub-Committee is a matter for the Licensing Committee to deal with. However, it is recommended that these positions be occupied by the same people. There are no proposed changes to the Chair and Vice-Chair positions.

5.8 It is recommended following consultation with the Leader of the Council that as has been previous practice, the following principles be applied:

- the Chair of the Audit Committee is from the principal opposition group and the Vice Chair from the majority group
- the Chair positions in all three Scrutiny Committees be filled by majority group councillors and the Vice Chair positions be filled by principal opposition councillors
- 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 majority group.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 6(a) - Political balance calculations

Appendix 6(b) - Proposed membership of the Council's committees and the Health and Wellbeing Board (to be circulated separately)

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.