

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF GOVERNANCE	COUNCIL	8 MAY 2024	7

CONFIRMATION OF COMMITTEES AND ALLOCATION OF MEMBERSHIP

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

RELEVANT LEAD MEMBER

This item is within the remit of Lead Member for Finance and Resources, Councillor Ellie Gaunt.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The council is required annually to confirm the committees that it wishes to appoint and allocate the membership of certain committees in accordance with the principles of political balance under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This report revisits the calculation as mandated by a resolution of the council at its meeting on 18 March this year.

RECOVERABILITY

This decision is not recoverable because it relates to a recommendation to the council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Allocate committee seats in accordance with the principles of political balance as set out in the table in paragraph 3.
2. Appoint members to seats on committees required to be politically balanced in accordance with nominations made by the political groups, where relevant.
3. Appoint members to the Licensing Committee, which is not required to be politically balanced.

REPORT

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

1. Under its constitution, the council is required annually to decide which committees to establish for the municipal year; decide the size and terms of reference for those committees; and decide the allocation of seats on those committees to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules where applicable. The council considered a report concerning those matters at its meeting on 18 March. The report contained a table showing the committee seat allocations required to achieve political balance, calculated using the methodology that has been used for more than 20 years.
2. The meeting resolved (as far as relevant):

1. Appoint the committees and joint committees set out in appendix 1 for the municipal year 2024-2025, with the same terms of reference as presently agreed.
2. Allocate committee seats, in accordance with the numbers as circulated, with a view to revisit the calculation of political balance, as outlined by Councillor Lee, together with the appointment of members to seats on committees at a future meeting.
3. Since the report for March 18 council meeting was written, a number of changes to political groups have occurred. These has affected the political balance calculation. A table showing the committee seat allocations required to achieve political balance following this change, calculated using the same methodology as the table in the previous report, is below.

Committee	Total seats	Con	Ind	Lab	Lib Dem	Non-aligned
Executive	12	7	3	0	1	1
Internal Affairs Scrutiny	12	7	3	1	1	0
Community Focus Scrutiny	12	7	3	0	1	1
Planning	12	7	3	1	0	1
Public Protection	12	7	3	1	0	1
Audit and Governance	9	5	3	0	0	1
Standards	5	3	2	0	0	0
Chief Officers Employment	6	4	2	0	0	0

4. The council is invited to make individual appointments at to seats allocated to political groups at today's meeting in accordance with the nominations by the political groups set out in appendix 1. The council is also invited to make appointments to the seats allocated to non-aligned councillors.

CALCULATION METHODOLOGY

5. The methodology used to calculate the table above results in the following:

	Percentage of councillors	Percentage of committee seats	Variance between % of councillors and % of committee seats
<i>Conservative</i>	51.35 (19 out of 37)	58.75 (47 out of 80)	+7.40
Independent	29.73 (11)	27.50 (22)	-2.23 (largest variance)
Labour	5.41 (2)	4.32 (3)	-1.66 (smallest variance)
Liberal Democrat	5.41 (2)	4.32 (3)	-1.66 (smallest variance)
Non-aligned	8.11 (3)	6.49 (5)	-1.86

Note that because the Conservative group forms an absolute majority of councillors, it is entitled to a majority on all committees, regardless of any other measure.

6. In analysing the fairness of the distribution of seats in accordance with the principle of political balance, the key measure is the difference between the largest and smallest variance, as shown in the fourth column of the table, but disregarding the majority group. The smaller the difference, the fairer the distribution. That difference is 0.57 as shown above (the difference between -2.23 and -1.66). Any other distribution of seats results in a larger number, which translates to a bigger difference in the relative advantage of the group with the largest variance compared to the group with the smallest variance.

7. The alternative calculation which was put forward to the March 18 council meeting resulted in the difference between the largest and smallest variance, (disregarding the majority group) being 0.78. My conclusion is that allocation of seats on the basis of the alternative calculation would not fulfil the principles of political balance as well as the calculation set out in the table set out in paragraph 3 and analysed in the table in paragraph 5.
8. My recommendation is therefore to continue to use the methodology used in previous years.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	✓

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	None arising from the report
Legal	Political balance is a legal requirement for most committees of the council.
Community Safety	None arising from this report
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising from this report
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None arising from this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising from this report

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS
<p>Council, 18 March 2024: It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appoint the committees and joint committees set out in appendix 1 for the municipal year 2024-2025, with the same terms of reference as presently agreed. 2. Allocate committee seats, in accordance with the numbers as circulated, with a view to revisit the calculation of political balance, as outlined by Councillor Lee, together with the appointment of members to seats on committees at a future meeting. <p>[...]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Appoint members to the Licensing Committee, which is not required to be politically balanced.

BACKGROUND PAPERS REVELANT TO THIS ITEM		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
N/A		

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Ian Curtis	ian.curtis@fylde.gov.uk	24 April 2023