

## **Council**

**18 April 2024**

# **Establishment of Committees, Appointments and Schedule of Meetings 2024/2025**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Chief Executive

Author: Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services

## **Summary**

This report asks the Council to make a number of recommendations to the Annual meeting of the Council on 15 May 2024 regarding the committees and other bodies to be appointed for 2024/2025 and also a programme of meetings.

### **1. Recommendations**

1.1. The Council is asked to agree to recommend to Annual Council on 15 May 2024:

1.1.1. the establishment of committees, sub committees and task groups, their size and the allocation of seats to political groups as set out in Appendices A and B to this report, together with terms of reference as set out in the Council's constitution;

1.1.2. that appointments should be made to Joint Committees, outside bodies and other bodies as set out in Appendix C (with nominees to be reported at the Annual Council meeting);

1.1.3. the timetable of meetings for the 2024/2025 municipal year as set out in Appendix D and;

1.1.4. to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings during the 2024/2025 municipal year as required, on the basis set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report.

### **2. Budget and policy framework**

2.1. The establishment of committees and the appointment of Members to serve on committees and outside bodies is a matter for decision by the Annual Meeting of the Council together with approval of the annual schedule of meetings.

2.2. The appointment of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of some committees, the establishment of sub-committees, and the appointment of Members to serve on them is a matter for decision at a Joint meeting of Committees, which will take place immediately after the Annual Council meeting.

### 3. Background

3.1. In April each year the Council usually considers the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on committees and makes recommendations for decision at the Annual Council meeting in May.

3.2. There are 59 Councillors representing 24 Wards. The current composition of the Council is as follows:

<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Proportionality %</b>
Labour and Co-operative Group	31	52.542%
Conservative	21	35.593%
Independent Group	3	5.085%
Independent Members (not a political group)	4	6.780%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.3. The current composition set out above takes account of recent changes to political balance, with regards to Councillors Hubbard, Shokar and Mrs Turpin no longer representing political groups and as such being treated as Independent Members. These changes did not trigger a review of the allocation of committee seats at the time, however, there is a legal requirement to undertake such a review at every Annual Council meeting, therefore, details of the review are set out in section 4 below.

### 4. Establishment of Committees and allocation of seats plus other appointments for 2024/2025

4.1. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated regulations (The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990) require the Council to review the allocation of seats on committees to political groups in specified circumstances including annually at the Annual Council meeting. Committee seats must be allocated in accordance with the following principles so far as is reasonably practicable, unless alternative arrangements are notified to all Members five clear days in advance of this meeting and agreed without any Councillor voting against them.

(a) that not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;

(b) that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is 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;

(d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

4.2. Principles (a), (b) and (d) apply to all appointments to the authority's own bodies and to certain outside bodies. However, principle (c) only relates to appointments to the 'ordinary committees' of the Council.

4.3. Discussions have taken place with Group Whips and a proposal for the allocation of seats to political groups has been agreed with them as set out in Appendix A to this report. This has the effect of the Labour and Co-operative Group's entitlement to committee seats reducing by 6 committee seats and a reduction in the Conservative Group's entitlement by 1 committee seat. These committee seats will become unallocated on the basis that no political group is entitled to them – this means there is now a total of 9 unallocated committee seats. The four Independent Members have no entitlement to any committee seats. This is set out in more detail below:

<b>Labour and Co-operative</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>	<b>Unallocated</b>	<b>Total</b>
70 (+3)	47	6	9	132

4.4. The Council is required to allocate three additional seats to the Labour and Co-Operative Group on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny to preserve that Group's entitlement to a majority position on any Committee in view of the four statutory co-optees with voting rights who have to be appointed to the Committee.

4.5. The Health and Wellbeing Board is listed as a Committee of the Council in Appendix B. This Committee is not subject to the rules on political balance and the positions of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Board are appointed by the Board at its first ordinary meeting after each Annual Council meeting.

4.6. The proposed list of committees, joint committees and sub-committees to be established in 2024/2025 are set out at Appendices B and C with recommended sizes and allocation of places. No changes are proposed in respect of the number and size of sub-committees.

4.7. Details of other bodies are set out in Appendix C to the report which are either recommended or required to comply with legal requirements or align with established practice.

4.8. Committee Terms of Reference are set out in the [Constitution](#) as follows:

4.8.1. Chapter 3, Part 2 (Responsibility for Council Functions) – Committees and Sub-Committees;

4.8.2. Chapter 4, Part 5 (Overview and Scrutiny Rules) – Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

## 5. Timetable of meetings

5.1. On 24 January 2024 the Council agreed a draft schedule of meetings for 2024/2025.

5.2. Since the January meeting there have been some ongoing discussions around the dates of some of the Cabinet Sub-Committee meetings and it is anticipated that finalised dates will be included in the report to the Annual Council meeting.

5.3. Members will be aware that a General Election will be held at some point during the 2024/2025 municipal year. This will place additional pressure on meeting rooms given the existing restrictions on using Gun Wharf and the requirements needed to support staff training and the administration of postal votes. Democratic Services are making contingency arrangements to ensure meetings can continue to take place during this period.

5.4. It is recommended that the Chief Executive is given authority, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings for the 2024/2025 municipal year. This will provide flexibility to change things like dates and start times of meeting, and to cancel meetings, if required.

## 6. Financial, legal and risk management implications

6.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2. The proposals in this report relating to the allocation of Committee seats comply with the relevant legal requirements set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

6.3. Schedule 12 to The Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to hold an Annual meeting each year on any day in March, April or May fixed by the Council. In addition to the Annual Council meeting, other meetings may be held at times and on dates fixed by the Council.

### Lead officer contact

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## Appendices

Appendix A – Review of allocation of committee seats

Appendix B – List of committees, sub-committees and task groups

Appendix C – List of joint committees and outside and other bodies

Appendix D – Timetable of meetings

## Background papers

None