

## **Annual Meeting of Medway Council (and Joint Meeting of Committees)**

**14 May 2025**

### **Establishment of Committees, Appointments and Schedule of Meetings 2025/2026**

Report from: Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director Legal and Governance

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#### **Summary**

This report sets out the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on Committees. The Council is asked to approve the recommendations in paragraph 1.1 relating to Committees and other bodies to be appointed for 2025/2026 and a programme of meetings.

The Council is also asked to make recommendations to the Joint Meeting of Committees on 14 May 2025, which will take place immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Council, in respect of the appointment of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of Committees and the establishment and membership of sub-committees, and a scrutiny task group.

#### **1. Recommendations**

##### **1.1. The Council is asked to agree:**

- 1.1.1. the establishment of Committees, their size and the allocation of seats to political groups as set out in Appendices A and B to the report, together with terms of reference as set out in the Council's constitution.
- 1.1.2. the appointment of members to each Committee as set out in Appendix B to the report, including the appointment of voting and non-voting co-optees on Committees as listed.
- 1.1.3. the appointments and nominations to Joint Committees, outside bodies and other bodies as set out in Appendix C to the report.
- 1.1.4. the timetable of meetings for the 2025/2026 municipal year as set out in Appendix D to the report.
- 1.1.5. to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings during the 2025/2026

municipal year as required, on the basis set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report.

1.2. The Council is asked to recommend to the Joint Meeting of Committees:

1.2.1. the appointment of Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons of committees (excluding the Health and Wellbeing Board) as set out in Appendix B to this report).

1.2.2. the establishment of sub committees (with terms of reference as set out in the Council's Constitution) and scrutiny task group, their size, the allocation of seats to political groups and memberships as set out in Appendix B to this report.

1.2.3. that the requirement for political balance should be waived in respect of Licensing Hearing Panels and Licensing 1982 Act Hearing Panels and that the process for selection of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Panel Members for these Panels should be as set out in Appendix B to this 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. At its meeting on 24 April 2025, the Council considered the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on committees and made recommendations for decision at the Annual Council meeting.

3.2. There are 59 Councillors representing 24 Wards. The composition of the Council changed just prior to the last full Council meeting when Councillors Hubbard and Shokar re-joined the Labour and Co-operative Group:

<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Proportionality %</b>
Labour and Co-operative Group	31	52.542%
Conservative	20	33.898%
Independent Group	5	8.475%
Reform UK Group	2	3.390%
Independent Member	1	1.695%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>

4. Establishment of Committees and allocation of seats plus other appointments for 2025/2026
  - 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 initially took place with Group Whips in early March and a proposal for the allocation of seats to political groups had been agreed with them. The increase in size of the Labour and Co-operative Group just ahead of the full Council meeting last month meant that a further review would be required and reported to this meeting (the Annual Council meeting).
  - 4.4. Officers undertook the further review of political balance and the allocation of committee seats and advised the Group Whips that achieving politically balanced committees, taking into account the requirements set out in paragraph 4.1 above would not be achieved by continuing with committees with even numbers (Planning Committee, 4 x Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Licensing and Safety Committee). Two options were shared with Group Whips:
    - 4.4.1. decreasing these particular committees by one seat each (option 1), or
    - 4.4.2. increasing them by one seat each (option 2).
  - 4.5. Group Whips representing the Labour and Co-operative Group, Conservative Group and Reform UK Group have indicated support for option 1, which is set

out at Appendix A and recommended for approval. The Independent Group indicated support for option 2.

- 4.6. 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 Committee 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. Finally, there is one unallocated seat to which none of the political groups are entitled to.

<b>Labour and Co-operative Group</b>	<b>Conservative Group</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>	<b>Reform UK Group</b>	<b>Unallocated</b>	<b>Total</b>
70	42	9	4	1	126

- 4.7. 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.
- 4.8. The proposed list of committees, joint committees and sub-committees to be established in 2025/2026 are set out at Appendices B and C with recommended sizes and allocation of places.
- 4.9. Details of other bodies, often referred to as outside bodies, are set out in Appendix C to the report. This reflects the outcome of discussions with Group Whips taking into account the requirement to comply with legal requirements for a small number of these bodies and aligning with established practice for the remainder of the bodies. This includes changing the name of the Rural Liaison Committee to the Rural Liaison Board to clarify its status, i.e. that it is not a formal committee of the Council. This proposal has been discussed and supported at a recent informal Cross Party Governance meeting to which Group Leaders, Deputy Leaders and Whips are invited to attend.
- 4.10. Committee Terms of Reference are set out in the [Constitution](#) as follows:
- 4.10.1. Chapter 3, Part 2 (Responsibility for Council Functions) – Committees and Sub-Committees;
- 4.10.2. Chapter 4, Part 5 (Overview and Scrutiny Rules) – Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

## 5. Timetable of meetings

- 5.1. On 23 January 2025 full Council agreed a draft schedule of meetings for 2025/2026. This included reference to a special Council meeting to be held on Thursday 26 June 2024, for the specific purpose of seeking approval at the Regulation 19 stage - Publication of the Pre-Submission draft Local Plan.
- 5.2. As reported to full Council on 24 April 2025, it is necessary to hold a special Council meeting on Thursday 13 November 2025 for the specific purpose of submitting comments to Cabinet on 21 November 2025 regarding the

proposed final submission to Government on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution, ahead of the deadline of 28 November 2025.

- 5.3. It is recommended that the Chief Executive is given authority, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings for the 2025/2026 municipal year. This will provide flexibility to change things like dates and start times of meetings, and to arrange and 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.
- 6.4. Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to arrange for the discharge of (non-executive) functions to committees, for example, the Audit Committee. The Rural Liaison Committee does not exercise any Council functions, rather it provides an opportunity for liaison and discussion concerning issues of common interest, identified by the Council or by Parish Councils. Therefore, changing its name to the Rural Liaison Board will clarify its status as a non-decision making body.

## 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 (to follow)  
Appendix C – List of joint committees and outside and other bodies (to follow)  
Appendix D – Schedule of meetings

## Background papers

None