

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

13 May 2026

Establishment of Committees, Appointments and Schedule of Meetings 2026/2027

Report from: Richard Hicks, Chief Executive

Author: Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services

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 2026/2027 and a programme of meetings.

The Council is also asked to make recommendations to the Joint Meeting of Committees, 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.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Council is asked:

- 1.1.1. To agree 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. To agree 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. To agree to decommission the School Transport and Curriculum Appeals Committee.
- 1.1.4. To agree the appointments and nominations to Joint Committees, outside bodies and other bodies as set out in Appendix C to the report.
- 1.1.5. To agree the timetable of meetings for the 2026/2027 municipal year as set out in Appendix D to the report.

- 1.1.6. To agree to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings during the 2026/2027 municipal year as required, on the basis set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report.
 - 1.1.7. To note the allocation of motions for the 2026/2027 municipal year as set out in paragraph 6.5 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. In April each year the Council 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:

Type	Number of Councillors	Proportionality %
Labour and Co-operative Group	31	52.542
Conservative Group	19	32.203
Independent Group	5	8.475
Reform UK Group	3	5.085
Independent Member	1	1.695
Total	59	100%

- 3.3. The current composition set out above takes account of the most recent change to political balance, with regards to the recent change to the memberships of the Conservative and Reform UK Groups, as first reported to full Council in January 2026.
4. Establishment of Committees and allocation of seats plus other appointments for 2026/2027
- 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 took place with Group Whips in early March 2026 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 takes account of the recommendation to decommission the School Transport and Curriculum Appeals Committee (see paragraph 4.6.1 for further information).
- 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 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. The overall number of committee seats (121) are set out below, allocated to each political group. There is 1 committee seat to which none of the political groups are entitled to, and to which the Independent Member has no entitlement to.

Labour and Co-operative Group	Conservative Group	Independent Group	Reform UK Group	Unallocated	Total
67 (+3)	38	9	6	1	121

- 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 2026/2027 are set out in Appendix B with recommended sizes and allocation of places. Members' attention is drawn to the following:
- 4.6.1. Members were advised at the January 2026 full Council meeting that the Cabinet approved a revised Education Travel Assistance Policy in August 2025 (decision no. 120/2025 refers). This included changes to the appeals process, in particular amending stage 2 appeals such that they are now heard by senior officers. This means that the School Transport and Curriculum Appeals Committee will be decommissioned once all appeals under the previous policy have been exhausted. Following discussions with the service, it is now recommended that the Committee be decommissioned.
- 4.6.2. The Medway Pensioners Forum has not attended any meetings of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee since August 2019. Despite a number of attempts to contact the organisation over this period of time they have not responded to the Council regarding their membership, therefore, it is recommended that they be removed as a co-opted non-voting member of the Committee.

- 4.6.3. No changes are proposed in respect of the number and size of sub-committees, the most recent change having been agreed by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 25 March 2026.
- 4.7. 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. Members' attention is drawn to the following:
- 4.7.1. SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) have formally recommended to full Council that the Humanist non-religious worldview be added to Group A (Christian denominations and other religions).
- 4.7.2. The Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board merged with North Kent Marshes Drainage Board on 1 April 2026 and shall now be known as North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board.
- 4.7.3. The Thames Gateway Strategic Group will be removed as it no longer exists.
- 4.7.4. The membership of the Informal Working Party on Polling District and Polling Places & the Member Development Advisory Group will be changed from 4:2:1 to 4:2:1:1 to enable the Reform UK Group to be represented on these groups.
- 4.7.5. The Gillingham Town Centre Forum will be decommissioned as it no longer meets, noting that the Gillingham Internal Taskforce and the Gillingham Community Forum are alternatives in the local area.
- 4.7.6. The following outside bodies have been added, Rochester Cruising Club and the Association of the Friends of Rochester Cathedral, in relation to the standing membership of the Mayor.
- 4.7.7. The Corporate Parenting Board (a Cabinet Advisory Group) has been included in section F (other bodies appointed to by Cabinet) for the purposes of appointing Members.
- 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 22 January 2026 full Council agreed a draft schedule of meetings for 2026/2027.
- 5.2. At the Group Whips meeting in early March, the Group Whips were advised that it has been necessary to move a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board from Thursday 26 June 2026 (2pm) to Wednesday 17 June 2026 (2pm).
- 5.3. With regards to Cabinet Sub-Committee meetings, which are responsibility of the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Kyndi) meeting originally scheduled for Tuesday 9 June 2026 (6pm) will now take place on Monday 15 June 2026 (5pm) and the start time for the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Kyndi) on Tuesday 17 November 2026 has brought forward from 6pm to 5pm.
- 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 2026/2027 municipal year. This will provide flexibility to change things like dates and start times of meetings, and to arrange additional meetings or cancel meetings, if required.

6. Allocation of motions

- 6.1. On 13 November 2025 full Council changed the Council Rules with regards to the allocation of motions, it was agreed that motions would be allocated on an "Equity and 10% basis".
- 6.2. It was agreed that those groups with 10% or more of the membership would have predetermined slots for motions to be submitted. Of the remaining two vacant slots, a ballot based on the equitable system is now used to determine which of the motions (if any submitted) is included on the agenda and debated). Where the slot is utilised by a smaller group / independent member, they will be excluded from the second ballot to maintain the best fit to the number of motions they could submit in a municipal year.
- 6.3. This system was implemented with effect from the full Council meeting held in January 2026, with motions allocated for the January and April meetings.
- 6.4. Under the current composition of the Council, entitlement to motions is as follows, noting that the Labour and Co-operative Group and Conservative Group both have a minimum of 10% of the Council's membership:

Grouping	Members	% of Members	12 Motions annually
Labour and Cooperative	31	52.5	6.3
Conservative	19	32.2	3.86
Independent Group	5	8.5	1.01

Reform UK	3	5.1	0.61
Independent Member	1	1.7	0.2
Total	59	100	11.98

- 6.5. The Council Rules state that a schedule of the allocation of motions will be submitted to the Annual Council meeting for noting, the following schedule was included in the report agreed at full Council in November 2025, as follows:

Meeting & motions	Equity & 10% allocation
July	
1	Labour and Co-operative
2	Conservative
3	Unallocated
October	
1	Unallocated
2	Conservative
3	Labour and Co-operative
January	
1	Conservative
2	Labour and Co-operative
3	Labour and Co-operative
April	
1	Labour and Co-operative
2	Labour and Co-operative
3	Conservative

- 6.6. Where meetings include provision for unallocated motions, and the smaller Groups and the Independent Member submit motions for those meetings by the specified deadline, they will be entered into a draw, administered by the Head of Democratic Services, the day before the meeting Agenda is published. Representatives from each of the political groups and the Independent Member will be invited to attend the draw in the interests of transparency.

7. Financial, legal and risk management implications

- 7.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.

7.4. Members are advised that there has been caselaw regarding the membership of SACRE, specifically, [Stephen Bowen, R \(on the application of\) v Kent County Council \(2023\)](#), in which the High Court ruled that humanists are eligible for membership of Group A of SACRE (the bodies through which Local Authorities are advised on the content of the religious education curriculum in their local areas).

Lead officer contact

Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services, Telephone: 01634 332509 Email: wayne.hemingway@medway.gov.uk

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