

**Meeting: Council**

**Date: 7 December 2017**

**Wards Affected: All Wards**

**Report Title: Review of Political Balance**

**Is the decision a key decision? No**

**When does the decision need to be implemented? Immediately**

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## **1. Proposal and Introduction**

1.1 This report sets out a review of the political balance of the Council to ensure places on Committees and Working Parties are allocated in accordance with the relevant statutory and Constitutional requirements. The report is presented following the creation of the Mayor's Non-Political Executive Group.

## **2. Reason for Proposal**

2.1 Following notification by Councillors Amil, Excell, King, Mills and Parrott that they wished to be known as the Mayor's Non-Political Executive Group, the Council's political balance needs amending.

## **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

3.1 **That the overall political balance of the committees as set out at Appendix 1 be approved.**

3.2 **That the following Working Parties be disbanded as their work has concluded:**

- **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Working**
- **Strategic Partnership Forum Working Party**

3.3 **That, in accordance with the Local Protocol for Working Parties, the overall political balance of working parties as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.**

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Political Balance of Committees

Appendix 2: Political Balance of Working Parties

**Background Documents: None**

## Supporting Information

### 1. **Position and Background Information**

Following notification by Councillors Amil, Excell, King, Mills and Parrott that with effect from 1 November 2017, they wish to be known as the Mayor's Executive Group and more recently (from 20 November 2017) as the Mayor's Non-Political Executive Group, this has resulted in changes to the political make-up of the Council. There are now 20 members of the Conservative Group, 8 members of the Liberal Democrat Group, 5 members of the Mayor's Non-Political Executive Group and 3 members of the Independent Group. The political balance is now:

Conservative Group	20 seats	= 55.55%
Liberal Democrat Group	8 seats	= 22.22%
Mayor's Executive Group	5 seats	= 13.89%
Independent Group	3 seats	= 8.33%

The creation of the new political group has resulted in a change in the political make-up of the Council and a recalculation of seats on Committees between political groups. Proportional distribution of seats on Committees is set out at Appendix 1.

Whilst not a legislative requirement, the Council has included in its Constitution for Working Parties to also be politically balanced. Proportional distribution of seats on Working Parties is set out at Appendix 2. Working Parties which have concluded their work have been recommended for disbandment and not included in the calculations.

### 2. **How does this proposal support the ambitions, principles and delivery of the Corporate Plan?**

The calculation of political balance of committees is a statutory requirement and supports all aspects of the Corporate Plan through the good governance of the Council.

### 3. **How does this proposal contribute towards the Council's responsibilities as corporate parents?**

There is no direct contribution towards the Council's responsibilities as corporate parents. The legislation ensures that nominations to the seats on committees reflects the representation of different political groups on the Council.

### 4. **How does this proposal tackle deprivation?**

As section 3 above.

5.

## **What are the financial and legal implications?**

### **Legal:**

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to allocate seats on committees to political groups in accordance with the size of each group as a whole, unless alternative arrangements are notified to all Members and agreed without any councillor voting against them. The Council is required to observe the following principles as far as it is reasonably practicable:

- (a) that not all seats on the body are allocated to the same group;
- (b) that the majority of seats on the body are 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; and
- (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of 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.

The Council is required to determine the number of seats on each committee and the allocation of those seats to the political groups. Applying the principles of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the supporting Regulations, the option for distribution would be proportional as set out at Appendix 1 (the Elected Mayor is not included in the calculation for proportionality purposes).

The allocation of seats includes a statutory bar on members of the Executive on the Overview and Scrutiny Board and a Council decision to exclude the Executive on the Audit Committee. The Mayor's Non-Political Executive Group currently comprises solely of members of the Executive. The overall calculations set out at Appendix 1 includes one seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Board being allocated to the Mayor's Non-Political Executive Group which the Group would utilise in accordance with Standing Order B2.1 whereby the Group Leader can nominate their places from another political group or not at all.

Political balance requirements may be dis-applied under Section 17, Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Regulation 20, Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. This would allow the relevant seats to be allocated to another group. Any decision to dis-apply would require a unanimous vote of full Council.

In respect of Working Parties, the Council's Constitution states that Working Parties considering non-executive functions will be appointed in accordance with the principles of political balance.

	<p><b>Finance:</b>  The Members' Allowances Scheme includes a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for Group Leaders of £330 per member. No councillor is entitled to receive more than one SRA covered by the Scheme. The changes to the political make-up of the Council outlined in this report have not resulted in an additional cost to the Members' Allowances budget due to the other SRA's already being paid.</p>
6.	<p><b>What are the risks?</b></p> <p>There is a statutory requirement to undertake a review of political balance following a change in the political composition of the Council. This review has been completed. Therefore there are no risks unless members fail to determine the matter.</p>
7.	<p><b>Public Services Value (Social Value) Act 2012</b></p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
8.	<p><b>What consultation you have carried out?</b></p> <p>The Group Leaders have been consulted on the political balance calculations set out at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.</p>