

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL

26 October 2021

Report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters For Decision

1 POLITICAL BALANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMITTEES

This report asks Members to determine the political balance arrangements for the Council's committees, sub-committees, advisory boards and panels, following (a) Cllr Stapleton's move to the Green Party and (b) the proposed abolition of the Electoral Review Working Group.

1.1.1 Under section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (duty to allocate seats to political groups) and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, the Council is required to review the composition of any of its committees and sub-committees to which those provisions apply at the annual meeting of the Council and after any election.

1.1.2 Following the notification from Councillor Nick Stapleton that he has ceased to be a member of the Liberal Democrats and has joined the Green Party, the number of seats held by each of the political parties is as follows:

Conservative	39	(72.22%)
Liberal Democrat	8	(14.81%)
Independent Alliance (Kent)	3	(5.56%)
Green	3	(5.56%)
Labour	1	(1.85%)
Total	54	(100%)

1.1.3 This report also considers the impact of the proposed abolition of the Electoral Working Review Group on the overall political balance calculations.

1.1.4 The Council is required to determine the composition of its committees to reflect this political balance and to ensure that:

- (a) not all the seats on the committee to which appointments are made are allocated to the same political group;

- (b) the majority of seats on the committee 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 (a) and (b), the total number of seats allocated to a particular political group reflects that group's proportion of the membership of the authority;
- (d) subject to (a) and (c) the number of seats on each committee allocated to a particular group reflects that proportion of the membership of the authority.

1.1.5 As a result of the change in Cllr Stapleton's group membership and the proposed abolition of the Electoral Review Working Group, the total number of seats held by political groups of the Council will be as follows (the numbers in brackets show the numbers held by each group prior to these recent changes):

Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat	Independent Alliance Kent	Green	Labour	Total Seats
118 (124)	24 (29)	9 (10)	9 (6)	3 (3)	163 (172)
72.22%	14.81%	5.56%	5.56%	1.85%	100%

1.1.6 The table below shows the number of committees etc of various sizes which need to be politically balanced and the way in which the total number of available seats might be allocated to reflect the proportions on the Council as a whole. In consequence, it is suggested that those committees requiring to be politically balanced be composed as follows (changes shown in brackets):

Committee	Size	Con	Lib Dem	Ind All	Green	Lab
Overview and Scrutiny	18	13	3	1	1	0
Licensing and Appeals	15	11	2	1	1	0
<i>Advisory Boards (x5):</i>						
Communities and Housing	16	11	2(-1)	1	1(+1)	1
Economic Regeneration	16	11	3	1	1	0

Finance, Innovation and Property	16	12	3	0	1	0
Planning and Transportation	16	12	2(-1)	1	1(+1)	0
Street Scene and Environment Services	16	12(+1)	2(-1)	1	1	0
General Purposes	14	10	2	1	1	0
Joint Standards	13	9	1(-1)	1	1(+1)	1
Audit	9	7	1	0	0	1
Electoral Review Working Group	9	7	1	1	0	0
JECC	9	6	2	1	0	0
Housing Association Liaison Panel	5	4	1	0	0	0
Total Number of Seats	163(-9)	118(-6)	24(-5)	9(-1)	9(+3)	3(-)

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 The Council is required to review the composition of its committees in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (duty to allocate seats to political groups) and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) regulations 1990.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 Not applicable.

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 Not applicable.

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 RECOMMENDED that the composition of all committees, sub-committees, advisory boards and panels be approved in accordance with the table at paragraph 1.1.6 and the Monitoring Officer make any consequential amendments to the Council's constitution in respect of political balance.

Background papers:

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Nil

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