

Meeting of the Council – 1st December 2025

Report of the Director of Legal, Compliance and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)

Political Balance of the Council and Composition of Committees

Purpose of Report

1. To report on revisions to the political balance of the Council and changes to the composition and membership of Committees.

Recommendations

2. That the Council endorse revisions to the composition and membership of Committees in accordance with the relevant political balance requirements of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
3. That the Council consider the appointment of Members to the following positions:
 - Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee
 - Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee

Background

4. At the Annual Meeting of the Council on 15th May 2025, the Council approved the composition and membership of Committees based on the political balance of the Council at that time.
5. On 10th November 2025, the Monitoring Officer was advised that Councillors J Clinton and J Thorne were no longer Members of the Conservative Group and would be serving as Reform UK Councillors.

6. Notice has been given that Councillors J Clinton, S Keasey and J Thorne wish to be treated as a political group (Reform UK) for the purposes of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Member of the Group to act as its Leader is Councillor S Keasey.

7. There are now 5 political groups represented on the Council:

Conservative Group (33 seats)

Labour Group (24 seats)

Black Country Group (6 seats)

Liberal Democrat Group (5 seats)

Reform UK Group (3 seats)

There is one other independent Member. The proportionality Regulations provide that a political group is constituted where two or more Members of the Council give notice that they wish to be treated as a group.

8. Under Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is required to provide for political balance on Committees. Article 4.2(e) of the Constitution provides that the Full Council is responsible for deciding on the composition of Committees and making appointments to them. The Monitoring Officer is authorised to make any necessary changes to the composition of Committees that might arise from time to time to ensure that the requirements relating to political proportionality, as required by either the Constitution or by law, are maintained.

9. A review of the composition and membership of Committees has been undertaken due to the change in the overall political balance of the Council. The attached Appendix sets out revisions to the composition and membership of Committees.

10. At the Annual Council meeting on 15th May 2025, Councillor J Clinton was appointed as the Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee. Councillor J Thorne was appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee. The Leader will make a recommendation at the Council meeting concerning these appointments for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

Finance

11. The financial implications arising from the maintenance of the Council's Constitution and the implementation of the Council's governance arrangements are met from existing resources.

Law

12. Relevant statutory provisions regarding the Council's Constitution and the appointment of Committees are contained in the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, together with any Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
13. The power to appoint Committees and to delegate functions to Committees and Officers is set out in Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. The power to appoint members to committees under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 includes, by necessary implication, the power to remove and replace committee members. However, this power cannot be delegated and must be exercised by the Full Council itself.
14. The political proportionality arrangements that apply to the allocation of seats on Committees is set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.
15. The political balance 'rules' provide that political groups are entitled to be allocated seats on Committees in accordance with the proportion of seats they hold on the Council. The removal and replacement of a Committee Chairman must be conducted in accordance with the wishes of the political group that originally appointed the Chairman, as stipulated under Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
16. Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 authorises the Council to approve different arrangements (eg: not reflecting political balance) provided that no Member of the Council votes against them.

Risk Management

17. There are no material risks arising from this report that need to be reflected in the Council's Risk Management Framework.

Equality Impact

18. The Council's Constitution sets out the arrangements made by the Council for the proper discharge of all its powers, duties and functions, including those relating to equality and diversity and in respect of children and young people.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

19. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Commercial/Procurement

20. The Constitution includes the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Environment/Climate Change

21. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Council Plan

22. The Council's Constitution and associated governance arrangements underpin the delivery of the Council Plan objectives.

Aftab Razzaq
Director of Legal, Compliance and Assurance
(Monitoring Officer)