

**TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER: POLITICAL BALANCE:
SECTION 15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989; THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT (COMMITTEES AND POLITICAL GROUPS) REGULATIONS 1990**

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Wards Affected: All
Report to: Annual Council
24 May 2023

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the political balance of the Council for the term of this Council 2023-2027, and the political balance of the committees of the Council.

Recommendation

2. **Council is recommended to:**
 - a) **Note the political balance of the Council.**
 - b) **That for the municipal year 2023/24 the composition of the Council's committees be as set out at paragraph 9 of this report.**

Background

3. Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1989 and the Regulations made thereunder, require the Council to regularly review the political composition of the Council and to determine the size and constitution of its Committees etc. to ensure that the political balance is reflected and maintained in those Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties by allocating seats on each Committee to each group in direct proportion to each group's overall representation on the Council.
4. In accordance with legislation, the Council is required to consider the political balance of the Council and to determine the allocation of seats on Committees.

The Rules and Principles of Political Balance

5. Following the coming into effect of the Local Government Boundary Commission's recommendations, the Council now has 48 councillors. The political composition of the Council is now: Liberal Democrat 20 seats (41.75%); Conservative 18 seats (37.5%); Green 4 seats (8.33%); the Independent group 4 seats (8.33%); Burgess Hill Independent 1 seat (2.08%); Labour 1 seat (2.08%).
6. This means that the Council is in a position of no overall political control, i.e., no single group has a working majority. This is the case for many Councils in the region. In this scenario Councillors across the parties will need to work together to create consensus. Councillors will need to collaborate to ensure collective governance that provides stability for the Council, and therefore for the residents of Mid Sussex.
7. The principles of political balance require that:
 - (a) not all seats on any committee or sub-committee are allocated to the same group;

- (b) the majority of seats on the committee/sub-committee are allocated to a particular group if that group has a majority of seats on the Council;
- (c) subject to (a) and (b) above that the number of seats allocated to any group on the total of all committees have the same proportion to the proportion on the full Council; and
- (d) subject to (a), (b) and (c) above that the number of seats on each committee allocated to each group bears the same proportion to the proportion on the full Council.

8. Through its constitution, the Council has established the following committees, each with the following number of members:

Committee	Membership
Scrutiny (People and Communities)	11
Scrutiny (Place and Environment)	11
District Planning	12
Planning	12
Licensing	15
Standards	6 (plus 4 Parish/ Town representatives)
Audit	7

Recent cross-party work to update the Council's Constitution sought to enhance the role of scrutiny by broadening the scope of the Scrutiny Committees. Therefore, they have been re-named and their scope is outlined below:

People & Communities: overall budget & policy framework, health & wellbeing, community safety, partnership working, equalities, revenues & benefits, waste & recycling, housing, environmental health.

Place & Environment: planning, leisure, parking, parks & open spaces, economy & sustainability, asset management.

It is hoped that this themed approach will provide an opportunity to consider more strategically the issues that matter to residents and to take the opportunity to have a broader approach to scrutinising strategy, policy and decision-making. This broader emphasis will also enable members to have a wider focus including considering the role of partners/ agencies.

9. In accordance with the principles set out above, this report proposes the composition of the committees to be as follows:

Scrutiny Committees x 2		District Planning Committee	
Liberal Democrat	5	Liberal Democrat	5
Conservative	4	Conservative	5
Green	1	Green	1
Independent group	1	Independent group	1
Burgess Hill Independent	0	Burgess Hill Independent	0
Labour	0	Labour	0

Planning Committee

Liberal Democrat	5
Conservative	4
Green	1
Independent group	1
Burgess Hill Independent	0
Labour	1

Licensing Committee

Liberal Democrat	6
Conservative	5
Green	1
Independent group	1
Burgess Hill Independent	1
Labour	1

Standards Committees

Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	2
Green	1
Independent group	1
Burgess Hill Independent	0
Labour	0

Audit Committee

Liberal Democrat	3
Conservative	3
Green	1
Independent group	0
Burgess Hill Independent	0
Labour	0

Total number of seats to be allocated: 74

Financial Implications

10. None

Other Material Implications

11. None

Background Papers

None