



COUNCIL: 19 July 2023

Report of: The Chief Operating Officer

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Yvonne Gagen

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE 2023/24

Borough wide interest

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To review the allocation of seats on Committees to Political Groups, as a result of the Countermanded Election held on 22 June 2023 and the re-establishment of the Our West Lancashire (OWL) Group.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That, for the period ending with the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or such lesser period should the political balance or allocation to political groups change during the year requiring a review under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the allocation of seats to the political groups be as agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 17 May 2023, subject to:

- (i) Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee – less 1 Conservative, plus 1 OWL
- (ii) Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee – less 1 Conservative, plus 1 OWL
- (iii) Planning Committee – less 1 Conservative, plus 1 OWL
- (iv) Licensing & Appeals Committee – less 1 Labour, plus 1 Conservative, plus 1 OWL
- (v) Licensing & Gambling Committee – plus 1 Conservative
- (v) Standards Committee – plus 1 OWL
- (vi) Audit & Governance Committee – plus 1 OWL

In addition to the above, the Conservative Group are required to reduce 1 seat on the Committees overall, which should be allocated to OWL. This will be reported at the meeting.

2.2 That the Leaders of each Political Group advise the Head of Legal & Democratic Services in relation to the names of the Councillors in respect of 2.1 above and Section 4.1A of the Council's Constitution be updated accordingly.

3.0 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES etc

- 3.1 At its Annual Meeting, the Council is under an obligation, under Section 15(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, to review the representation of the Political Groups on Committees and Sub-Committees. Under the Act, the numbers of seats on ordinary Committees have to be aggregated and allocated to the proportion that each political group bears to the total members of the Council, in so far as reasonably practicable. This was undertaken at the Annual meeting in May 2023 when the composition of the Council was Labour 26 members, Conservative 15 members, 'Our West Lancashire' 1 member, which did not at that time constitute a Political Group and 3 vacancies.
- 3.2 Of the seats available in Committees, these were allocated to the Labour Group and the Conservative Group, in line with the composition above. The allocation of remaining seats not allocated to any Political Group (two) were allocated to the Member who did not belong to a Political Group at the Council's discretion and in accordance with the regulations.
- 3.3 Following the Countermanded Election held on 22 June 2023, the Chief Operating Officer received notification to re-establish a group 'Our West Lancashire' and subsequently a review of the representation of different political groups on Committees has taken place. The Labour Group continues to have 26 Members – 57.8% of the total membership, the Conservative Group has 15 members – 33.3% of the total membership and 'Our West Lancashire' has 4 members (8.9%) of the total membership
- 3.4 Of the seats available on the Committees, based on the calculations, recommendations from the Leader for the change in allocation of seats are listed in paragraph 2.1.
- 3.5 There is no legal requirement under the 1989 Act to aggregate the number of seats on ordinary sub-committees. The Act simply requires that seats on such sub-committees be allocated to the political groups in the same proportion as each group bears to the whole Council. Political balance rules do not apply to Working Groups or Commissions.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Reviewing the political balance on committees ensures that the Council is complying with its obligation, under Section 15(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

7.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

None.