



ANNUAL COUNCIL – 13TH MAY 2021

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To carry out a review of political balance across the authority and the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines the political balance of the authority.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Council notes the political balance as outlined in Appendix 1 and that there has been no change to the general allocation of seats to the Committees in accordance with the political balance.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 In order to comply with statutory requirements to keep the political balance of the authority under review and to allocate seats on committees in accordance with that balance.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Section 15 to 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (the 1989 Act) sets out requirements to ensure there is political balance on the committees set out in this report.
- 5.2 The Council is required to review the political balance of its Committees and determine the allocation in accordance with the principles set out in Section 15 of the 1989 Act namely:-

(a) Not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group.

(b) That the majority of seats on the body are allocated to a particular political group if the number of people belonging to that group represents a majority of the council's membership.

c) Subject to those earlier rules the number of seats on the ordinary committees of the council allocated to each group bear the same proportion to the total of all seats allocated as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

d) Subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the 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.

5.3 An Independent Councillor not in a Group is not according to the principles set out above entitled to seats on Committees and is not taken into account for the purposes of the political balance calculations below.

5.4 However the allocation of seats based on the principles in Section 15 may be varied by Section 17 of the 1989 Act. The Council may adopt an alternative arrangement to the political proportionality as outlined in this report and distribute the seats on a different basis provided that notice of such a proposal is given in the Council summons and the alternative arrangement is approved by Council without any member voting against the arrangement. The alternative arrangement would mean treating the 2 independent members as a group. That said if alternative arrangements under Section 17 were to be adopted by the Council, the membership of a committee would need to reach 20 for a seat to be allocated to either independent member as highlighted on Appendix 2.

5.5 In applying the political balance rules under Section 15 the Council has so far as is practicable allocated the seats according to the overall percentage that a party has of the total seats of the authority. However, it is impossible to obtain a perfect percentage balance on every committee and there are therefore two principles:-

(i) The majority group must have the majority on any committee.

(ii) That the overall allocation of seats is as close as possible to the overall percentage that a party holds on the council.

5.6 The **composition of the Council as at 29th April 2021 is as follows**

| Groups & Independents | Number of Councillors | Political Balance |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Labour | 49 | 67% |
| Plaid Cymru | 18 | 24.7% |
| Independents | 4 | 5.5% |
| Independent Councillor | 1 | 1.4% |
| Independent Councillor | 1 | 1.4% |

5.7 The total number of seats on Committees which are subject to the political balance requirements is 151. Members will recall that the Planning Committee membership has been reduced to 16 in accordance with a decision of Council on 13th April 2021.

The present allocation of seats is as detailed below.

| Groups & Independents | No. of Cllrs | No. of Committee seats | Political Balance |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Labour | 49 | 102 | 67% |
| Plaid Cymru | 18 | 38 | 24.7% |
| Independent Group | 4 | 11 | 7.3%* |
| Independents (not in a Group) see para 5.3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

- 5.8 Based on the current composition of the Council the proportional allocation of seats on politically balanced Committees is outlined below.

Governance and Audit Committee 12 Members (8-3-1)

*Appeals Committee 3 Members (1-1-1)

Appointments Committee 9 Members (6-2-1)

Democratic Services Committee 16 Members (11-4-1)

Licensing Committee 15 Members (10-4-1)

Planning Committee 16 Members (11-4--1)

Education Scrutiny Committee 16 Members (11-4-1)

Social Services Scrutiny 16 Members (11-4-1)

Policy and Resources/Partnerships Scrutiny Committee 16 Members (11-4-1)

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee 16 Members (11-4-1)

Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 16 members (11-4-1)

*The Appeals Panel has a Committee Membership of 3 which under the current political balance would be an allocation of 2 seats Labour and 1 Plaid Cymru but is comprised of equal representation from the 3 main political groups, this increases the percentage share of the main Independents Group.

- 5.9 Appendices 1 and 2 to this report set out the political balance and allocation of seats for Committees under both scenarios – appendix 1 - treating the 2 independent members individually or appendix 2 - treating them as a group.

5.10 **Conclusion**

Members are asked to consider and note the political balance in accordance with the detail contained in this report.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There are no assumptions contained in this report as the requirements to review the political balance is set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 As the report is for information only there is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The views of the consultees have been incorporated into this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made under the Act and
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

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Appendix 1 Political Balance

Appendix 2 Alternative Political Balance