

By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager
To: County Council – 19 March 2026
Subject: Proportionality and Appointments to committees and other bodies
Classification: Unrestricted

Recommendation:

The County Council is asked to:

- (a) **DETERMINE** the total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on certain bodies, as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Group leaders and the Monitoring Officer, to adjust and confirm the allocation of committee places as necessary in order to conform to overall proportionality requirements; and to confirm external Joint Committee appointments where required.

For Decision

Composition of the County Council

1. As a result of the changes to Group Membership and the establishment of new Political Groups since the last consideration of this item, the Council is now made up of the following Members. Please note there is one vacancy.

Political Group	Number of seats	Proportion of seats (%)
Reform UK	47	58.02
Liberal Democrat	12	14.81
Restore Britain Kent	7	8.64
Conservative	6	7.41
Green	5	6.17
Labour	2	2.47
Non-Group aligned	2 (inc vacancy)	2.47
Total	81	100%

Note – Figures rounded for presentational purposes

Committee Appointments

2. The Council must determine the number of Members to serve on each committee and the allocation of committee places between the political groups.
3. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires committee places to be allocated between the political groups in accordance with the following principles:
 - (a) the group with the majority of seats on the Council must have a majority of seats on each committee¹.
 - (b) subject to (a) above, the number of seats on the total of all committees allocated to any political group must be proportional to the number of seats which that group holds on the Council;
 - (c) subject to (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on each committee allocated to any political group must be proportional to the number of seats which that group holds on the Council.
 - (d) Only political groups have an entitlement to seats on committees. A 'political group' is defined as two or more Members who inform the Monitoring Officer that they wish to be regarded as a political group.
4. Proposals for the size of each committee and the allocation of committee places between the political groups has been prepared for the County Council's approval. The proposals are based on calculations required to ensure the Council may adhere to the principles of the legislation and the details are set out in the Appendix for consideration and decision.
5. The Council must seek to achieve proportionality as far as is practicable, balancing the requirements set out in paragraph 3. To ensure reasonable representation across as many committees as possible while keeping the total allocations close to the proportionate entitlements, this commonly requires a small level of under-representation of the largest group. The small level of underrepresentation is necessary to achieve the other balance requirements of Committees that reflect the total number of County Council seats held by each group, the total number of Committee seats available and the political balance on each individual committee. Due to all Groups now being different sizes, the level of variance for the Groups is different and this is necessary to balance the overall proportionality requirements.
6. As a result of the Group changes, there are no longer any Political Groups with equal numbers of Members. Therefore the new proportionality arrangements do not incorporate split entitlements (where multiple groups have, for example, 0.5 of a seat on the same committee).

Sub-committees / Panels

7. The proposals for Membership arrangements of the various sub-committees and Panels are also set out in the appendix. Sub-committees must align with proportionality in terms of the representation of Political Groups on each individual sub-committee. The following paragraphs set out the existing arrangements for management of various sub-committees where Membership is relevant. No changes are proposed to the arrangements already agreed by Full Council as part of recent consideration of the Proportionality position.
8. Members from Groups other than those allocated seats on the Panels undertaking Regulation matters may sit on Panels on such occasions when one of the allocated Groups gives up a seat. In addition, it is a requirement that Panels be chaired by a member of the Committee responsible for Regulation matters.
9. Transport Appeal Panels (conducted under Panel / Sub-committee arrangements within the Regulation functions) meet with such frequency that that Panel membership is determined by the availability of individual Members from all political groups subject only to the need for the largest Group to have a majority on each Panel. Membership of the Committee responsible for Regulation functions is not a requirement for its Panels for individual Members or political groups, although the Chair of each Panel must be member of the Committee responsible for Regulation matters.
10. The Selection and Member Services Governor Appointments Panel will only meet on very rare occasions. The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Young People has delegated powers to make Local Authority appointments/nominations to governing bodies in consultation with the Chairman when they meet the County Council's guidelines. On those occasions when the guidelines are not met, the Panel Members' views are sought. The Panel meets on those occasions when there is either no unanimity amongst the Panel Members or if they unanimously disagree with the Corporate Director's recommendations. The Panel also meets if it needs to consider a request for the removal of a Local Authority Governor.
12. The Mental Health Guardianship Sub-Committee is chaired by the Chair of the Committee responsible for Regulation matters. The rest of its membership is drawn from volunteers from the Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee. It meets once a year to oversee the Guardianship Register. In the event that a decision is needed on the discharge of persons who are subject to guardianship, a Panel of 3 of its Members will meet. Due to the urgent need for a decision, membership of the Panel would be determined by the availability of Members to serve at very short notice.
13. The Scrutiny Committee is responsible for managing the Topic Review programme and may set up Short Focused Inquiries as required, which are time limited and task specific, carrying out reviews and making recommendations. It is convention to apply political proportionality to these groups.

Other Authorities, Joint Committees and Partnership Bodies

14. The proportionality principles in the 1989 Act also apply to the appointments which the Council makes to various other authorities, joint committees and partnership bodies. Details of the allocations are in the appendices.
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Recommendations

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Committee numbers and Group allocations

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