

Eden District Council

Council

28 April 2022

**Allocation of Seats on Committees**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	N/A
<b>Report from:</b>	Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services
<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>	

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To propose the distribution of seats in accordance with the rules of political proportionality, and to make appointments to the Committees for the remainder of the 2021/2022 municipal year.

**2 Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

1. the proposed allocation of seats as set out in this report be approved;
2. the appointment of Members to Committees as set out in Appendix 2 be approved; and
3. the Green Group and Labour Group adopt a reciprocal arrangement where the nominated Members can act as Standing Deputies.

**3 Report Details**

- 3.1 The seats on the Council's Committees should be allocated in accordance with the principles contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to the political groups amongst the members of the Council so far as it is reasonably practicable. The principles are paraphrased below, and in the order of priority:

1. All the seats on the Committee cannot be allocated to the same political group;
2. the majority of the seats allocated on any body, including each Committee, area allocated to the group, if any, which has a majority on the Council;
3. the number of seats on the total of all Committees allocated to each political group bear the same proportion as the proportion the members of that group has to the members of the entire Council; and
4. the number of seats on each Committee allocated to each group bear the same proportion as the proportion the members of that group has to the total members of the entire Council.

The legislation provides that such determinations are to be achieved 'as far as reasonably practicable'.

- 3.2 As a result of the resignation of Councillor Martin from the Conservative Party in February 2022, the political balance of the Council is required to be reconsidered. The number of Conservative Group Members have decreased by one, whilst the number of Independent Members has increased by one. The Council membership is as follows:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Members</b>
Conservative Group	12
Independent Group	5
Independent Alliance Group	5
Liberal Democrat Group	12
Labour Group	2
Green Group	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

No one single party has a majority.

- 3.3 There are sixty seats across the six Council Committees. For the purpose of calculating political proportionality, a political group should consist of two or more members. This means that the Labour and Green Groups, with two members each, are considered a political group in terms of calculating the allocation of seats. For the purposes of political balance, the Cabinet does not count as seats to be allocated.
- 3.4 At the Council meeting held at 25 November 2021 a report (G39/21) was submitted that set out the allocation of seats based on negotiations with the various group leaders. This allocation was agreed by Council as the best reflection of political proportionality at the time as far as reasonably practicable.
- 3.5 Discussions have taken place with the affected group leaders following Councillor Martin moving from the Conservative Group to the Independent Group with regard to the best option to reflect the change in political proportionality.
- 3.6 The proposed allocation of seats to Committees is as follows:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Proposed number of seats</b>
Conservative Group	19
Independent Group	8
Independent Alliance Group	8
Liberal Democrat Group	19
Labour Group	3
Green Group	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

- 3.7 Due to the nature of the rounding it is not possible to fully calculate membership for groups and Committees. To balance it requires the Independent and Independent Alliance Groups to each take two additional seats - one seat on either Accounts and Governance Committee, Human Resources and Appeals Committee, Planning Committee or Finance Scrutiny Committee. Through consultation with group leaders it was decided that the Independent Group would take their seats on Planning Committee and Finance Scrutiny Committee, and the Independent Alliance take their two seats on Human Resources and Appeals Committee and Accounts and Governance Committee. The appointment of Members to these Committees is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.8 In order to aid clarity and transparency, Appendix 1 sets out how the numbers are calculated in relation to the principles of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This also highlights the change in number of seats that impacts the Conservative Group and Independent Group.
- 3.9 At the Annual Council meeting on 27 May 2021 it was proposed and approved that the Green and Labour Groups adopt a reciprocal arrangement whereby nominated members can act as Standing Deputies for either group. This accommodates the practical limitations associated with having a group comprising two members, where one member sits on the Cabinet. This is once again recommended in this report.
- 3.10 The reason for this report is to allow the Conservative Group and Independent Group to make changes with regards to their membership of all formal Committees of the Council.

## **4 Policy Framework**

- 4.1 The Council has four corporate priorities which are:
- Sustainable;

- Healthy, safe and secure;
- Connected; and
- Creative

4.2 This report meets the sustainable corporate priority.

## 5 Consultation

5.1 Affected Group Leaders have been contacted regarding any alterations to their allocation of seats, and have been asked to provide the names of members that they wish to nominate to sit on the Council's Committees. This is set out in Appendix 2. Any further changes will be reported to Council.

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 Financial and Resources

6.1.1 Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the Council's stated priorities, as set out in its Council Plan 2019-2023 as agreed at Council on 7 November 2019.

There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

### 6.2 Legal

6.2.1 Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places a duty on the Council to review the representation of political groups on its Committees where the members of the Committee are split into different political groups.

6.2.2 The Act requires that the Council should allocate seats on Committees in accordance with the principles laid out in the Act. These principles are reproduced in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

6.2.3 Once political group allocations have been determined, it is the duty of the Council to exercise the power to make appointments to Committees to give effect to the nominations of the political groups concerned. This political requirement also applies to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### 6.3 Human Resources

6.3.1 There are no human resources implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### 6.4 Environmental

6.4.1 There are no Environmental implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### 6.5 Statutory Considerations

<b>Consideration:</b>	<b>Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:</b>
Equality and Diversity	None arising from this report.
Health, Social Environmental and Economic Impact	None arising from this report.
Crime and Disorder	None arising from this report.

<b>Consideration:</b>	<b>Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:</b>
Children and Safeguarding	None arising from this report.

## 6.6 Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Controls Required</b>
There is a need to allocate the appointment of Members to seats in compliance with the statutory principles set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.	Failure to allocate seats in line with these principles may result in error and/ or legal challenge.	Appendix 1 sets out the calculations utilised in relation to the statutory principles of the Act.

## 7 Other Options Considered

7.1 No other options have been considered.

## 8 Reasons for the Decision/Recommendation

8.1 To comply with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated regulations in relation to the appointment of members to Committees in accordance with the express wishes of the political groups to which seats have been allocated.

### Tracking Information

<b>Governance Check</b>	<b>Date Considered</b>
<b>Chief Finance Officer (or Deputy)</b>	20/04/2022
<b>Monitoring Officer (or Deputy)</b>	20/04/2022

**Background Papers: G39/21, Allocation of Seats on Committees.**

**Appendices:**

- Appendix 1 – Calculation and Allocation of Seats with Regard to the Four Principles**
- Appendix 2 Appointment of Members to Committees**  
*[Please note: this Appendix will be sent ‘to follow’.]*

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