



DECISION TAKEN BY THE MONITORING OFFICER

Decision title: Changes to committee membership

Officer making the decision: David Clark, Monitoring Officer

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Date of Decision: 15 July 2024

Details of the decision:

The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority (from the Full Council meeting on 22 May 2024), in consultation with the political group leaders to make in-year changes to committee membership in accordance with the allocation of places to political groups by the Council and the wishes of the relevant political group leader.

The membership of Somerset Council is divided into political groups the Council is required to review and allocate the total number of seats on committees in accordance with the strength of each political group. The current position in terms of the number of members within a political group is:

- Liberal Democrats = 61 members
- Conservative = 33 members (changed 21/05/24)
- Labour = 5 members
- Green = 5 members
- Independents = 3 members
- No political group = 3 members (changed 21/05/24)

The above political balance results in the following entitlement to seats for committees where political balance rules apply and if Council agrees at its discretion (*) to allocate to members of no political group:

Political Group	No of Members	Entitlement to committee places	If Council chooses to use its discretion
Liberal Democrat	61	57.0%	55.5%
Conservative	33	30.8%	30.0%
Labour	5	4.7%	4.5%
Green	5	4.7%	4.5%

Independent	3	2.8%	2.7%
No political group *	2	0%	2.7%
Totals	110	100%	100%

Appendix 1 sets out guidance regarding the method of allocation of seats / places on committees.

Appendix 2 sets out the calculation of aggregate entitlement to places on committees and this was considered by the Council on 22 May 2024 at its Annual General Meeting (AGM). Whilst the majority of committee places were allocated by the Council at the AGM, some vacancies remained. This report seeks to allocate those vacancies in accordance with the delegation and arrangements that Council agreed.

In accordance with this, the Monitoring Officer has made the following changes to Committee Membership:

Audit Committee

To appoint Councillor Steve Ashton to the vacancy allocated to the Liberal Democrat group in accordance with the wishes of Councillor Bill Revans.

Officer Appeals Committee

To appoint Councillor Hilary Bruce to the vacancy allocated to the Liberal Democrat group in accordance with the wishes of Councillor Bill Revans.

Pensions Committee

To appoint Councillor David Fothergill to the vacancy allocated to the Conservative group in accordance with the wishes of Councillor David Fothergill.

Planning Committee West

To appoint Councillor Dave Mansell to the vacancy on this committee with the support of all political group leaders as Council has agreed that places on this committee are not allocated in accordance with political proportionality rules.

Reasons for proposed decision:

To update committee membership with necessary changes as identified for Somerset Council.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Group Leaders have been consulted on the proposals set out in this report and consensus reached to ensure the committees are fully functional and compliant with their terms of reference.

If the vacancies are not filled then any vacancies should be reported to the next available Council meeting for the Council to agree allocations.

Implications considered:

Legal - The rules governing the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees to political groups are set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made thereunder including the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

The provisions of the 1989 Act include the requirement that, where Members of the Council are divided into political groups, then the membership of its committees and sub-committees must reflect the political balance of the Council as a whole.

The proposals set out in this report comply with the Council's Constitution.

Finance – no specific financial implications are identified as the vacancies being appointed to do not carry any Special Responsibility Allowances.

Equalities and other implications - The Council's duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 is to have "due regard" to the matters set out in relation to equalities when considering and making decisions on the provision of services. There are no direct impacts of these recommendations on the provision of services. There are no direct impacts on sustainability, health and safety, community safety or privacy aspects as a result of this proposal.

Background papers:

Report of the Monitoring Officer, Full Council AGM, 22 May 2024
Committee Membership records held on ModGov at the Council
Somerset Council Constitution
Local Government Act 1972
Local Government Access to Information Act 1985
Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Local Government Act 2000
Somerset Structural Changes Order 2022

The following consultation has been completed:	Councillor	Date
Local County Councillors consulted where the decision directly affects their Division	N/A	N/A
Relevant Executive Member(s) consulted	Bill Revans as Leader of the Council and Liz Leyshon as Deputy Leader	12/07/24
Opposition Spokesperson(s) consulted/informed	David Fothergill, Dave Mansell, Leigh Redman	12/07/24

	and John Hunt as Leaders of the Opposition Parties	
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Decision Maker

I am aware of the details of this decision, have considered the reasons, options, representations and consultation responses (where applicable) and give my approval / agreement to its implementation.

Signed:

Name: David Clark

Post: Monitoring Officer

Date: 15 July 2024