

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S URGENT DECISION ON BEHALF OF

Council
20 September 2023

Report Title: Allocation of Committee Seats to Political Groups

Submitted by: Chief Executive

Portfolios: One Council, People & Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Purpose of the Report

To re-allocate committee seats to the political groups following a change in political proportionality of the Council.

Decision

That Council:

- 1 Notes the changed political proportionality of committee places membership following the by-elections held in the Knutton and Audley wards on 7th September 2023.**
- 2 Agrees to change the composition of committees as set out in this report in order to ensure political proportionality.**
- 3 Receives and approves nominations from Group Leaders for members to be removed from, and placed on, committees to give effect to the changed committee composition.**
- 4 Receives and approves nominations from Group Leaders for any other vacant committee places, in line with the political proportionality of the Council.**

Reasons

To comply with the political proportionality requirements in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, following the by-elections in the Knutton and Audley wards on 7th September 2023.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") imposes political proportionality requirements in respect of the allocation of seats on ordinary committees to the political groups.**

- 1.2 Specifically, section 15 of the Act requires that four principles be followed in allocating committee seats:-
- a) All seats on a committee cannot be allocated to the same political group;
 - b) The majority of the seats on each committee should be allocated to the political group holding the majority of seats on the council;
 - c) Subject to (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on the total of all the ordinary committees of the council allocated to each political group should bear the same proportion to the proportion of their seats on the council;

The change is best effected by simply reverting to pre resignation

- d) Subject to (a), (b) and (c) above, the number of seats on each ordinary committee of the council allocated to each political group should bear the same proportion to the proportion of their seats on the council.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Following the by-elections held to elect one Councillor for the Knutton ward and one Councillor for the Audley ward there is a need to alter the seat allocations as set out above. The election of Rebekah Sioban Lewis (Labour Party) in Audley and Robert Ian Moss (Labour Party) in Knutton mean that the political proportionality on the Council is:

- Conservative 57%
- Labour 43%

Labour are now entitled to 34 places and Conservatives to 45 places,

- The change is best effected by simply reverting to pre resignation committee make up:
- Additionally, Labour need to nominate to their vacant seat on Planning Committee

- 2.2 The adjustment of committee seat allocations requires:

- Conservative Group decrease its seat allocation by 2
- Labour group increase its seat allocation by 2

- 2.3 In order to both reflect the political proportionality across the Council as a whole and, as far as practical, reflect the Council's overall political proportionality on individual committees these changes are best reflected by changing the membership of Audit & Standards Committee and Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee as set out below:

- Audit and Standards Committee - Conservative membership reduced by 1; Labour membership increased by 1.

- Economy and Place Scrutiny - Conservative membership reduced by 1; Labour membership increased by 1.

2.4 Following discussion with the Group Leaders, the nominations to the two committees will be made at the Council meeting on 20th September.

3. **Proposal**

- Notes the changed political proportionality of committee places membership following the by-elections held in the Knutton and Audley wards on 7th September 2023.**
- Agrees to change the composition of committees as set out in this report in order to ensure political proportionality.**
- Receives and approves nominations from Group Leaders for members to be removed from, and placed on, committees to give effect to the changed committee composition.**
- Receives and approves nominations from Group Leaders for any other vacant committee places, in line with the political proportionality of the Council.**

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 To comply with the political proportionality requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 Consideration was given to giving effect to these changes by way of an urgent decision by the Chief Executive, but the absence of any committee meetings prior to this Council meeting had rendered the use of urgency powers unnecessary.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 Dealt with in the body of the report.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 N/A

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 N/A

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 Dealt with in the body of the report.

10. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

10.1 None identified.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is not a Key Decision.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Not Applicable.

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Not Applicable.

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 Not Applicable