

**Appointment of Committees and  
Review of Allocation of Seats on Committees  
to Political Groups**

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**Introduction**

1. This report guides the Council in constituting and re-appointing committees and following the legal requirements in allocating seats to the political groups.

**Legal Position**

2. Under the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (“the Act”) and subsequent Regulations, (“the Regulations”), the Council would normally be required to review the representation of the different political groups on committees at the Annual Council meeting. Under the Coronavirus Act and subsequent Regulations, an annual meeting is not required, however the council can still choose to undertake annual business. In addition to this, since the last meeting of Council, Cllr Kevin Daley (Conservative) has been elected to the Till and Wylve Valley division, and it is custom for political balance to be reviewed following a By-election. The report also factors in changes to political proportionality at Swindon Borough Council.
3. It is open to the Council when carrying out a review, to adopt some arrangement other than that prescribed by the Act and the Regulations. Notice of such a proposal would have to be given in the Summons, and a decision would need to be made with no one voting against it. The remainder of this report assumes that the Council will not want an alternative arrangement to that prescribed by law.

**Political Groups**

4. There are currently 4 political groups on the Council. The respective strengths of those Groups are as follows:

Name of Group	No. of Councillors in Group
Conservative	63
Liberal Democrat	21
Independent	10
Labour	3

One seat is currently vacant due to the postponement of the by-election for By Brook division. Whilst it is usual practice not to re-balance committees until a by-election has taken place, since an election is now unlikely before May 2021, in fairness to all political groups, Group Leaders have agreed to calculate political balance over 97 members, instead of 98.

5. Under the regulations, two or more councillors may form and register a group.
6. This report has been prepared on the basis of the strengths of the various political groups as they currently stand as set out in paragraph 4 above.

### **Principles**

7. The Act sets out four principles which must be followed so far as reasonably practicable. They are:
  - (a) *Preventing domination by a single group:* All the seats on a committee should not be allocated to the same political group.
  - (b) *Ensuring a majority group enjoys a majority on all committees:* If one political group has a majority in the full Council, that political group should have a majority on each committee.
  - (c) *Aggregating all committee places and allocating fair shares:* Subject to the above two principles, the total number of seats on all the committees of the Authority allocated to each political group should be in the same proportion as that political group's seats on the full Council.
  - (d) *Ensuring as far as practicable fairness on each committee:* Subject to the above three principles, the number of seats on each committee of the Authority allocated to each political group should be in the same proportion as that political group's seats on the full Council.

### **Application of Principles**

8. The Council must review the establishment of its committees in accordance with the principles laid down in the Act. Immediately after this is done, each political group should state the names of the councillors it wishes to take its allocated places on committees, including substitutes, and when those wishes are known, the Council is under a duty to make the appointment of those councillors as soon as practicable. It is a legal requirement however that the Council formally approves the appointment of councillors to committees and therefore it is essential that each political group notifies Democratic Services of their nominated councillors to serve on committees.

### **Councillors not in a Political Group**

9. In the case of councillors who are not members of a political group, a proportion of seats on committees equal to the proportion of Council members who do not belong to a political group, has to be reserved, with appointments to these

seats being made by the Council at its discretion. There are no ungrouped members on this Council at this time.

## **Committees of the Council**

10. There are currently the following committees:

- Appeals Committee
- Area Planning Committees: Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western
- Audit Committee
- Children's Select Committee
- Electoral Review Committee
- Environment Select Committee
- Health Select Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Licensing Committee
- Officer Appointments
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- Pension Fund Committee
- Police and Crime Panel
- Staffing Policy Committee
- Standards Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee

11. Outside the scope of this report are the Cabinet, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Local Pension Board as the political proportionality rules continue to not apply to these bodies.

### **12. Local Pension Board**

Under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and consequent amendments to the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, each administering authority is required to appoint a local pension board to assist the administering authority to comply with relevant legislation and guidance, and to ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Local Government Pension Scheme. Such Boards are constituted entirely under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and are not local authority committees, membership is as defined in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

## **Area Boards**

13. Area boards are appointed by the Council under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. These are constituted as area committees within the meaning of Section 18 of the Local Government Act 2000 and regulations made under that section for the purposes of discharging functions delegated by the executive (or not otherwise reserved). They are not subject to the rules on political proportionality. A list of these area boards is set out at Appendix 1 to this report.

14. All unitary councillors representing the electoral divisions covered by the area board will be appointed to their respective area board..

15. Pewsey and Tidworth are established as a single area committee with two sub-committees, each of which operate as an area board known as Pewsey Area Board and Tidworth Area Board respectively.

### **Health and Wellbeing Board**

16. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the Council is required to appoint a Health and Wellbeing Board that works with partners, including the GP led Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), to prepare a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Council and the CCG and to encourage the delivery of integrated services. The Board is to be regarded as an ordinary committee of the Council and is therefore appointed by the Council, reports to the Council and with membership, as defined by the legislation, agreed by the Council.

### **Children’s Select Committee**

10. This Committee must include nominees of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and a number of elected parent governor representatives (historically there have been 3 appointed representatives – one from each school sector). They will be voting members. In accordance with the principle set out at 7(b) above the majority group are entitled to appoint additional councillors to ensure it enjoys a majority. The Council also has discretion to appoint an unlimited number of co-opted members onto this committee as representatives of children’s organisations/agencies (historically this has been on a non-voting basis).

### **Joint Committees**

17. The Police and Crime Panel constituted under the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011 is a committee of Swindon and Wiltshire and the two councils are required to meet a “balanced appointment objective” whereby members reflects both the geographical and political nature of the two councils plus the skills and experiences required to fulfil the Panel’s functions. Wiltshire’s PCP comprises 11 councillors, plus two independent members, with the ratio of councillors 7:4 in favour of Wiltshire.
19. The membership of the PCP must reflect the political proportionality of the two councils when taken together.
20. Swindon’s current political composition is as follows:

Conservative: 30  
 Labour: 22  
 Lib. Dem: 2  
 Ungrouped members: 2

When taken with the political composition with Wiltshire Council the allocation is:

Conservative	93	7 seats (6.686)
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Lib Dem	23	1 seat (1.654)
Labour	25	2 seats (1.797)
Independent	10	1 seat (0.719)
Ungrouped	1	0 seats (0.072)
Ungrouped	1	0 seats (0.072)

Swindon is entitled to appoint 2 Conservatives and 2 Labour councillors, leaving Wiltshire to appoint 5 Conservatives, 1 Lib Dem and 1 Independent.

22. The Wiltshire Pension Fund Committee must also reflect the proportionality of both Wiltshire and Swindon Borough Council when taken together. The Committee is constituted of 5 Wiltshire Councillors, 2 Swindon councillors, 2 voting and 2 nonvoting representatives.

Conservative	93	4 seats (4.255)
Lib Dem	23	1 seat (1.052)
Labour	25	1 seat (1.144)
Independent	10	1 seat (0.458)
Ungrouped	1	0 seat (0.046)
Ungrouped	1	0 seat (0.046)

Swindon is entitled to appoint 1 Conservative and 1 Labour councillor, leaving Wiltshire to appoint 3 Conservative, 1 Lib Dem and 1 Independent.

### **Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority**

23. The political proportionality requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 applies to appointments to the Fire Authority. Wiltshire is entitled to appoint 6 members to the Fire Authority, based on the respective strengths of the political groups the allocation of places is:

Conservative	63	4 seats (3.897)
Lib Dem	21	1 seat (1.299)
Labour	3	0 seat (0.186)
Independent	10	1 seat (0.619)

### **Method of Calculating the Allocation of Places to Political groups**

24. The principles in paragraph 7 can be applied in the following sequence:
- (i) Calculate the total number of seats with votes on all the ordinary committees and any Joint Committees.
  - (ii) Calculate the proportion that each political group forms of the total membership of the Authority. Reserve an appropriate number of seats for ungrouped members.
  - (iii) Apply those proportions to the total number of ordinary committee seats to give the aggregate entitlement of each group; the requirement to apply

the proportions “so far as reasonably practicable” can be met by rounding down fractional entitlements of less than half, and rounding up entitlements of a half or more; if this results in a greater aggregate than the number of seats available, the fractional entitlement(s) closest to a half should be rounded in the other direction until entitlements balance the available seats.

- (iv) Apply the proportions to the number of councillors on each ordinary committee to give provisional entitlement to seats on that committee.
  - (v) If the provisional entitlement gives only one group seats on the committee, adjust the entitlement so that the next largest group has a seat (thus applying principle (a) in paragraph 7).
  - (vi) Finally, adjust the seats on each committee so that the total allocated to each group is as near as possible to their aggregate entitlement, whilst preserving the results reached at steps (iv) and (v) (thus applying principle (c) in paragraph 7).
25. The Council is free to adopt any aggregate number of places on ordinary committees so long as it follows the principles in paragraph 7 and the sequence in paragraph 24. A draft scheme of committee places will be published as an appendix.
26. A numerical guide to proportional representation on Committees is at Appendix 2 to reflect the Council’s updated political composition.

### **Matters for Decision**

27. The Council is asked:
- (a) To note this report and the legal requirements.
  - (b) To re-appoint the following committees with the terms of reference as set out in the Constitution:-

Appeals Committee  
Area Planning Committees: Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western  
Audit Committee  
Children’s Select Committee  
Electoral Review Committee  
Environment Select Committee  
Health Select Committee  
Health and Wellbeing Board  
Licensing Committee  
Officer Appointments  
Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee  
Pension Fund Committee  
Police and Crime Panel  
Staffing Policy Committee  
Standards Committee

## Strategic Planning Committee

(c) To re-appoint those Area Boards, constituted as area committees as set out in paragraphs 13 to 15 and Appendix 1 of this report to comprise the Unitary Councillors for that area.

(d) To re-appoint the Local Pension Board established under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and consequent amendments to the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013.

(e) To approve a scheme of committee places which sets out the number of seats available to members of the Council and to political groups (Appendix 3).

(f) To appoint members to the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority, in accordance with the guidance set out in this report.

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Background papers: None

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – List of Area Boards

Appendix 2 - Numerical Guide to political proportionality

Appendix 3 – Draft Scheme of committee places (*to follow*)