

Report subject	Review of the political balance of the Council, the allocation of seats on Committees to each political group and the appointment of Councillors to Committees and Outside Bodies
Meeting date	10 February 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Council is asked to consider and approve the review of the political balance of the Council, the allocation of seats on Committees to each political group, the appointment of Councillors on Committees and appointments to outside bodies following the political group changes.
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) the revised political balance of the Council, as set out in Table 1 to this report be noted;(b) the number of seats on the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reduced to 11 to 10 seats;(c) the allocation of seats to each political group, as set out in Table 2 to this report, be approved;(d) the appointment of Councillors to Committees and Boards, taking into account the wishes of each political group, as detailed in Table 3 to this report, be approved;(e) Councillor Mark Howell plus one other member of the Council be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Licensing Committee referred to in paragraphs 12 and 13 to this report;(f) a member of the Council be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Eastern BCP Planning Committee referred to in paragraphs 12 and 13 of this report;(g) the allocation of seats to each political group to the outside bodies, as detailed in Table 4 to this report, be approved;(h) the appointment of Councillors to the outside bodies, taking into account the wishes of each political group, as detailed in Table 5 to this report, be approved;(i) Councillor Lawrence Williams be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Dorset Police and Crime Panel as shown in Table 5 to this report.

Reason for recommendations	To ensure compliance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated Regulations in reviewing and approving the political balance of the Council and the allocation of seats together with any other associated issues.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Millie Earl, Leader of the Council
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. The Council is asked to note the revised political balance of the Council following notifications from Councillor Mark Howell of his decision to resign from the Poole People Group and to be unaligned to any political group, and from Councillor Rachel Pattinson-West of her decision to resign from the Liberal Democrat Group and to subsequently join the Green Group.
2. Set out in Table 1 below is the revised political balance of the Council reflecting these changes. Due to the mathematical rounding of seat entitlements based on the existing number of seats on committees which totals 112, the existing political balance will not divide equally into this number. The Council therefore has two options, (1) to allocate the seats with an accepted imbalance or (2) reduce the number of seats on one of the committees to reduce the total seats to 111.
3. The two options are set out in the table below showing the calculations for both 112 seats and 111 seats. It is proposed to proceed with a total of 111 committee seats by reducing the number of seats on Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 11 members to 10 members. The Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been consulted and supports this change.

Table1 (1)	No of Seats (2)	% of total seats (3)	Seat entitlement for 112 seats* (4)	Seat entitlement for 111 seats* (5)
Liberal Democrat	28	36.84	41.26	40.89
Conservative	9	11.84	13.26	13.14
Christchurch Independents	8	10.53	11.79	11.68
Labour	8	10.53	11.79	11.68
Green	7	9.21	10.32	10.22
BCP Independents	5	6.58	7.37	7.30
Poole People	4	5.26	5.89	5.84
BCP Reform UK	2	2.63	2.95	2.92
Independents	2	2.63	2.95	2.92

Table1	No of Seats	% of total seats	Seat entitlement for 112 seats*	Seat entitlement for 111 seats*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Poole Engage	2	2.63	2.95	2.92
Other	1	1.32	1.47	1.46
Total	76		111 (-1)	111

4. After allocating the proportion of seats to the political groups, any remaining unallocated seats may be allocated by council to any named councillor, although, it has been customary, where appropriate, to allocate such committee seats to those councillors who are not a member of any political group. There is one seat shown as 'Other' in the table above.
5. The following principles are contained within Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and have been amended under the regulations to take account of the fact that not all the seats are necessarily held by members of political groups. They need to be applied in the following order and as far as practicably possible:
 - (a) Not all the seats on a committee are allocated to the same political group.
 - (b) Where a group has a majority of seats on the Authority it should have the majority of seats on each committee.
 - (c) The third rule provides that, without being inconsistent with the first two rules, the number of seats allocated to each political group on all the ordinary committees taken together be as near as reasonably practicable proportionate to their proportion of seats as a proportion of the authority as a whole.
 - (d) Finally, so far as is consistent with the above each group should be allocated seats on each committee to reflect their proportion of seats on the authority.
6. The allocation of seats other than in accordance with the above principles, requires approval without dissent.
7. The Council is asked to consider the proposed allocation of seats to political groups as detailed in Table 2 below in accordance with the above principles and based on the number of seats on the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee being reduced to 10. The last column in the table identifies there is no variance in the allocation of seats when compared to calculations set out in Table 1, column 5.
8. Seats on committees, which are allocated to political groups, are to be filled by councillors of the respective political group in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group.

Table 2 – Allocation of seats on Committees/Boards

Political Group	Western BCP Planning Committee	Eastern BCP Planning Committee	Licensing Committee	Standards Committee	Appeals Committee	Audit & Governance Committee	Overview and Scrutiny Board	Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee	Children's Services O&S Committee	Environment and Place O&S Committee	Investigation and Disciplinary Committee	Total	Variance (+/-)
Liberal Democrat	4	4	5	3	3	4	5	3	4	4	2	41	+ 0
Conservative	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	13	+ 0
Christchurch Independents	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	12	+ 0
Labour	1	1	1	1	-	1	2	1	2	2	-	12	+ 0
Green	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	+ 0
BCP Independents	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	7	+ 0
Poole People	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	6	+ 0
BCP Reform UK	1	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	+ 0
Independents	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	3	+ 0
Poole Engage	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	+ 0
Other (to be allocated)	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	+ 0
Total	11	11	14	7	7	9	13	10	11	11	7	111	

Appointment of Councillors to Committees

9. The following table (Table 3) sets out the proposed membership of the Committees and Boards as advised by the respective political groups. Where a political group has not advised of their proposed members to serve on each committee or board at the time of publication, this will be shown as a vacancy.
10. The Political Groups may at any time alter their Group's membership of Committees and Boards, but any seats otherwise allocated including to the unaligned Members must be approved by full Council. Members are asked to consider the schedule and any revised nominations submitted by the political groups.
11. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 makes provision, where a political group is unable to appoint or fails to appoint a member of that group to an allocated seat, for the council to 'make such appointment as they think fit'. This does not require a recalculation of political balance, and the seat may be allocated to any councillor regardless of political grouping, however, the provisions relating to substitutions would not apply to these direct appointments similarly to those seats allocated to councillors who are not a member of a political group.
12. Members will note in the table below (marked with *) that since the allocation of seats in October 2025, the BCP Reform UK Group has not appointed a member of that group to the Eastern BCP Planning Committee, and the Poole Engage Group has not appointed a member of that group to the Licensing Committee.
13. Unless the Groups concerned appoint a member of their group to the vacant seats prior to the council meeting, council is asked to appoint a named member to each

seat. If more than one valid nomination is received for each seat it will be necessary to conduct a secret ballot in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

14. As set out in the schedule, it is proposed that the seat shown as 'Other' be allocated to Councillor Mark Howell to serve on the Licensing Committee. This appointment requires approval and is included within the remit of recommendation (e).

Table 3 – Appointments to Committees/Boards

	Western BCP Planning Committee	Eastern BCP Planning Committee	Licensing Committee	Standards Committee	Appeals Committee	Audit & Governance Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Board	Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee	Children's Services O&S Committee	Environment & Place O&S Committee	Investigation and Disciplinary Committee
Liberal Democrat	Chapmanlaw Clements Le Poidevin Sidaway	Clements Gillett Le Poidevin Tarling	Chapmanlaw Harman Matthews Richardson Sidaway	Andrews Chick Nanovo	Brown, O Le Poidevin Logan	Andrews Slade, V Tarling Trent	Goodall Mackrow Trent Walters Weight	Matthews Richardson Slade, P	Brown, O Harman Mackrow Walters	Chick Clements Gillett Goodall	Earl * Cox **
Conservative	Challinor	Slade, T	Filer Williams	Wright	Dove	Beesley	Beesley Wright	Allen	Slade, T	d'Orton-Gibson	Dove
Christchurch Independents	McCormack	Flagg Hilliard	Flagg Hilliard	Ricketts	Phipps	Phipps	Dedman	Dedman	Martin, D	Ricketts	-
Labour	Cooper	Canavan	Farquhar	Farquhar	-	Connolly	Aitkenhead Canavan	Canavan	Cooper Carr-Brown	Martin, J Moriarty	-
Green	Salmon, J	Salmon, J	Keddie	Pattinson-West	-	Armstrong	Salmon, K	Armstrong	Bull	Rigby	Pattinson-West
BCP Independents	Martin, G	-	Bartlett	-	Rampton	Bartlett	-	Dower	-	Edwards	Bartlett
Poole People	Hitchcock	Rice	-	-	Miles	-	Rice	-	Hitchcock	Rice	-
BCP Reform UK	Adams	Vacancy*	-	-	-	-	-	-	Farr	-	-
Independents	-	-	-	-	-	-	Northover	Northover	-	-	Northover
Poole Engage	-	-	Vacancy*	-	-	-	-	Bagwell	-	-	Butt
Other	-	-	Howell	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* Leader of the Council in accordance with the Constitution

** Portfolio Holder in accordance with the Constitution

Allocation of Outside Body Seats to Political Groups

15. The following tables (Tables 4 and 5) set out the allocation of seats and named appointments on outside bodies which are subject to the political balance requirements. The last column in Table 4 identifies there is no variance in the allocation of seats compared to the calculations in Table 1.

16. Council is asked to appoint a named member of the Council to the Dorset Police and Crime Panel. If more than one valid nomination is received it will be necessary to conduct a secret ballot in accordance with the Council's procedure rules. At the time of writing this report, one nomination had been received for Councillor Williams to be appointed and is reflected in Table 5 accordingly.

Table 4 – Allocation of seats on Outside Bodies

	Entitlement based on 17 Seats	Dorset Police and Crime Panel	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority	Dorset Pension Fund Committee	Lower Central Gardens Trust Board*	Total	Variance (+/-)
Liberal Democrat	6	1	2	1	2	6	+ 0
Conservative	2	-	-	1	1	2	+ 0
Christchurch Independents	2	1	1	-	-	2	+ 0
Labour	2	1	-	-	1	2	+ 0
Green	2	1	-	1	-	1	+ 0
BCP Independents	1	-	1	-	-	1	+ 0
Poole People	1	-	1	-	-	2	+ 0
BCP Reform UK	0	-	-	-	-	0	+ 0
Independents	0	-	-	-	-	0	+ 0
Poole Engage	0	-	-	-	-	0	+ 0
Other (to be allocated by council)	1	1	-	-	-	1	+ 0
Total	17	5	5	3	4	17	

* Membership on Lower Central Gardens Trust Board must be not less than 4 and not more than 5.

Table 5 - Appointment of Councillors to Outside Bodies

	Dorset Police and Crime Panel	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority	Dorset Pension Fund Committee	Lower Central Gardens Trust Board*
Liberal Democrat	Sidaway	Brown, O Weight	Brown, D	Gillett Nanovo
Conservative	-	-	Beesley	Williams
Christchurch Independents	Flagg	Hilliard	-	-
Labour	Canavan	-	-	Martin, J
Green	Keddie	-	Salmon, J	-
BCP Independents	-	Dower	-	-
Poole People	-	Miles	-	-
BCP Reform UK	-	-	-	-
Independents	-	-	-	-
Poole Engage	-	-	-	-
Other (to be allocated by Council)	Williams	-	-	-

Summary of financial implications

17. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Summary of legal implications

18. The Council is required to comply with the relevant legislation and regulations when considering and approving the political balance of the Council and the allocation of seats.

19. The Act and Regulations make provisions where a proposal is not as far as possible politically representative. This includes instances where a Group gives up a seat which they are entitled to hold in favour of another and distorts the political balance rules. In such an instance such a proposal can only be accepted if no member votes against them.

20. The proposals, as set out in this report, comply with the political balance principles and can be approved with a simple majority.

21. Although ordinarily the allocation of seats on committees is in accordance with the political balance of the Council, where a political group fails to appoint to a seat allocated to them, the Council may appoint another councillor to that seat. This does not need to be in accordance with the political balance provision and may be appointed regardless of any dissent.

Summary of human resources implications

22. There are no human resources implications associated with this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

23. There are no sustainability implications associated with this report.

Summary of public health implications

24. There are no public health implications associated with this report

Summary of equality implications

25. There are no equality implications associated with this report. It would be a matter for the political groups to consider any equality issues through their own appointment process.

Summary of risk assessment

26. There are no risk implications associated with this report.

Background papers

None

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.