

**Surrey Heath Borough Council**  
**Council**  
**25 October 2023**

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**Review of Political Proportionality and Membership of  
Committees**

**Head of Service** Gavin Ramtohal - Head of Legal & Democratic Services  
**Report Author:** Rachel Whillis – Democratic Services Manager  
**Wards Affected:** n/a

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**Summary and purpose**

To consider the Governance Working Group's recommendations in relation to altering the size of committees and other bodies of the Council and a revised scheme of political proportionality and revised membership of committees to reflect these changes.

**Recommendation**

The Council is advised to RESOLVE that

- (i) the size of the Standing Committees of the Council and other bodies of the Council be amended, as set out at paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 of this report;
- (ii) the revised the scheme of proportionality, as set out at Annex A to the report, be adopted for the remainder 2023/24; and
- (iii) the revisions to the membership of the Committees, as set out at Annex B to this report, be agreed.

**1. Membership of the Standing Committees and Other Bodies of the Council**

- 1.1 The Council is asked to review the size of committees and other bodies of the Council, in line with the recommendations from the Governance Working Group.
- 1.2 At its meeting in August 2023 the Governance Working Group agreed by majority that the committee sizes be reduced, with the intention to free up Members' time to participate in working groups and other councillor activities. The proposed size of committees is as follows:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Current Membership</b>	<b>Proposed Membership</b>
Planning Applications	15 councillors	11 councillors
Licensing	13 councillors	11 councillors
Performance & Finance Scrutiny	13 councillors	11 councillors
External Partnerships Select	13 councillors	11 councillors
Audit & Standards	7 councillors	7 councillors <sup>1</sup>
Employment	9 councillors	5 councillors

1.3 The Governance Working Group is also recommending that the membership of the Joint Staff Consultative Group is amended to six councillor representatives and six Staff Representatives. Furthermore, it recommends that its own membership is amended to seven members comprising four representatives from the Liberal Democrats group and the opposition group leaders. The proposed changes to these groups does not affect the scheme of proportionality.

## **2. Political Proportionality**

2.1 By law, seats on committees must be allocated in proportion to the political composition of the Council. Only with no councillor voting against such a decision, can an authority decide that it wishes to adopt an arrangement other than a proportional one.

2.2 Four groups have been formed: the Liberal Democrats Group, the Conservative Group, the Community Group, and the Labour Group. The number of seats of each group on the Council and the resulting percentages are as follows:

<u>Liberal Democrats</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Labour</u>
24	6	3	2
68.57%	17.14%	8.57%	5.71%

2.3 In determining the allocation of seats on committees, the proportion that each political group forms of the total membership of the Council is applied to the total number of elected councillor seats on each committee. Fractional entitlements of less than one half are rounded down and entitlements of one half or more are rounded up. So that this process of rounding does not result in disproportionate advantage to one political group, the aggregate membership of all the committees must also be in line with the proportions on the Council.

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<sup>1</sup> It is proposed to retain seven Members on this committee at the present time and review the as part of the considerations regarding an Independent Representative on the Audit and Standards Committee.

### **3. Proposal and Alternative Options**

- 3.1 The Council has no option but to achieve political proportionality. Where it is not possible to achieve absolute proportionality for each committee, the scheme agreed must achieve overall proportionality across all the committees of the Council.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the Council adopts the revised scheme of proportionality as set out at Annex A to this report and agrees any consequential changes to the membership of committees, having regard to the nominations of the relevant group leaders. This scheme achieves the required balance between the four political groups on the Council.
- 3.3 Alternatively, the Council could choose to retain the current scheme of proportionality and memberships of committees as they meet the necessary requirements.

### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

### **5. Legal and Governance Issues**

- 5.1 As set out above.

### **6. Monitoring Officer Comments**

- 6.1 No matters arising.

**Annexes:** Annex A – Scheme of Proportionality

Annex B: - Revised memberships of committees and other bodies of the Council (to follow)

**Background Papers:** None

## Annex A - Scheme of Proportionality

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Planning Applications	7	2	1	1	11
Licensing	7	2	1	1	11
Performance & Finance	7	2	1	1	11
External Partnerships	7	2	1	1	11
Audit & Standards	5	1	1	0	7
Employment	4	1	0	0	5
<b>Total seats</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>
% of Committee seats	66.07%	17.86%	8.93%	7.14%	100%
% of Council membership	68.57%	17.14%	8.57%	5.71%	100%