
**Membership Arrangements: Climate Change Working Group –
Recommendation from the Constitution Review Working Group**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881429
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An Effective and Sustainable Council The Green Thread
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to RESOLVE that:

The membership of the Climate Change Working Group should be amended to reflect the political balance and there should be a total of 9 Members appointed to the group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At a meeting of Council held on 24th July 2019 Members approved a Motion in which a climate emergency was declared. This Motion also outlined some of the action that the Council planned to take to address the climate emergency, which included a proposal to establish a climate change cross party working group.
- 2.2 The first meeting of the Climate Change Working Group took place on 9th October 2019. At this meeting, Members agreed terms of reference for the group and that there should be a core membership of 15 Councillors. The membership was not politically balanced.
- 2.3 At a meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group held on 11th October 2021 Members discussed meeting arrangements for the Climate Change Working Group. Concerns were raised at this meeting

by some Members about the effectiveness of the Climate Change Working Group to date. Particular reference was made to the relatively large size of the membership of this group compared to other working groups and it was commented that this could impact on productivity.

- 2.5 In this context, the Constitutional Review Working Group is proposing that the membership of the Climate Change Working Group should be reduced and altered to reflect the political balance of the Council.
- 2.6 From time to time it is necessary to review the workings of these groups and the membership thereof and given the recent change to group numbers and size it would appear to be an appropriate time for review. It is therefore suggested that members give consideration to reconfiguring the membership so as to accord with political balance whilst at the same time enabling all groups to participate. This would also mirror membership arrangements that are already in place for the Constitution Review Working Group.
- 2.7 Further reviews of other working groups may be undertaken on a case-by-case basis during the year.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The political balance rules are set out in The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. When setting the political balance, the Council needs to comply with this legislation.
- 4.2 The political balance rules, in terms of the appointment of Members to Committees to reflect the authority's political balance, apply to most "ordinary committees", or formal Committees such as the Planning Committee, though not the Cabinet.
- 4.3 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 stipulates in calculating the political balance "*...that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.*" (Para 15, (5), (c)) This means that in calculating the overall political balance, only

the figures for ordinary Committees should be included in the calculations for the authority.

- 4.4 Working Groups, scrutiny Task Groups and advisory panels are not classified as ordinary committees. Therefore, the political balance does not need to apply to these bodies.
- 4.6 However, the Council can determine how membership is allocated for informal bodies such as working groups. Therefore, Members could set the membership of a working group in accordance with numbers that would correspond with the political balance for a Committee of an equivalent size in membership. It must be noted, though, that if this was to occur the seats could not be included in the formal calculations for the Council's political balance nor would the seats on those groups be included in the total of all seats used to calculate the political balance.
- 4.7 Should Members decide to appoint to the Climate Change Working Group in a manner that reflects the political balance, it is suggested that consideration be given to appointing a total of 9 Members to the group. This would ensure that all political groups are represented and each of the political groups not forming part of the administration would be able to appoint the same number of Members, so would be equally represented. The number of appointments in this context would be 5 Conservative Members and 1 Member from each of the other political groups.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Council needs to ensure that governance arrangements enable Council business to be conducted in an effective and sustainable manner. As part of this process, Members should consider whether changes to the membership of the Climate Change Working Group would improve the Council's ability to conduct Council business in an effective and sustainable manner.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The purpose of the Climate Change Working Group, as detailed in the Motion agreed by Council in July 2019, was "...to *develop an action plan, report regularly on actions taken and engage with local communities.*" Therefore, the Climate Change Working Group has an important role in terms of enabling the Council to tackle climate change.

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6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 No equalities and diversity implications have been identified.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Bromsgrove District Council has a number of working groups, including the Climate Change Working Group.
- 6.3 Working Groups do not have any decision-making powers. However, they can make recommendations to Council for consideration. Meetings of these groups are informal and are held in private.
- 6.4 A change to the membership of the Climate Change Working Group to reflect the political balance of the Council would result in a decrease in membership to 9 Members overall. This is the minimum number of Members required on the group in order for all political groups to be represented at meetings of the Climate Change Working Group.
- 6.5 During the Constitution Review Working Group meeting in October 2021 when the membership of the Climate Change Working Group was discussed, suggestions were also made about potential changes that could be made to the terms of reference for the group. These suggested changes will be referred to the Climate Change Working Group to discuss when reviewing the group's terms of reference.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 No specific risks have been identified.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

None

Background papers

Background papers include the relevant legislation:

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989

The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

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9. **REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro	25/10/21
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal Democratic and Property Services	25/10/21