



South Tyneside Council

Report to Appoint the Membership of Committees of the Council (Orange Papers to be tabled at the meeting)

This document has been classified as: **Not
protectively marked**

**Lucy Keating, Director of Legal and Governance
(Monitoring Officer) 0191 424 7050
Council 19 May 2026**

Report to Council

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Leader of the Council

Report of Lucy Keating, Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Subject: Report to appoint the Membership of Committees of the Council (Orange Papers to be tabled at the Meeting)

Date: 19 May 2026

Wards affected: All Wards are equally represented by the work of the Council's Committees.

Council ambitions: This will help us achieve all five of our Ambitions in all we do.

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? No

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: General Exception Rule / Special Urgency Rule No

Relevant Scrutiny Chair: NA

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides information to assist Council in appointing the membership of the Committees of the Council (Orange Papers). There is a requirement to calculate proportionality to ensure that committees that are subject to political proportionality are correctly constituted.

Background Information

2. The Council must allocate seats on committees and other prescribed bodies to give effect to the political balance rules under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government Committee and Political Group Regulations 1990.
3. The political balance rules require Council to ensure that the political groups represented on Council have proportionate representation on the committees of the Council.
4. Political groups must comprise two or more Elected Members and be actively constituted as a group in accordance with the above Regulations. Councils can allocate seats on committees to Members not aligned to a Group but are under no statutory obligation to do so.

Group	Number of Councillors in the Group as of 19 May 2026	As a percentage (%) 19 May 2026	Committee Seat Entitlement - 19 May 2026
Reform	41	75.93	135.91 (136)
Green Group	10	18.52	33.15 (33)
South Tyneside Alliance Group (STAG)	2	3.70	6.63 (7)
Labour	1	1.85	3.31 (3)
Total	54 Members	100%	179 seats

5. The procedure for achieving political balance in advance of the Annual Meeting of Council has been to:
 - (a) determine the percentage split between the political groups and any non-affiliated Members represented on the Council.
 - (b) allocate the total number of seats on 'ordinary committees' directly covered by the proportionality rules in the proportions that the political groups and any non-affiliated Members have to the membership of the Council.

- (c) allocate seats on each committee to match the totals in (b), endeavouring to ensure that each individual committee composition is as close as possible to balance identified in (a) but giving precedence to the need to get as close as possible to overall proportionality.
- (d) allocate seats on other committees and sub-committees as far as possible to make the political balance referred to in (a) above, but without the requirement to check the balance on the numbers of seats in total.

Committee	Total places	Reform	Green	STAG	Labour
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating and call-in	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Our Place & Environment Scrutiny	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Housing Scrutiny	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Education and Skills Scrutiny	12	9.11	2.22	0.44	0.22
Regulatory/Licensing	15	11.39	2.78	0.56	0.28
Planning	16	12.15	2.96	0.59	0.30
People and OD Committee	11	8.35	2.04	0.41	0.20
Constitution	9	6.83	1.67	0.33	0.17
Pensions	8	6.07	1.48	0.30	0.15
General Purposes	16	12.15	2.96	0.59	0.30
Common Land/Town & Village Greens	13	9.87	2.41	0.48	0.24
Standards	7	5.31	1.30	0.26	0.13
Totals	179	135.91	33.15	6.63	3.31

6. The political proportionality requirements apply to a total of 15 committees with a total membership of 179. Insofar as possible, giving precedence to the need to get as close as possible to overall proportionality, seats on these committees have been allocated proportionately.

Committee Membership

7. The membership of the Committees of the Council political proportionality requirements based on the above calculation therefore translate as follows:

COMMITTEE	REFORM GROUP	GREEN GROUP	SOUTH TYNESIDE ALLIANCE GROUP	LABOUR GROUP
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating (12)	9	2	1	0
Our Place & Environment Scrutiny (12)	9	2	0	1
Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny (12)	9	2	0	1
Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny (12)	9	2	1	0
Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny (12)	9	3	0	0
Housing Scrutiny (12)	9	2	1	0
Education and Skills Scrutiny (12)	9	2	0	1
Regulatory/Licensing (15)	12	3	0	0
Planning (16)	12	3	1	0
People and OD Committee (11)	9	2	0	0
Constitution (9)	7 1 sub	2 1 sub	0	0
Pensions (8)	6	1	1	0
General Purposes (16)	12	3	1	0
Common Land/Town and Village Greens (12)	10	3	0	0
Standards (7)	5 1 sub	1 1 sub	1	0
Totals	136	33	7	3

8. It is not a statutory requirement to ensure that the Audit Committee is politically balanced, however the Council has decided for many years to ensure Audit

Committee is appointed to in line with political balance and it is recommended that this continues.

9. Audit committees are a key component of a Council's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independently minded and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management. The Audit Committee act as the principal non-executive, advisory function supporting those charged with governance in the Council, be independent of both the executive and the scrutiny functions and include at least one Independent Person.

	REFORM	GREEN	STAG	LABOUR
Audit Committee	4 (3.80) 1 sub	1 (0.93) 1 sub	0 (0.19)	0 (0.09)

Political Groups

10. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 provide for the constitution of political groups as follows:

8(1) *A political group shall be treated as constituted when there is delivered to the proper officer a notice in writing which—*
(a) is signed by two or more members of the authority who wish to be treated as a political group; and
(b) complies with the provisions of paragraph (3).

8(2) *A political group shall cease to be constituted if the number of persons who are to be treated as members of that group is less than two.*

8(3) *A notice under paragraph (1) shall state—*
(a) that the members of the authority who have signed it wish to be treated as a political group;
(b) the name of the group; and
(c) the name of one member of the group who has signed the notice and who is to act as its leader.

11. There are 41 councillors (75.93%) who wish to be treated as a political group called the Reform Group. Councillor P Mackings is the Leader of the Reform Group. Councillor S Sybenga is the Deputy Leader of the Reform Group. The Reform Group is the main group of the Council.
12. There are 10 councillors (18.52%) who wish to be treated as a political group called the South Tyneside Green Group. Councillor R Taylor is the Leader of the South Tyneside Green Group. Councillor T Leather is the Deputy Leader of the South Tyneside Green Group. The South Tyneside Green Group will be a main opposition group of the Council. This is important to note for the purposes of Substitute Members on Constitution Committee, Standards Committee and Audit Committee.

13. There are 2 councillors (3.70%) who wish to be treated as a political group called the South Tyneside Alliance Group (STAG). Councillor K Owens-Palmer is the Leader of the South Tyneside Alliance Group. Councillor S Oliver is the Deputy Leader of the South Tyneside Alliance Group.
14. There is 1 councillor (1.85%) who belongs to the Labour party, this is Cllr G Kilgour.

Financial and Resources

15. There are no specific finance and resource implications arising as a direct result of this report. No Elected Members receive any remuneration over and above their Basic Allowance for simply being a member of a Council committee, unless they are also tasked with a special responsibility i.e. a Chairing role. The Leader of the Council and the Leader of the main opposition group of the Council receive a Special Responsibility Allowance.
16. There are many aspects of being an effective councillor, and the role and responsibilities each councillor has in relation to their committee memberships requires a great deal of time and resource in preparation so that councillors can properly contribute – challenge, inspire and inform, which goes far beyond simply attending the meeting itself.
17. Everything the Council does needs to be seen in the context of an increasingly challenging financial environment and all Council committees consider this during the course of their work. The demand for services is increasing whilst the funds available to meet those needs continues to fall. Despite these challenges the Council has a drive and commitment to ensure it is doing the very best for residents and communities in the delivery of its Vision and Ambitions for South Tyneside.

Legal and Governance

18. The allocation of seats shall conform to the principles set down in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Part 1 Section 15(5)(a) – (d). The Council is required to review the representation of Groups at its Annual Meeting each year to determine the membership of committees of the Council. This is in accordance with Sections 15 to 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Section 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 (Requirement to Constitute Political Groups).
19. Where political balance requirements apply, Borough Council should comply with the wishes of each political group unless there are sound reasons for challenge. Ordinarily, it is only where a political group fails to express their wishes within the prescribed time that Borough Council may decide whom to appoint but Group leaders must take responsibility for their members working collaboratively on all Committees, and this should be carefully considered during the nomination process.

Risk

20. In line with the relevant legislation, the Council must review the Political Balance and appoint the membership of the Committees of the Council at its Annual Meeting of Council. Therefore, there is no alternative option otherwise the Council would be at risk of not complying with required legal obligations and provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Non-compliance or a misalignment across our committees could create issues with our decision-making and the potential for confusion, complaints and accusations of a lack of fairness, openness and transparency.

Equality and Diversity and Community

21. The decisions recommended in this report do not give rise to any equality or diversity implications. Whilst there are no specific equalities implications, Elected Members are reminded of their duties under the Equality Act 2010 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics. Training is available for any Elected Member who may require it to ensure compliance with the Equality Act and Public Sector equality duties.
22. The Mayor and Committee Chairs have an overriding discretion to extend speaking limits and make other adjustments on request of Elected Members to enable everyone to contribute at Council and at all Committee meetings.
23. Political proportionality relates entirely to the membership of the Council. All Groups have had the opportunity to provide their views and suggest nominations as to their preferred membership depending upon their seat allocation to be duly considered by Borough Council.

Environmental and Sustainability

24. The decisions recommended in this report do not give rise to any environmental or sustainability implications. It is of course important that committee membership is stable and experienced so that committee business can be maintained and functions well. Committee membership refreshment can bring to the Committee new talent and diverse perspectives, but continuity of membership can help build trust and more efficient ways of working.

Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans

25. Our Vision is based on five 'Ambitions'. We want all residents in South Tyneside to be financially secure; be healthy and well throughout their lives; be connected to jobs, skills, and learning; be part of strong communities; and we want to support our residents by targeting support to make things fairer.
26. The work of the Executive and Council's committees supports those Ambitions and helps ensure that all policies, strategies and plans are known and understood, with work and focus across all Committees focused on our Vision and Ambition to target support at the residents and parts of the borough that need it more, reducing inequalities and making things fairer.
27. This report should be considered with the Council's Vision and Values in mind and demonstrate alignment to our agreed 'Council Values' that define what we stand for as an organisation and the things that are most important in terms of how we work and act in a way that is 'PROUD'.

Consultation and Engagement

28. All Group Leaders have had the opportunity to discuss seat allocations with their Groups and to advise of nominations specific to their allocated seats. However, it is of course a decision of Borough Council to appoint the membership of the Committees of the Council.

Recommendations

29. Borough Council are asked to:
 - a) note the information included in the report with regards to the calculation of political balance of the Council for the 2026/2027 municipal year.
 - b) note the various political Groups across the Council, together with Group Leaders and Deputy Leaders; and
 - c) using the Orange Papers provided for support, appoint the membership of the Committees of the Council for the 2026/2027 municipal year.

Reasons for Recommendations

30. To ensure Council appoint the membership of the committees of the Council in accordance with political balance. To ensure Council appoint the membership of the committees of the Council in accordance with political balance

List of Appendices

None

Report to Appoint the Membership of the Committees of the Council (Orange Papers)

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location
The Local Government and Housing Act 1989		http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/42/part/I/crossheading/political-balanceoncommittees-etc
The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 -		http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1990/1553/contents/made