



South Tyneside Council

Motion Allocation Arrangements

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Lucy Keating, Director of Legal & Governance
(Monitoring Officer)
Constitution Committee – 14 July 2026

Report to Constitution Committee

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Paul Mackings, Leader of the Council

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

Subject: Motion Allocation Arrangements

Date: 14 July 2026

Wards affected: All Wards are equally represented by the work of the Constitution Committee.

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

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

No

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:

Relevant Scrutiny Chair: N/A

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

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide proposals to ensure we continue to implement fair, transparent, efficient and orderly allocation of motions among council members and parties, while maintaining orderly meetings and protecting minority rights in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and applicable legislation, including Schedule 12 Local Government Act 1972 and related provisions since the May 2026 elections which saw political change.
2. Once agreed the proposals will be included in the revised Constitution determining the rules governing the submission, scheduling and debate of motions at meetings of the Council.

Background Information

3. A fair and transparent Motions provision enables the Council to, not only do the right thing to ensure fairness across political parties, but it also ensures we act in accordance with Council powers.
4. The Constitution was revised in 2025 to include within paragraph 10.1 Notice, the time limitation on submission of motions by email and included the following wording:
 -Notice of motion cannot be submitted by Elected members for the next upcoming meeting of Borough Council earlier than 00.01am on the working day immediately after the preceding ordinary meeting of Borough Council....
5. A change was also made to the allocation of motions as included in 10.2.2 below:
 - **10.2.2** A maximum of four (4) motions only will be considered at any one meeting. Of these four (4) motions and based on the current political balance of the Council – the main group will be allocated two (2) motions, and each of the opposition groups (of which there are currently two (2) opposition groups) will be allocated one (1) motion each. If a motion were submitted after 4 motions had been received, Members would be advised. The motion would need to be re-submitted in accordance with Rule 10 for the next ordinary meeting of Full Council after the meeting and would not automatically roll forward.
6. The current rule, with four motions, enables the 'main group' to have two motions and each opposition group one motion each. This assumes a dominant administration and a small number of opposition groups of a meaningful size.

Main issues and Options to be Considered

7. South Tyneside Council now has three opposition groups. Our current rule only allows two opposition motions in total. This will mean that one group is excluded at every meeting. Reform UK, with 76% of the seats (41 / 54 seats) are in control of the Council agenda through administration of business.

8. Listed below the new political composition of:

- Reform: **41**
- Green: **10**
- Independent: **2**
- Labour: **1**

Total = 54 members

9. In governance terms, a fair system should reflect political proportionality, ensure meaningful opposition voice, avoid excluding smaller groups entirely, be clear and administratively workable.

10. The below proposals provide options for fairness when apportioning Motions. Neighbouring local authority peers have advised that they are not yet updating their Motions save from Gateshead, however, they have not yet shared their updated proposals.

11. In reviewing the operation of the four-motion limit, consideration has been given to:

- The relative political composition of the Council.
- The need to ensure fair and proportionate representation in debate.
- The importance of enabling participation from all groups.
- The practical requirement for five Members to support any motion.

12. Three options are set out below for consideration.

Option 1 - Proportionate allocation with cross-group sponsorship

This option retains the four-motion limit and allocates motion slots broadly in proportion to group size but introduces a formal mechanism to enable smaller groups to participate by addressing the five-signatory requirement.

Under this approach:

- Motion slots are allocated proportionately as follows:

- Reform: 2 motions
- Green: 1 motion
- 1 opposition slot shared by:
 - Independent
 - Labour
- Any group allocated a motion slot may secure the required five signatories from across the Council, rather than solely from within their own group.
- The motion remains formally attributed to the originating group for the purposes of allocation.

In addition, where a group does not have sufficient Members to meet the five-signatory threshold independently, the Constitution would make explicit provision that:

- Supporters of a motion are not required to be members of the originating group.
- Cross-group sponsorship is a recognised and legitimate mechanism to enable debate.

This model:

- Maintains proportionality in how agenda space is allocated.
- Is future-proofed and neutral, avoiding reference to specific groups.
- Resolves the practical barrier presented by the five-signatory rule.
- Encourages collaborative working across groups.

However, it relies on a degree of informal cooperation, and there is no guarantee that smaller groups will always be able to secure the additional signatures required. Despite this, it represents a balanced and realistic approach that aligns procedural fairness with operational viability.

Option 2 — Proportionate allocation based on group size

This option retains the four-motion limit but allocates motions in proportion to each group's share of Council seats. In practice, this would look like the below:

Group	% seats	Fair motion share (of 4)
Reform	76%	~3 motions
Green	19%	~1 motion
Others (3)	5%	~0 motions

This would result in the largest group receiving the majority of slots, with other groups allocated representation only where justified by their size within the four available motions.

This approach is:

- Mathematically fair
- Politically neutral, as it does not reference specific groups
- Future-proofed, as allocations automatically adjust to changes in group composition

However, there are notable limitations:

- Smaller groups or individual Members may not secure any motion opportunities
- The five-signatory requirement further restricts participation for smaller groups
- The model may be perceived as reducing inclusivity in Council debate

While robust in principle, this option may be considered overly rigid in practice. To ensure the Constitution is future proofed, the political parties and their percentage of seats would not be noted and is noted above for the purpose of clarity in practice.

Option 3 — Equal allocation to all groups

This option allocates one motion slot to each recognised group. Currently in practice this would look like the below:

- Reform: **1 motion**
- Green: **1 motion**
- Independent: **1 motion**
- Labour: **1 motion**

It prioritises inclusivity, ensuring all groups can bring forward business at each meeting.

However:

- It does not reflect the relative size and mandate of groups.
- It gives equal weight regardless of representation on the Council.
- Smaller groups may still face difficulty meeting the five-signatory requirement.

This option may therefore be viewed as the least proportionate, despite its inclusive intent. To ensure the Constitution is future proofed, the political parties and their percentage of seats would not be noted and is noted above for the purpose of clarity in practice.

Considerations

13. In assessing the options, Members are asked to consider the need to balance:

- Proportionality (reflecting the democratic composition of the Council).
- Inclusivity (ensuring all groups have a voice).
- Practicality (including compliance with the five-signatory requirement).
- Clarity and sustainability of the rules going forward.

Preferred Option

14. **Option 1 is recommended as the preferred approach.**

It provides a balanced and workable compromise, ensuring:

- The largest group's position is reflected.
- The principal opposition retains a clear voice.
- Smaller groups are not excluded entirely.

15. It also remains flexible and practical, particularly in enabling smaller groups to participate within the constraints of the five-signatory rule.

Implications

Financial and Resources

16. There are no direct financial implications arising from the proposed changes to motion allocation arrangements. Any administrative impacts will be managed within existing resources

Legal and Governance

17. There is a risk that the current motion allocation arrangements, if not updated to reflect the revised political composition of the Council, may be perceived as disproportionate or exclusionary, potentially impacting Member participation and confidence in the fairness of Council proceedings. The recommended approach mitigates this risk by introducing a balanced and transparent framework that maintains proportionality whilst enabling participation from all groups, including smaller groups through cross-group support mechanisms.

Risk

18. There is a risk that the current arrangements may be perceived as unfair or exclusionary given the revised political composition of the Council, which could impact Member engagement and public confidence in democratic processes.
19. The proposed changes mitigate this risk by introducing a more proportionate and inclusive framework for the allocation of motions, whilst maintaining clear procedural rules.

Equality and Diversity and Community

20. The proposals support inclusive participation in Council business by providing a mechanism for all political groups, including smaller groups, to contribute to debate.
21. This enhances democratic engagement and ensures that a wider range of community views can be represented.

Environmental and Sustainability

22. There are no direct environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans

23. The proposals support the Council's ambitions by strengthening transparent, accountable and inclusive governance arrangements, enabling effective decision-making and representation across all communities.

Consultation and Engagement

24. Informal engagement has taken place with governance peers across neighbouring authorities.
25. The proposals have been developed based on internal governance review and consideration of the Council's current political composition.
26. Formal adoption will follow Member consideration through the Constitution Committee and Full Council.

Recommendations

27. It is recommended that Members:

- (a) Agree to adopt **Option 1** as the basis for motion allocation at Council meetings; and
- (b) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to incorporate the agreed approach into the Constitution, including any necessary procedural detail regarding the operation of the shared slot.

Reasons for Recommendations

28. The recommendations ensure that motion allocation arrangements remain fair, transparent and proportionate following the change in political composition of the Council.
29. Option 1 provides a balanced and practical approach that supports inclusive participation, maintains procedural clarity, and aligns with the Council's constitutional and statutory framework.

List of Appendices

None

Motion Allocation Arrangements

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