

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of meeting:** 23 April 2019

**By:** Assistant Chief Executive

**Title:** Scrutiny committee size

**Purpose:** To review the number of councillors appointed to scrutiny committees

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Governance Committee is recommended to consider whether to increase the number of councillors appointed to scrutiny committees.**

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### **1 Background**

1.1 Following consideration by the Governance Committee, Full Council on 27 March 2018 approved a new scrutiny structure.

1.2 The new People and Place Scrutiny Committees were appointed to at the Annual Council meeting in May 2018 and began meeting in June 2018. The new committees have therefore been active for just under a year.

1.3 In April 2018, the Governance Committee requested that a review of the number of councillors appointed to the scrutiny committees be undertaken and reported to the committee in early 2019 to enable any changes to be made before the Annual Council meeting in May. Following an initial report considered on 5 March 2019, the Governance Committee requested further information, specifically the impact of increasing the size of the People and Place Scrutiny Committees by two Members.

### **2 Size of scrutiny committees**

2.1 The new People and Place Scrutiny Committees are larger than the predecessor committees – comprising 11 Members each, compared to seven previously. The increased size was designed to reflect both the broader remits and smaller number of committees, and the move towards a commissioning model of scrutiny, with the larger committees providing a greater pool of Members from which Review Boards and other working groups could be drawn.

2.2 Members expressed mixed feedback about the proposed size of committees during the 2018 review of scrutiny arrangements. Some Members expressed concern that larger committees would be unwieldy and difficult to manage. Others queried whether the size could be increased to involve more Members, for example an increased presence from opposition groups.

2.3 Comparison with the size of the scrutiny committees of other top tier local authorities in the south east indicates that committee size ranges from 8-16 Members, with most committees between 10 and 13 Members. This suggests that the current size of ESCC committees is typical. It should be noted that the People Scrutiny Committee includes four statutory education co-optees, bringing the overall size of the existing committee to 15.

### **3 Impact of additional Members**

3.1 If the size of committees was to be increased, for example to a size that would potentially provide an additional seat to an opposition group, proportionality rules mean that the controlling group would also receive additional seats thus making no difference to overall balance. Furthermore, additional seats on scrutiny committees would be factored into the overall group seat allocations across all committees, not just scrutiny.

3.2 Appendix 1 contains details of the current committee seat allocations, including scrutiny committees, which is based on 11 Members appointed to People and Place Scrutiny Committees and seven to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.3 Appendix 2 models the impact of increasing the number of places on People and Place Scrutiny Committees by two to 13 elected Members in total on each committee.

3.4 In summary, the impact of increasing the membership of the two scrutiny committees by two Members each, based on the Council's current political make-up, is that the Conservative Group receives two additional places across all committees and the Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups receive one additional place each. The allocation of these places to specific committees would need to be considered by Governance Committee so that the overall number of committee seats allocated to each group is balanced.

3.5 When considering whether to increase the number of councillors appointed to scrutiny committees, practical factors are also relevant. Issues may include the availability of Members to fill seats and attend meetings, and increased challenges in supporting and managing large meetings.

### **4 Conclusions and recommendations**

4.1 The Governance Committee is recommended to consider whether to increase the number of councillors appointed to scrutiny committees, taking into account comparisons with other authorities, practical factors and the modelled impact of increasing the number.

**PHILIP BAKER**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

Contact Officer: Claire Lee, Member Services Manager  
Tel. No. 01273 335517  
Email: [claire.lee@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:claire.lee@eastsussex.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1 – Current seat allocations

Group	Number of Councillors	%	Number of seats
Conservative	30	60	47
Liberal Democrat	11	22	17
Labour	4	8	6
Independent Democrat Group	2	4	3
Independent	3	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>78</b>

COMMITTEE	Conservative	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Independent Democrat Group	Independent Group
<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Regulatory (18)	10.80 (11)	3.96 (4)	1.44 (1)	0.72 (1)	1.08 (1)
Planning (7)	4.20 (4)	1.54 (2)	0.56 (1)	0.28 (0)	0.42 (0)
Governance (5)	3.00 (3)	1.10 (1)	0.40 (1)	0.20 (0)	0.30 (0)
Standards Committee (7)	4.20 (4)	1.54 (1)	0.56 (1)	0.28 (0)	0.42 (1)
Pension Committee (5)	3.00 (3)	1.10 (1)	0.40 (0)	0.20 (0)	0.30 (1)
Audit (7)	4.20 (4)	1.54 (2)	0.56 (0)	0.28 (1)	0.42 (0)
<b>Scrutiny Committees:</b>					
Health Overview & Scrutiny (7)	4.20 (4)	1.54 (2)	0.56 (0)	0.28 (0)	0.42 (1)
People (11)	6.60 (7)	2.42 (2)	0.88 (1)	0.44 (1)	0.66 (0)
Place (11)	6.60 (7)	2.42 (2)	0.88 (1)	0.44 (0)	0.66 (1)
<b>TOTALS (78)</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>

## Appendix 2 – Modelling the impact of increased scrutiny places

Group	Number of Councillors	%	Number of seats
Conservative	30	60	49 (+2)
Liberal Democrat	11	22	18 (+1)
Labour	4	8	7 (+1)
Independent Democrat Group	2	4	3 (unchanged)
Independent	3	6	5 (unchanged)
Total	50	100%	82

### Indicative allocations to committees – subject to achieving overall balance

COMMITTEE	Conservative	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Independent Democrat Group	Independent Group
<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Regulatory (18)	10.80	3.96	1.44	0.72	1.08
Planning (7)	4.20	1.54	0.56	0.28	0.42
Governance (5)	3.00	1.10	0.40	0.20	0.30
Standards Committee (7)	4.20	1.54	0.56	0.28	0.42
Pension Committee (5)	3.00	1.10	0.40	0.20	0.30
Audit (7)	4.20	1.54	0.56	0.28	0.42
<b>Scrutiny Committees:</b>					
Health Overview & Scrutiny (7)	4.20	1.54	0.56	0.28	0.42
People (13)	7.80	2.86	1.04	0.52	0.78
Place (13)	7.80	2.86	1.04	0.52	0.78
<b>TOTALS (82)</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>