

Committee: Council

Date:

Title: Political Balance on the Council

Tuesday, 15 May
2018

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Item for decision:
Yes

Summary

1. This report considers the political composition of the Council and recommends that seats on the main committees be allocated to the three political groups as detailed below.

Recommendation

2. That the Council reviews its political composition to achieve political balance and approves the allocation of seats on its committees as detailed below.

Financial Implications

3. None.

Background Papers

4. None.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Political parties to consult within their Groups to determine their views on the recommendation.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	To comply with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. In the event that members decide an allocation of seats which does not accord with the principles of political balance, this can only be achieved if no members attending the meeting

	dissent.
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

6. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to review the representation of the different political groups at the annual meeting or as soon as practicable thereafter. It further requires them to allocate the places on their committees to political groups represented in accordance, so far as reasonably practicable, with the following four principles of proportionality:
- (a) that not all places on the body concerned are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the places on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of an 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;
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on the body which is allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

Current situation

7. The current political composition of the Council is as set out below:

Group	Members	%
Conservative	24	61.54
Residents for Uttlesford	11	28.21
Liberal Democrats	4	10.26
	39	100

8. The number of places on ordinary committees of the Council (excluding Standards) is as follows:

Committee	Seats
Planning	10
Licensing and Environmental Health	10
Scrutiny	11
GAP	10
Total	41

9. Based on 41 committee places, the number of places available to each political group is as follows:

Group	%	Calculated seats	Number of seats
Conservative	61.54	25.23	25
R4U	28.21	11.56	12
LD	10.26	4.21	4
	100	41	41

10. The effect of the allocation of committee places indicated above will mean that Planning, Licensing and Environmental Health and Governance, Audit and Performance Committees will have an allocation of 6:3:1 and Scrutiny Committee will have an allocation of 7:3:1.

Allocation of Seats – Committees

Licensing and Environmental Health Committee

11. The Council is not obliged to take the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee into account for the purposes of the calculation, because it is not a committee established under the Local Government Act 1972. However, it is usual to offer the ten places to be allocated on the same basis of proportionality, and the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee has therefore been included in the calculation of the number of seats.

Standards Committee

12. The Localism Act 2011 set out changes to the Standards regime. There is no longer a statutory obligation to appoint a Standards Committee. However it was agreed in 2012 that the Council would not be an appropriate forum for dealing with individual allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct and a Standards Committee was appointed to undertake this function.

13. In the absence of a separate statutory power, a Standards Committee is required to be appointed under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and is subject to the rules of political balance.
14. Since the Localism Act changes, the Standards Committee has had an equality of representation between all political groups. The Council's Constitution recognises that the rules of political balance contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 apply, but acknowledges that a politically balanced Standards Committee would be undesirable. It provides that, subject to no member present voting against the proposal, each political group on the Council would have at least one member on the Standards Committee. Article 9 of the Constitution provides for each political group to have at least one member on the Committee and for up to three nominations from each political group. The Council appointed a Standards Committee of nine members at the last annual meeting and it is suggested that this should continue, unless fewer than three members are nominated by any one group.
15. If this Committee were to be included in the calculations, a total of 50 seats would be available and the number of places allocated to each group would be:

Group	Percentage	Total Seats
Conservative	61.54%	(30.77) 31
Residents for Uttlesford	28.21%	(14.11) 14
Liberal Democrats	10.26%	(5.13) 5

Proposal for allocation of seats

- 14 Based on the principles outlined in this report, and the entitlement of each of the political groups to committee places as set out in paragraph 9, and including the nine seats on the Standards Committee, the allocation of the resulting 50 seats would be as follows:

Committees	Seats	Conservative	R4U	LD
Planning	10	6	3	1
LEH	10	6	3	1
Scrutiny	11	7	3	1
GAP	10	6	3	1
Standards	9	3	3	3
Total seats	50	28	15	7

Risk Analysis

There are no risks associated with this report.