

Committee: Annual Council
Title: Political Balance
Report Author: Ben Ferguson, Democratic Services Manager
bferguson@uttlesford.gov.uk

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Summary

1. This report considers the political composition of the Council and recommends that seats on the main committees be allocated to the five political groups as detailed in the report.
2. Following the resignation of Cllr Gerard in April 2020, the Council has 38 members with no means to hold a by-election and fill the vacancy until May 2021.
3. The Council's political composition is 23 Residents for Uttlesford, 7 Liberal Democrats, 4 Conservatives, 2 Greens and 2 Uttlesford Independents.

Recommendations

4. That the Council reviews its political composition and achieves political balance by allocating seats on its committees as detailed in the report.

Financial Implications

5. None.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None.

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	To ensure political representation on the council's committees is proportional to the council's political composition.
Health and Safety	None

Human Rights/Legal Implications	To ensure compliance with the Local Government Housing Act 1989
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

8. The Local Government Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities 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 seats 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 seats on the body concerned are allocated to the same political group;
- b) that the majority of the seats 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 the seats on the body which are 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.

9. Ahead of any decision by Council, it has been assumed the number of seats on ordinary committees of the Council (excluding Standards Committee) will be as follows:

Committee	Number of Seats
Governance, Audit and Performance	10
Licensing and Environmental Health	9
Planning	12
Scrutiny	10
Total	41

10. To account for having 38 members rather than 39 in 2020-21, and to allow for full political group representation on the Planning Committee, the number of seats on the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee has been reduced by one.
11. Based on the 41 seats, the number of seats available to each group is as follows:

Group	Percentage	Calculated Seats	Number of Seats
Residents for Uttlesford	60.53%	24.82	25
Liberal Democrats	18.42%	7.55	8
Conservative	10.53%	4.32	4
Uttlesford Independents	5.26%	2.16	2
Green Group	5.26%	2.16	2
Total	100%	41	41

Licensing and Environmental Health Committee

12. The Licensing Committee cannot be taken into account for the purposes of the calculation because it was not established under the Local Government Act 1972. However, it seems sensible to offer the nine places to be allocated on the same basis of proportionality, and the Licensing Committee has therefore been included in the calculation of the number of seats.

Standards Committee

13. The Council's Constitution recognises that 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. The aim is to achieve an even balance on the Committee.
14. Article 9 of the Constitution provides for three nominations for each political group, until the point when the Committee reaches a maximum of 9 members. As there are now 5 political groups it is proposed that membership of the Standards Committee should be allocated as follows:

Political Party	Number of Seats
Residents for Uttlesford	3
Liberal Democrats	2
Conservatives	2
Uttlesford Independents	1
Green Group	1
Total	9

Proposal for Allocation of Seats

15. The allocation of the 50 seats is therefore proposed as follows:

Committee	No. Seats Available	Residents for Uttlesford	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Independent	Green
Governance, Audit and Performance	10	6	2	1	0	1
Licensing and Environmental Health	9	6	2	1	0	0
Planning	12	7	2	1	1	1
Scrutiny	10	6	2	1	1	0
Standards	9	3	2	2	1	1
Total	50	28	10	6	3	3

Risk Analysis

16. There are no risks associated with this report.