

Committee: Full Council

Date:

Title: Political Balance 2021-22

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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 by-elections held on 6 May 2021, the Council has 39 members.
3. The Council's political composition is 24 Residents for Uttlesford, 5 Liberal Democrats, 5 Conservatives, 2 Greens, 2 Uttlesford Independents and 1 Independent.

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	Group Leaders have been informed of the political balance calculation.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal	The political balance calculation is in

Implications	accordance with 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 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 proposed that 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	9
Licensing and Environmental Health	10
Planning	12
Scrutiny	9
Total	40

10. Following the resignation of Councillor Isham from the Residents for Uttlesford Group, the Council also has an Independent member who is not affiliated to a party group for the purposes of the political balance calculation. Independent members are entitled to be allocated committee seats on committees to make the best overall fit. Guidance on this matter has been issued by the Local Government Association (LGA), which has been followed in the calculations below. If Independent members are excluded it can result in the political balance being disproportionate on some or all committees. It is therefore recommended that Councillor Isham is granted a seat on the Licensing & Environmental Health Committee, which ensures the seat allocation to the committees conforms to the principles in para 9 and provides for all members to have at least one seat on at least one committee.

11. Based on the 40 seats, the number of seats available to each group is as follows:

Group	Percentage	Calculated Seats	Number of Seats
Residents for Uttlesford	61.54%	24.62	25
Liberal Democrats	12.82%	5.13	5
Conservative	12.82%	5.13	5
Uttlesford Independents	5.13%	2.05	2
Green Group	5.13%	2.05	2
Independent	2.56%	1.02	1
Total	100%	40	40

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 ten 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. It is a requirement that the Licensing Committee has between 10-15 members.

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 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 49 seats is therefore proposed as follows:

Committee	No. Seats Available	R4U	LDs	CONs	UTT INDs	Greens	IND
Governance, Audit and Performance	9	6	1	1	0	1	0
Licensing and Environmental Health	10	6	1	1	0	1	1
Planning	12	7	2	2	1	0	0
Scrutiny	9	6	1	1	1	0	0
Standards	9	3	2	2	1	1	0
Total	49	28	7	7	3	3	1

Risk Analysis

16. There are no risks associated with this report.