

REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS	
Executive Summary	Following a change to the membership of the political groups at North Norfolk District Council, the Council is required to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub committees and working parties to reflect the political balance of the Council, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made thereunder.
Options considered	This is a statutory report and Full Council is required to approve any change to the political balance. Alternative options are therefore not presented.
Consultation(s)	Following a change in the political balance it is necessary to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Council approves the revised political balance calculation as per section 2.3 of this report 2. That Council approves the allocation of seats to political groups as shown at Appendix A, taking into consideration any arrangements agreed by the Group Leaders 3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties & panels.

Wards affected	All
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since the last review of the political balance of the Council in May 2023, there has been a change to the political make-up of the Council. As a result of this change, it is necessary to review the political balance again and determine the allocation of seats on committees to ensure that they reflect the revised balance.
- 1.2 Council's duty is to determine the allocation of seats to be filled by appointments by the authority, except the Cabinet. The purpose is to ensure that there is proportionality across all formal activities of the Council, reflecting the overall political composition. It affects all formally constituted committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels which discharge functions on behalf of the authority.

2. Background

2.1 In May 2024, a member of the Independent Group joined the Conservative Group. This has resulted in the following change to the composition of the council: Liberal Democrats (25 members), Conservatives (13 members) Independent Group (2 members).

2.2 Section 15(1) of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to review the representation of the different political groups on committees and sub-committees:

- at, or as soon as practicable after the Annual Meeting of the Council or,
- where notice is received of a change in the composition of political groups

2.3 The Head of Paid Service has a duty, whenever such a review takes place, to submit a report to the Council showing what the allocation of seats, in their opinion, best meet the requirements of the above Act.

2.3 Political Composition

The political composition of the Council is outlined below:

Group	No. of members	%
Liberal Democrat	25	62.5
Conservative	13	32.5
Independent	2	5.0
Total	40	100%

2.4 The Council needs to approve the allocation of seats to the political groups on those committees which are required by law to be politically balanced.

2.5 The obligation to ensure that there is proportionality in the political composition of the Council's committees extends only to proportionate representation of members of political groups and does not require that a vacant seat is represented.

2.6 In carrying out any review, the Council is obliged to adopt the following principles and to give effect to them 'so far as is reasonably practicable':

- a) That not all seats on the Council are allocated to the same political group
- b) That the majority of the seats on the Council are allocated to a particular group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership
- c) Subject to the above, that the number of seats on ordinary committees of the Council which are allocated to each political group, have 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 and
- d) Subject to a) and c) above, that the number of the seats on the Council which are allocated to each group have the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that Council as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Council.

- e) It was agreed at the Annual meeting of Full Council on 17th May 2023 that delegation should be given to the Group Leaders to make any changes required to appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels as long as they are in accordance with the political balance. Group Leaders will inform the Democratic Services Manager of any changes and Members will be informed via the Members' Bulletin. In addition, and to ensure they changes are recorded formally, an update will be provided to future next meeting of Full Council. IT is proposed that this convention is continued to allow appointments to be filled without waiting for approval from Council.
- f) As the political balance has changed in advance of the Annual General Meeting, changes to appointments can be made at the meeting on 15th May 2024.

3. Entitlement to Places

- 3.1. The table at Appendix A shows those Committees that are required to be politically balanced. Generally, the approach taken has been to round up percentages where they are above 0.5% or close to 0.5.
- 3.2. According to NNDC's Constitution, Chapter 5 section 6.2 'Working Parties shall in law be Committees of the Council' and consequently the political balance rules will also apply to working parties – unless they are Cabinet sub-committees. Cabinet sub-committees are not required to be politically balanced but it is the practice at NNDC that they are and for this reason they are included in the table (marked with an asterisk)
- 3.3. The Employment & Appeals Committee acts as the Councils Disciplinary Panel for Chief Officers and this is required to be politically balanced. As it is legally required to be politically balanced, it is proposed that the Independent Group will be allocated a seat. It is also suggested that one of their allocated seats is on the Standards Committee as it is preferable that this committee has representatives from across the groups to ensure impartiality when assessing complaints.
- 3.4. Overall the percentages have changed slightly as follows:

The Liberal Democrat Group remains unchanged on 62.5% of seats available (60 seats)

The Conservative Group has changed from an allocation of 30% to 32.5% of committee seats available (32 seats)

The Independent Group has changed from 7% to 5% of seats allocated (5 seats)
- 3.5. In the last report to Council in May 2023, there were 104 committee seats available. In February 2024, Full Council agreed to disband the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund (NNSCF). The seven seats on this panel have therefore been removed from the seat allocation and there is now a total of **97 seats**.
- 3.6. The impact of this change means that the reduction in four seats allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group has been automatically applied by the removal

of their four seats on the NNSCF. It is therefore proposed that there are no changes to the Liberal Democrat seat allocations on the committees.

- 3.7 The Conservative Group 'lost' two seats when the NNSCF was disbanded but have gained two seats from the Independent Group. The proposed allocations are set out at Appendix A.
- 3.8 The allocations at Appendix A are suggested by the Democratic Services Manager. Group Leaders can agree to alternative arrangements as long as the political balance of key committees is not affected.

4. Corporate Priorities

This is a statutory report.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

This is statutory report and there are no financial or resource implications.

6. Legal Implications

Full Council is required to approve any change to the political balance of the Council. A failure to do would be a breach of the statutory requirements.

7. Risks

As highlighted above, a failure to approve a change in the political balance of the Council would be a breach of the statutory requirements.

8. Net ZeroTarget

N/A

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

N/A

10. Community Safety issues

N/A

Conclusion and Recommendations

Following a change in the political balance it is necessary to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels.

Recommendations:

- 1. That Council approves the revised political balance calculation as per section 2.6 of this report**
- 2. That Council approves the allocation of seats to political groups as shown at Appendix A, taking into consideration any arrangements agreed by the Group Leaders**
- 3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties & panels.**