

<b>REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS</b>	
<b>Executive Summary</b>	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.
<b>Options considered</b>	This is a statutory report and Full Council is required to approve any change to the political balance. Alternative options are therefore not presented.
<b>Consultation(s)</b>	Following a change in the political balance it is necessary to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. That Council approves the revised political balance calculation as per sections 2.3 and 3.5 of this report</b></li> <li><b>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</b></li> <li><b>3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties &amp; panels.</b></li> </ol>

<b>Wards affected</b>	All
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since the last review of the political balance of the Council in May 2024, 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 2025, a Liberal Democrat member was elected to the Council. Previously, this seat had been held by a Conservative member. A member of the Conservative Group then moved to the Independent Group. This has resulted in the following change to the composition of the council: Liberal Democrats (26 members), Conservatives (11 members) Independent Group (3 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.

The political composition of the Council is outlined below:

Group	No. of members	%
Liberal Democrat	26	65
Conservative	11	27.5
Independent	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 email. 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 21st May 2025.

### **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. Proposed changes are highlighted in red.
- 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 Council's 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. The Cabinet Working Party for Projects has not met for some time and is not scheduled to meet. This has therefore been removed from the seat allocations table, reducing the overall number of seats from 97 to 92.
- 3.5. Overall, the percentages have changed slightly as follows:  
  
The Liberal Democrat Group has increased to 65% of seats available (59 seats)  
  
The Conservative Group has changed from an allocation of 32% to 27.5 of committee seats available (26 seats)  
  
The Independent Group has changed from an allocation of 5% of seats to 7.5% allocated (7 seats)

- 3.7 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. As it currently stands, the Conservative Group has one more seat allocated and the Independent Group has one less – it is suggested that the Group Leaders could agree to an exchange of seats on one of the smaller committees to address this.

#### **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 sections 2.3 and 3.5 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.**