



**County Council
Tuesday, 20 May 2025**

ADDENDA – ANNUAL COUNCIL

8. Appointments (Pages 1 - 4)

Members are asked to:

- (a) elect the Leader of the Council;
- (b) note the names, addresses and electoral divisions of the people appointed to the Cabinet by the Leader of the Council for the coming year and their respective portfolios; and
- (c) note the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

9. Committees and Review of Political Balance (Pages 5 - 16)

The Council is required by the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 to review the political balance on its committees after an election.

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COUNCIL

20 May 2025

APPOINTMENTS - CLARIFICATION OF ‘OPPOSITION GROUP’
ARRANGEMENTS

Report by Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to note this report.

Executive Summary

- 2. This report clarifies the arrangements for the Council’s ‘Opposition’ considering the current political composition of the Council and the provisions of the Constitution.

Rules around ‘the opposition group’

Background

- 3. The election to Oxfordshire County Council on 1 May 2025 returned a Liberal Democrat majority, with 36 of the 69 available seats. The remaining seats were returned as follows:

Conservative	10
Green	7
Henley Residents Group	1
Independent	1
Independent Oxford Alliance	1
Labour and Labour & Co-operative	12
Reform UK	1

- 4. Any two or more councillors may inform the Proper Officer of their intention to form a political group on the Council and be recognised as such. These political groupings form the basis of decisions such as political proportionality on committees but are also used to determine under the Council’s Constitution which group becomes ‘the Opposition ’ and assumes the rights associated with that status.

5. The Proper Officer has received notice that 12 elected members intend to operate as a political group, the Labour & Co-operative Group. The Proper Officer has received notice that the Conservative, Independent and Independent Oxford Alliance members have agreed to form a political group, the Oxfordshire Alliance. As a result there are two political groups of equal size (being 12) which are not the group from which the cabinet is drawn thereby qualifying equally to be 'the Opposition'.

Formal recognition of 'the opposition' group

6. Under Part 9.2 of the Council's Constitution, the Protocol on Councillors' Rights and Responsibilities, the Council is required to recognise a formal Opposition group.
7. Part 9.2 (2) outlines the requirements as follows: 'The largest political group on the Council which is not the Group(s) from which the Cabinet is drawn will be officially recognised by the Council as the Opposition.'
8. The Constitution does not specify how the Council should manage a situation in which two (or more) groups have equal claim to recognition as 'the Opposition' and there is no legal mechanism or established protocol in the Constitution to decide how any responsibilities may be shared. In light of this neither of the groups felt it appropriate to rotate and share the official opposition designation. Bearing in mind the Constitution does not specify a protocol for dealing with exactly the same number of elected members in opposition groups and no pragmatic solution could be reached, the only viable option is to establish two official oppositions.
9. It is recommended that the Constitution is reviewed in light of this, so provision can be agreed if this situation of having two equal sized opposition groups both entitled to be recognised as the Opposition arises in the future.

The Constitutional rights and privileges of 'the Opposition' group

10. Formal recognition by the Council as 'the Opposition' confers a number of rights and privileges on a political group. Part 9.2 (2) of the Constitution outlines a number of these: 'The Opposition may appoint a Leader, Deputy Leader and other Councillors (not being more than the number of Councillors in the Council's Cabinet) to shadow the responsibilities of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the other Cabinet members as set out in the relevant part of this Constitution. Collectively these Opposition Councillors will be termed the Shadow Cabinet.' These roles confer the right to enhanced communication with senior officers, as well as Special Responsibility Allowances.
11. A further right of the Opposition relates to the position of Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Under the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Part 6.2 (9) it states that 'The positions of Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees will be drawn from among the councillor members sitting on the respective committees. A Committee will normally appoint to these positions on an annual

basis. A Chair will be from the Opposition Group. It should be noted that this stipulation does not relate to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which operates under different constitutional arrangements.

Consequences of proposed course of action

Recognising two Opposition Groups

12. It is the advice of the Monitoring Officer that in the absence of any agreement or protocol to do otherwise that under the Council's Constitution both the Labour & Co-Operative Group and the Oxfordshire Alliance are recognised by the Council as the Opposition, with each having the full rights of that status.
13. This would lead to the existence of two Leader of the Opposition roles each with the right to appoint Shadow Cabinets, with their full rights.
14. The Members' Allowances Scheme outlines the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) payable to the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet members, which are presently:

(a)	Leader of the Opposition	£13,824.00
(b)	Shadow Cabinet Member	£ 3,456.00
15. Recognising two Opposition Groups leads to an increase in SRAs payable. The precise cost depends on the size of the Cabinet appointed by the Leader of the Council and whether the Opposition groups appoint Shadow Cabinets of the same size or smaller. The maximum increased cost of SRAs for two opposition Leaders with nine Shadow Cabinet Members each would be £44,928.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

16. The equitable resolution whereby two groups of equal size and equal right under the Council's Constitution are to be recognised as 'the Opposition' corresponds with the Council's democratic responsibilities.

Financial Implications

17. The cost arising from additional special responsibility allowances, as set out in paragraph 15, will need to be met from the existing budget during 2025/26. The ongoing additional cost will need to be considered as part of the Budget & Business Planning process for 2026/27.

Comments checked by:

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer
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Legal Implications

18. Political groups are constituted and notified to the Proper Officer in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990/1553.
19. Council is responsible for appointing to Committees under s102 of the Local Government Act 1972. Under section 15 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Council has a duty to allocate committee seats to achieve political proportionality. This applies to all committees of the Council where at least three seats have to be filled by the members of the Council.
20. The responsibility for determining the Members' Scheme of Allowances under Section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 is a matter reserved to Council and should there be a wish to amend the Scheme of Allowances the Council would have to have due regard to a report from an Independent Remuneration Panel before amending the Scheme. The current Scheme by virtue of the maximum period of four years allowed for Indexation to apply under Regulation 10 (5) Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003/1021 comes to an end on 31 March 2026. The Scheme will need to be reviewed in 2025/2026 and a new Scheme put in place effective from 1 April 2026 in any event.
21. Under Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 the Council has a responsibility to have and keep up to date a Constitution.

Comments checked by:

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Anita Bradley
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: None

Background papers: None

Contact Officer: Anita Bradley
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May 2025

Divisions affected – All

COUNCIL

20 MAY 2025

COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council is RECOMMENDED
 - a) To note the review of political balance of committees to reflect the formation of the groups following the Council election on 1 May 2025.
 - b) To appoint members to the committees of the Council as listed at Annex 1.

Background

2. Seats are allocated to political groups in accordance with the groups' proportionate strength on the Council as a whole. Any seats left over are distributed to any non-grouped members.
3. The following rules, in priority order, apply for political proportionality:
 - (i) Where a group has an overall majority on the Council, that group is entitled to a majority of the seats on each committee and sub-committee.
 - (ii) Each political group is entitled to its proportion of the total number of seats on all the committees added together, according to the ratio of the number of members of the group to the number of members of the Council.
 - (iii) Subject to (i) and (ii) above, each group is entitled to its proportion of the number of seats on each individual committee.

- (iv) For sub-committees and some other bodies, a group is entitled to its proportion of the number of seats regardless of the total number of seats involved (but still subject to the majority rule in (i) above).

Review of political balance

4. Following the election on 1 May 2025 the number of councillors has increased to 69. There are 97 seats on committees to allocate.

5. Four political groups have been formed on the Council. The political balance calculation is now based on the following political group sizes:

36	Liberal Democrat Group
12	Labour & Cooperative Group
12	Oxfordshire Alliance Group
7	Green Group

6. The political proportionality calculations are shown in Annex 2 and are summarised as follows:

- Due to rule (i) above, the Liberal Democrat Group must have a majority on each committee. This results in a total of 56 seats – above their strict proportion of 50.16.
- The Labour & Cooperative Group and the Oxfordshire Alliance Group would be entitled to 16.87 seats each under strict proportionality. Because they have the same number of seats, they have the same proportion calculation on each committee. It was identified that there were six committees on which one group should have two seats and the other group should have one seat. The two group leaders agreed how those seats will be shared between the groups in a way which maintains the overall balance. This results in 16 seats for both groups.
- The Green Group would be entitled to 9.84 seats under strict proportionality. The Group has been allocated one seat on each of the nine committees on which it has the highest proportion.

Appointments

7. The political group leaders have nominated councillors for the committee positions as listed in Annex 1.

8. There are a number of additional appointments that are not subject to the Regulations on political balance. It is the practice though, to allocate positions proportionally and a proposed breakdown is shown in Annex 1.

Legal implications

9. Political groups are constituted and notified to the Proper Officer in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990/1553.
10. Council is responsible for appointing to Committees under s102 of the Local Government Act 1972. Under section 15 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Council has a duty to allocate committee seats to achieve political proportionality. This applies to all committees of the Council where at least three seats have to be filled by the members of the Council.

Comments checked by: Kim Sawyer, Interim Head of Legal and Governance,
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Financial implications

11. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Comments checked by: Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
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Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex 1 – Committee membership

Annex 2 – Political proportionality calculations

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May 2025

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Committee membership – May 2025

	Liberal Democrat	Oxfordshire Alliance	Labour & Cooperative	Green
Audit & Governance (9)	5	1	2	1
	Roz Smith	Ted Fenton	James Fry	Gavin McLauchlan
	Leigh Rawlins		Andrew Crichton	
	Ron Batstone			
	John Shiri			
	David Hingley			
BOB HOSC (7)	4	1	1	1
	Jane Hanna	Paul Austin Sargent	Imade Edosomwan	Robin Jones
	Ron Batstone			
	Judith Edwards			
	Gareth Epps			
Charlotte Coxe Trust (5)	3	1	1	
	Ben Higgins	Ian Snowdon	Geoff Saul	
	Maggie Filipova-Rivers			
	Matt Webb			
Education & Young People OSC (9)	5	1	2	1
	Toyah Overton	James Plumb	Liz Brighthouse	Emma Markham
	Johnny Hope-Smith		Izzy Creed	
	Georgina Heritage			
	Andy Graham			
	John Shiri			

Horton HOSC (8)	5	1	1	1
	Jane Hanna	Kieron Mallon	Mark Cherry	Robin Jones
	Matt Webb			
	Chris Brant			
	Gareth Epps			
	David Hingley			
Oxfordshire Joint HOSC (7)	4	1	1	1
	Jane Hanna	Paul Austin Sargent	Imade Edosomwan	Emma Garnett
	Ron Batstone			
	Judith Edwards			
	Gareth Epps			
Pension Fund (7)	4	2	1	
	Nick Cotter	Nick Field- Johnson	Andrew Crichton	
	Peter Stevens	David Henwood		
	Leigh Rawlins			
	Dan Levy			
People OSC (9)	5	2	1	1
	Will Boucher- Giles	Kieron Mallon	Imade Edosomwan	James Barlow
	Rebekah Fletcher	Ian Snowdon		
	Judith Edwards			
	Georgina Heritage			
	Toyah Overton			
Performance & Corporate Services OSC (9)	5	1	2	1

	Nathan Ley	Lee Evans	Brad Baines	Ian Middleton
	Tom Greenaway		Glynis Phillips	
	Will Boucher-Giles			
	Roz Smith			
	John Shiri			
Place OSC (9)	5	2	1	1
	Lesley Maclean	Thomas Ashby	Susanna Pressel	Emily Kerr
	Chris Brant	Liam Walker		
	Bethia Thomas			
	Laura Gordon			
	Leigh Rawlins			
Planning & Regulation (12)	7	2	2	1
	Diana Lugova	Paul Austin Sargent	Mark Cherry	Gavin McLauchlan
	Tony Worgan	Saj Malik	Geoff Saul	
	Ron Batstone			
	Lesley Maclean			
	Roz Smith			
	Jenny Hannaby			
	Vacant			
Remuneration (6)	4	1	1	
	Liz Leffman	James Robertshaw	Liz Brighthouse	
	Neil Fawcett			
	Gareth Epps			
	Andy Graham			

The following appointments are not subject to the rules of political balance:

	Liberal Democrat	Oxfordshire Alliance	Labour & Cooperative	Green
Corporate Parenting Panel (9)	5	2	2	
Oxfordshire County Council & Employees Joint Consultative Committee (7)	4	1	1	1
Oxfordshire County Council & Teachers Joint Committee (5)	3	1	1	
Oxfordshire County Council Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed	4	1	1	1

Members of the Fire Service (7)				
Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel (1)	1			

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Group	Seats	%
Liberal Democrats (LD)	36	52.17%
Labour and Cooperative Party Group (L&C)	12	17.39%
Oxfordshire Alliance (OA)	12	17.39%
Green Group (Grn)	7	10.14%
Non-aligned (NA)	2	2.90%
Total	69	100.00%

	LD	LD*	L&C	L&C	OA	OA	Grn	Grn	Totals
	%	Alloc	%	Alloc	%	Alloc	%	Alloc	
Planning & Regulation Committee	12	6.26	7	2.09	2	2.09	2	1.22	12
Audit & Governance Committee	9	4.70	5	1.57	2	1.57	1	0.91	9
Pension Fund Committee	7	3.65	4	1.22	1	1.22	2	0.71	7
Remuneration Committee	6	3.13	4	1.04	1	1.04	1	0.61	6
Charlotte Coxe Trust Committee	5	2.61	3	0.87	1	0.87	1	0.51	5
Overview & Scrutiny Committees:									
Performance & Corporate Services OSC	9	4.70	5	1.57	2	1.57	1	0.91	9
People OSC	9	4.70	5	1.57	1	1.57	2	0.91	9
Place OSC	9	4.70	5	1.57	1	1.57	2	0.91	9
Education and Young People OSC	9	4.70	5	1.57	2	1.57	1	0.91	9
Horton HOSC	8	4.17	5	1.39	1	1.39	1	0.81	8
Oxford Joint HOSC	7	3.65	4	1.22	1	1.22	1	0.71	7
BOB HOSC	7	3.65	4	1.22	1	1.22	1	0.71	7
Overall com total	97	50.61	56	16.87	16	16.87	16	9.84	97

* Where a group has an overall majority on the Council, that group is entitled to a majority of the seats on each committee and sub-committee.

The Leaders of the two groups agreed on an equal share out of seats on these committees to maintain the overall proportions.

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