

## **Divisions affected – All**

### **COUNCIL**

**12 MAY 2026**

## **COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE**

### **Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Council is RECOMMENDED
  - a) To decommission the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Horton HOSC);
  - b) To appoint the committees and committee positions listed in Schedule 1 in Annex 1 continuing with the existing terms of reference;
  - c) To appoint members to the committees of the Council as listed at Schedule 1 in Annex 2.

or

  - d) To appoint the committees and committee positions, including Horton HOSC, listed in Schedule 2 in Annex 1 continuing with the existing terms of reference; and
  - e) To appoint members to the committees of the Council as listed at Schedule 2 in Annex 2.  
  - f) To note the review of political balance of committees to reflect the current formation of the political groups.

#### **Decommission the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

2. A report on Political Balance considered by Council on 12 December 2023 proposed to remove Horton HOSC from the list of committees appointed by Council. This committee was set up to support a funding bid to the Government for a new hospital. The bid was unsuccessful and scrutiny

activities relating to Horton Hospital will be taken forward by the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. Council did not agree to remove the Horton HOSC at that time. Since then, the position with regard to the scrutiny committee has not changed and Horton HOSC has not met since 27 November 2020. The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer advises that, as the Council approaches a decision on Local Government Reorganisation, all aspects of the Council's governance should accurately reflect current circumstances.
4. Horton HOSC included one member from Warwickshire County Council and one member from West Northamptonshire Council. Warwickshire County Council has not appointed a member of the committee since May 2024. West Northamptonshire Council has not appointed a member since May 2023. Both councils now list the committee as dormant.

## **Appointment of Committees**

5. It is proposed to re-appoint the committees listed in Schedule 1 in Annex 1, without Horton HOSC, or the committees listed in Schedule 2 in Annex 1, with Horton HOSC.
6. Whilst the Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (BOBHOSC) has unanimously agreed not to meet any further, it is proposed to retain this committee and appoint Members to it until such time as a Thames Valley Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is established.
7. The geographical footprint of the corresponding Integrated Care Board is changing which will require a new overview and scrutiny committee to be formed. A Thames Valley Joint HOSC will be constituted in due course by means of a report to each constituent council.

## **Review of political balance**

8. 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.
9. 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).
10. Four political groups were formed on the Council following the election on 1 May 2025. There has been one change to the political groups since then, Councillor Higgins left the Liberal Democrat Group and is now an independent Member, non-aligned. The political balance calculation is based on the following political group sizes:

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

There are three Members not aligned to any political group.

11. The political proportionality calculations following the proposed decommissioning of Horton HOSC are shown in Annex 3 and are summarised as follows:
- There are 69 councillors and 89 seats on committees to allocate proportionally.
  - Due to rule (i) above, the Liberal Democrat Group must have a majority on each committee. This results in a total of 51 seats – above their proportion of 45.14.
  - The Labour & Cooperative Group and the Oxfordshire Alliance Group would be entitled to 15.48 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. The result is that both groups have 15 seats.

- The Green Group would be entitled to 9.03 seats under strict proportionality. However, there are only 8 seats remaining to allocate. The Group has been allocated one seat on each of the eight committees on which it has the highest proportion.

12. The political proportionality calculations without the proposed decommissioning of Horton HOSC are shown in Annex 4 and are summarised as follows:

- There are 69 councillors and 97 seats on committees to allocate proportionally.
- 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 proportion of 49.20.
- 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. The result is that both groups have 16 seats.
- The Green Group would be entitled to 9.84 seats under strict proportionality. However, there are only 9 seats remaining to allocate. The Group has been allocated one seat on each of the eight committees on which it has the highest proportion.

## **Appointments**

13. The leaders of the political groups have been requested to submit their nominees for their committee places in time to be included in the Schedule of Business to be published as Annex 2 to this report the day before the Council meeting.

## **Legal implications**

14. 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.
15. 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:

Jay Akbar, Head of Legal and Governance Services

## **Financial implications**

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

Comments checked by:

Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner

**Anita Bradley**

**Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

Annex 1 – Committees

Annex 2 – Committee membership

Annex 3 – Political proportionality calculations without Horton HOSC

Annex 4 – Political proportionality calculations with Horton HOSC

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May 2026