

Divisions affected – All

COUNCIL

8 SEPTEMBER 2026

COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

Report of the Acting Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council is RECOMMENDED to note:
 - a) the election of Councillor Dr James Hartley to the Chesterton and Launton division in the by-election that took place on 3 September 2026;
 - b) that Councillor Hartley has joined the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council; and
 - c) that there is no change to the overall political balance since the last review agreed at Council on 30 June 2026.

Review of political balance

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).

4. Council on 30 June 2026 agreed the last report on political balance. On 16 July 2026, former Councillor Will Boucher-Giles, a member of the Liberal Democrat Group, resigned his seat in the Chesterton and Launton division. On 3 September 2026, a by-election was held to fill the vacancy. Councillor Dr James Hartley was declared elected and joined the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council.

5. The group numbers are now as follows:

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.

6. The political proportionality calculations have therefore not changed since the last review of political balance on 30 June 2026.

Legal implications

7. 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.

8. 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.

Financial implications

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

Jay Akbar,

Head of Legal and Governance Services and Acting Monitoring Officer

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September 2026