

## **Divisions affected – All**

### **COUNCIL**

**16 APRIL 2024**

## **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 a new political group 'The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire (TIVOO)' comprising three members: Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak, Cllr Damian Haywood (Deputy Group Leader) and Cllr Sally Povolotsky (Group Leader).
- b) To appoint members to the committees of the Council listed at Annex 1. A fully populated list with nominations from the political groups for the vacant seats will be circulated ahead of the meeting.
- c) To remove the Corporate Parenting Committee from the list of Council committees.

#### **Background**

2. The last review of political balance took place at the Council meeting on 12 December 2023 to reflect the establishment of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appointment of two more county councillors on the Pension Fund Committee and changes in the membership of the political groups.
3. Seats are allocated to political groups in accordance with the groups' proportionate strength on the Council as a whole. Any seats left over are then distributed to any non-aligned Independent members who are not members of a political group.
4. 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).
5. As the Council does not have a majority administration, (i) is not applicable but (ii), (iii) and (iv) do need to be applied to the allocation of seats.

### **Implications of the formation of a new political group**

6. The total number of committee places is 97. Of those, the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance (LDG) is entitled to 36 seats, the Conservative Independent Alliance (CIA) to 34 seats, the Labour and Co-operative Party Group (Lab Coop) to 21 seats and The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire (TIVOO) to 5 seats. There is one non-aligned Independent councillor, Cllr Hannah Banfield, and one seat is available to them after the seats have been allocated to the political groups.
7. The political proportionality calculations are shown at Annex 2 with notional entitlements shown alongside the number of seats allocated to each political group and the non-aligned Independent councillor.
8. Annex 1 shows the current committee representation with the seats previously held by members of The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire shown against that group. There is no need for any changes to the seats held by the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance, the Conservative Independent Alliance and the Labour and Cooperative Party Group. There is one seat remaining for Cllr Hannah Banfield as a non-aligned Independent councillor; this means that she can continue to be a member of the Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Corporate Parenting Committee**

9. The committee was established in May 2023 relating to undertake the Council's role as Corporate Parent for children-in-care and care leavers.
10. The members appointed to the committee have met informally on a number of occasions to consider the best approach to Corporate Parenting. Following advice from the Director of Children's Services and senior colleagues in Children's Services, committee members recognise that a formal committee is not the right forum for the Council to undertake its role as Corporate Parent.

11. A more informal arrangement is required to allow members to engage effectively with children we care for-in-care and care leavers. This will take the form of a cross-party Corporate Parenting Panel which will provide nominated members with an opportunity to work more informally with children and young people and representatives from partner organisations. Work is currently being undertaken to develop the new arrangements.

## **Legal Implications**

12. The rules on political balance are contained in Sections 15, 16 and 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the Act') and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. The applicable rules from Section 15(5) of the Act are summarised in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report and these have been applied to the calculations in the annexes. Other legal considerations are contained in the main body of this report.

*Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer*

## **Financial Implications**

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

**Anita Bradley**

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

Annex 1 – Committee membership

Annex 2 – Political proportionality calculations

Contact officer: Simon Harper, Head of Governance,  
[simon.harper@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:simon.harper@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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