

## **Divisions affected – All**

### **COUNCIL**

**21 MAY 2024**

## **REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE**

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

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**1. Council is RECOMMENDED**

- a) To note how the rules relating to political proportionality have been applied to the appointment of Council committees.
- b) To appoint members to the committees of the Council and other bodies 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.

#### **Background**

2. A review of political balance took place at the Council meeting on 16 April 2024 to reflect the formation of a new political group, The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire (TIVOO), and the removal of the Corporate Parenting Committee.
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 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.
- 6. The committee representation agreed by Council on 16 April 2024 reflected the political proportionately of the Council at that time – 23 Liberal Democrat Green Alliance: 22 Conservative Independent Alliance: 14 Labour & Cooperative Party Group: 3 The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire. There was one seat remaining for Cllr Hannah Banfield as a non-aligned Independent councillor: Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Review of political balance**

- 7. Since the Council meeting on 16 April 2024, Cllr Richard Webber has resigned as a member of the Council. Cllr Webber represented the Sutton Courtenay and Marcham Division and was a member of the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance. Cllr Webber was a member of two committees: Planning & Regulation Committee and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 8. The political balance calculation is now based on the following political group sizes:
  - 22 Liberal Democrat Green Alliance
  - 22 Conservative Independent Alliance
  - 14 Labour & Cooperative Party
  - 3 The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire
  - 1 Non-aligned Independent
- 9. The revised political proportionality calculations are shown in Annex 2. The Labour and Cooperative Party Group have gained the seat on Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee vacated by Cllr Webber (Liberal Democrat Green Alliance). The seat vacated by Cllr Webber on the Planning & Regulation Committee has been left with the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance.
- 10. There is one seat remaining for Cllr Hannah Banfield as a non-aligned Independent councillor: Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 11. With 22 members in the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance and Conservative Independent Alliance, the theoretical entitlements to seats on committees for both political groups is the same (34.42). For the time being, 35 seats have been allocated to the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance and 34 seats allocated to the Conservative Independent Alliance. The additional seat is on the Planning and Regulation Committee on the basis that the Liberal Democrat

Green Alliance held this seat before Cllr Webber resigned. It is shown in Annex 1 as a Liberal Democrat Green Alliance vacancy.

12. The political balance will be reviewed following the by-election for the Sutton Courtenay and Marcham Division and, if necessary, a report will be brought to a future meeting of Council.

### **Other appointments**

13. Annex 1 also includes a list of other bodies that have historically been appointed to at the Annual Meeting of Council. Current membership is shown along with vacant positions.

### **Legal Implications**

14. 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 paragraph 4 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: Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer*

### **Financial Implications**

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

*Checked by: Prem Salhan, Interim Strategic Finance Business Partner – [prem.salhan@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:prem.salhan@oxfordshire.gov.uk)*

**Anita Bradley**

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

Annex 1 – Committee membership and other appointments

Annex 2 – Political proportionality calculations

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