COUNTY COUNCIL – 16 May 2022

COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

Report by Report by the Director of Law & Governance

RECOMMENDATION

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- (a) note how the rules operate and approve necessary adjustments to achieve the balance across and within Committees to comply with the rules.
- (b) appoint Councillors to the scrutiny and other committees of the Council listed in Annex 3 as required by any changes necessary as a result of applying the proportionality rules, and subject to any changes on the nomination of the political groups.

Executive Summary

- The Council is required by the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 to review the political balance on its committees on an annual basis and then in any circumstances set out in Regulations under the 1989 Act. A note is attached (Annex 1) which summarises how the rules operate.
- 2. The last revision took place at the Annual Council meeting on 17 May 2022.
- 3. Since then, Councillor Hannah Banfield has left the Labour & Cooperative Party Group to become an Independent Non-aligned Member. A further review of political balance now needs to occur to reflect the relative proportion of each Group with regards to seats on the Council.
- 4. This report therefore invites Full Council to note the revised proportionality and to make any consequential amendments to appointments to committees arising from this. **Annex 2** shows the revised arithmetical product of the rules for the Council's committees.

Corporate Parenting Committee

5. To acknowledge the significance of the Council's corporate parenting role it is proposed that a formal Corporate Parenting Committee is established, under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, comprising nine members that will meet four times each year. The terms of reference for the committee are shown at **Annex 4**. The role of the committee will be to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children in care and care leavers.

Implications of the revised proportionality

6. The relative sizes of the Council's Political Groups, and their entitlements to seats, are now as follows:

Political Group	Liberal Democrat/Green Alliance Group	Conservative- Independent Alliance Group	Labour & Co- operative Party Group
Group Size	24	22	15
Revised number of seats – legal/notional entitlement	37	34	23
Actual current number of seats	37	34	24
Number of seats over or under entitlement			One over

- 7. Cllrs Banfield and Gawrysiak are not members of a political group on the Council and have one committee place each. It is proposed to have one Independent Non-Aligned Member on the new Corporate Parenting Committee.
- 8. Looking at the overall proportionality in the table above, the position is that the seat allocation is in balance overall save for a surplus of one for the Labour & Cooperative Party. The precise proportions of the 98 seats for each group are:

Liberal Democrat / Green Alliance	37.333
Conservative Independent Alliance	34.222
Labour & Cooperative Party Group	23.333

The Liberal Democrat / Green Alliance and the Labour Party Cooperative Group share the highest decimal remainders. Following consultation between the two group leaders it has been agreed that the Labour & Cooperative Party Group will retain the extra seat.

As no other group has an entitlement to another seat – it is not proposed to change the above allocation. The Council may decide to make other changes

although these must still reflect political proportionality (only if the Council decides with no dissenting vote can the seat entitlements be varied).

Appointments

9. Council is asked to consider the appointments to committees and to confirm them as reflecting as far as practicable subject to any changes on the nomination of the political groups.

Legal Implications

10. Seats must be allocated in relation to political proportionality unless there is a decision to the contrary taken with no member voting against. Where appointments to committees fall to be made to any particular political group in order to reflect their entitlement to seats overall, and on individual committees, the Council must give effect to the wishes of the relevant Group as expressed through that Group's Leader or Deputy Leader. The rules on political balance are contained in Sections 15, 16 and 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. This report is consistent with these.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance anita.bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Financial Implications

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

Comments checked by:

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Annex:	Annex 1 – Local Government & Housing Act 1989 - Political Balance Annex 2 – Calculations Annex 3 – Committee Membership Annex 4 – Corporate Parenting Committee – Terms of Reference	
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