

Review of political balance and appointment to committees 2022 to 2023

Report number:	COU/WS/22/012	
Report to and date:	Council	14 June 2022
Cabinet member:	Councillor John Griffiths Leader of the Council Telephone: 01284 757001 Email: john.griffiths@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Teresa Halliday Monitoring Officer Telephone: 01284 757144 Email: teresa.halliday@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This report refers to non-executive matters and therefore is not required to be included on the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: None

Recommendations: It is recommended that Council approves:

- 1. The revised political balance and allocation of seats and substitutes on committees as per Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/22/012.**
- 2. A return to the membership of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to a total of 12 members in accordance with the terms of reference.**
- 3. The appointment of the non-grouped independent members to 1 seat on the Officer Appeals Committee and 1 seat on the Officer Appointments Committee.**

Continued....

- 4. Delegation for Group Leaders to nominate members from their Groups to seats and as substitutes on committees.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 At the Annual Meeting in May 2022, the Council reviewed and approved its political balance and allocation of seats and substitutes on committees.

On 20 May 2022, the Monitoring Officer received notification of a change in membership of the political groups as detailed below:

Group	Members	Change
Conservative Group	41	+1
Independent Group	17	-2
Labour Group	4	N/A
Non-Grouped Independent	2	+1

- 1.2 Following the above changes, the Monitoring Officer received a request from the Leader of the Conservative Group to undertake a review the political balance and allocation of seats and substitutes on committees.
- 1.3 The Monitoring Officer has a duty to submit a report to the Council showing the revised political balance and proposed allocation of seats on committees.

2. Proposals within this report

Political balance and allocation of seats and substitutes in accordance with the political balance rules (section 15 Local Government and Housing Act 1989)

- 2.1 The allocation of seats and substitutes to committees must respect the requirement to ensure that relevant committees are politically balanced, in that they reflect the number of councillors who belong to each political group within the Council.
- 2.2 The rules on allocating seats are that, as far as possible:
- Not all seats on a committee can be given to a single political group
 - The majority group must be allocated the majority of seats on a committee
 - Subject to a. and b., the proportion of seats on ordinary committees allocated to a group must be proportionate to the total number of seats held by that group

- d. Subject to a. b. and c., the proportion of seats on all committees allocated to a group must be proportionate to the total number of seats held by that group

- 2.3 The committees to which these rules apply are as follows:
 - Development Control Committee (16 seats and 8 substitutes)
 - Licensing and Regulatory Committee (15 seats and 7 substitutes)
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee (16 seats and 8 substitutes)
 - Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (12 seats and 6 substitutes)
 - Standards Committee (6 seats and 3 substitutes)
 - Officer Appointments Committee (6 seats and 3 substitutes)
 - Officer Appeals Committee (6 seats and 3 substitutes)
- 2.4 At its Annual Meeting in May 2022, Council approved a request to increase the membership of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to a total of 13 members to assist with an equitable distribution of seats. However, following the review, the additional seat is no longer necessary, so it is proposed to return to 12 seats on the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in line with the terms of reference as contained in Part 3b, section 2 of the Constitution.
- 2.5 Councillors who are not members of a political group are not automatically entitled to seats but can be allocated seats by the Council and they can then agree between them who will take the seats. The Council currently has two non-grouped members, and it is proposed that they are allocated one seat on the Officer Appointments Committee and one seat on the Officer Appeals Committee.
- 2.6 The calculation to allocate seats to political groups requires the rounding up or down of calculated figures to give whole numbers. It is therefore very difficult to create a perfect allocation of seats and some adjustments may be needed to create an equitable allocation between political groups. This can include adjusting the number of councillors that sit on each committee. The proposed allocation of seats and substitutes to committees is attached at Appendix A to this report.

The appointment of councillors to committees

- 2.7 Subject to Council approval of the allocation of seats and substitutes on committees, the Group Leaders are asked to nominate which members from their group will be appointed to the seats and to notify the Monitoring Officer of those nominations.
- 2.8 The non-grouped members are also asked to agree between them on who will take the seats allocated to them and to notify the Monitoring

Officer. If agreement cannot be reached, then Council may be asked to vote on which non-grouped councillor is appointed to each committee.

2.9 It should be noted that each Group that is represented on a committee has been allocated a substitute place on that committee and the remaining substitute seats have then been distributed by political balance.

2.10 The nominations should be made to the Monitoring Officer within 14 days, on which the Monitoring Officer will appoint members to committees.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 None

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 None

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 None

6. Implications arising from the proposals

6.1 None

7. Appendices referenced in this report

7.1 Appendix A: Allocation of seats and substitutes to committees

8. Background documents associated with this report

8.1 West Suffolk Council Constitution, Part 3b, section 2: "Responsibility for Council (non-executive) Functions": [Part 3 - Section 2 - Responsibility for Council Non Executive Functions April 2021.pdf \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#)