



Report to:	Council	25 May 2023
Lead Officer:	Liz Watts, Chief Executive	

The allocation of seats on committees and appointment of committee chairs – 2023/24

Executive Summary

1. To seek Council's approval of the allocation of seats on committees and the appointment of Members and substitute Members to committees.
2. This report also requests that Council appoints the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees; and re-appoints the Lead Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Council approves:
 - a) The allocation of seats on committees as set out in Appendix A (which remains unchanged)
 - b) The nominations of the Political Group leaders to seats on committees as set out in Appendix B
 - c) The appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees as set out in Appendix C
 - d) The re-appointment of Grant Osbourn as the Council's lead Independent Person and Gillian Holmes as the Council's deputy Independent Person for a further two-year term.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Regarding appointments to committees, to comply with Council Standing Order 1.3, "Selection of councillors on committees and outside bodies" and to enable the Council to comply with its obligations under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
5. In respect of the appointment of Independent Persons, to comply with Article 9.1(c) of the Council's constitution and the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, to

appoint at least one Independent Person to assist the authority in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst its councillors.

Details

6. Political Groups on the Council are formed in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 when two or more Councillors notify the Chief Executive, as Proper Officer, of their wish to be treated as a Political Group.
7. Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 imposes a duty on the local authority at its annual meeting, or as soon as possible after it, to review the allocation of seats on the committees of the Council between the Political Groups.
8. The following principles laid down in the Act apply to the allocation of seats:
 - a. That not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same Political Group.
 - b. That the majority of seats on the body are allocated to a particular Political Group if the number of persons belonging to that Group is a majority of the authority's membership.
 - c. Subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each Political Group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that Group to the membership of the authority.
 - d. Subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on the body which are allocated to each Political Group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on the body as is borne by the number of members of that Group on the membership of the authority.
9. These principles must be applied as far as reasonably practical. Where adjustments are required to reflect rounding up and down, the final decision rests with Council, ideally on the recommendation of the Political Group leaders.
10. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that once the Council has determined the allocation of committee places between the Political Groups, the Council must then appoint the nominees of the Political Groups to the committees.

Considerations

Political Proportionality and Nominations

11. There have been no scheduled council elections in South Cambridgeshire this May, so the current political group makeup of the Council remains unchanged as:

Liberal Democrat	35
Conservative	9
Unaligned	1

12. The breakdown of each Political Group is therefore as follows:

Liberal Democrat	79.545%
Conservative	20.455%

13. Each of the Political Groups is entitled to a certain number of seats on ordinary committees based on their Group's percentage representation.

14. The Council's current ordinary committee structure comprises 62 seats.

15. The calculation to determine the entitlement of Political Groups to seats on these committees is as follows:

$$\frac{\% \text{ for each Political Group} \times \text{number of committee seats (62)}}{100}$$

16. The notional entitlement to ordinary committee seats for each Political Group is therefore:

Liberal Democrat	49.318	= 49 seats
Conservative	12.682	= 13 seats

17. Fractional entitlements of less than one half are rounded down with entitlements of one half or more being rounded up. So that this process of rounding does not result in disproportionate advantage to any one political group, the aggregate membership of all the ordinary committees must be in line with the proportions on the Council.

18. Political Groups may give any seat allocated to them to any other Group or unaligned member.

19. Unlike ordinary committees, the seats on joint committees and advisory committees are not aggregated. Proportionality is applied as far as reasonably practical on each individual joint or advisory committee. The Majority Group must have a majority on each of these committees.

20. Since there have been no elections this May, the proposed allocation of seats to committees (set out at Appendix A) remains unchanged.

Nominations and Substitutes

21. Substitute members may be appointed from each Political Group and must be appointed by Council at its annual meeting in a hierarchical list per committee.

Council may also appoint substitutes to any bodies where provisions for substitutes exist in that body's terms of reference.

22. The nominations of Political Groups to seats on committees, including substitute members, are set out at Appendix B.

Mandatory Training Requirements

23. Members are reminded that members and substitute members of the Planning Committee and Licensing Committee may only serve on these bodies once they have received the necessary training.
24. Members sitting on an employee appeals panel will also be required to undertake appropriate training before being eligible for appointment to the panel.

Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees

25. Nominations for the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees are set out at Appendix C.
26. Council is reminded of the arrangement for co-Vice Chair positions for the Climate Change and Environment Advisory Committee. This arrangement reflects the high priority attached to climate and environmental issues as reflected in the Council's Business Plan. Council is invited to appoint a Vice-Chair for Environment and a Vice-Chair for Climate Change. The Vice Chair for Environment would deputise at meetings of the Committee in the absence of the Chair.

Appointment of Lead Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person

27. Article 9.1(c) of the Constitution sets out arrangements for the appointment of one or more Independent Persons to work alongside the Monitoring Officer to initially consider complaints that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct.
28. Council is invited to re-appoint Grant Osbourne (as Lead Independent Person) and Gillian Holmes (as Deputy Independent Person) for a further two-year term.

Options

29. Council can opt to approve the proposals set out in the report in respect of the allocation of seats on committees or Council could agree an alternative proposal that reflects the principles of political proportionality.
30. The requirement to allocate seats according to Political Groups' proportionate strengths can be overridden by some other arrangement, either in relation to all committees, sub-committees and other bodies or in relation to any individual committee, sub-committee or other body, provided that no Councillor votes

against the alternative arrangement when it is proposed (a “no dissent” alternative).

31. The Council is therefore not obliged to follow the proportionality rules and may make different arrangements, provided the following procedures set out in Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are followed:
- i. Due notice is given in the agenda for the meeting.
 - ii. No Member of the Council votes against the proposal, although there may be abstentions.
32. In respect of the appointments to the roles of the independent persons, the Council could decide not to approve the appointment of the individuals named in this report.

Implications

33. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, there are no significant implications.

Background Papers

The following background information was used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire District Council’s Constitution
- The Local Government and Housing Act 1989
- The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

Appendices

Appendix A: Committee seat allocation 2023/24

Appendix B: Nominations for seats on Committees, Joint and Advisory Committees and Substitutes 2023/24

Appendix C: Nominations for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees 2023/24

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