

Committee name: Council

Committee date: 23/05/2023

Report title: Political Proportionality of Norwich City Council, 2023-24

Portfolio: Leader of the Council (TBC)

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: All Wards

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Purpose

This report sets out the political balance for the civic year 2023-24, giving notice of changes to the council's political composition following the recent elections.

Recommendation:

To approve the political proportionality for the civic year 2023-24 and to amend the membership of the Scrutiny, Planning Applications, Licensing and Regulatory Committees to 14 members each.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city corporate priority

Report details

1. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to review the representation of different political groups on committees and sub-committees at, or as soon as practicable after, the Annual Meeting of the Council; or in the event of a change to the council's political composition.
2. Following the recent elections, the political composition of the Council is

now as follows:

| Group | Members | Percentage |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Labour Group | 23 | 59.0 |
| Green Group | 13 | 33.3 |
| Liberal Democrat Group | 3 | 7.7 |
| Total | 39 | 100.0 |

3. In determining the allocation of seats on ordinary committees, the proportion that each political group forms of the total membership of the Council is applied to the total number of elected member seats on each committee, so far as is reasonably practicable. Fractional entitlements are rounded appropriately to ensure that this process of rounding does not result in advantage to one political group. The aggregate membership of all the ordinary committees must also be in line with the proportions on the Council.
4. The principles mentioned above, in relation to the seats on any body which fall to be filled by appointments made by the council, are:
 - (a) that not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body is 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 the council which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of the council as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the council; and
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.
 - (e) In the case of councillors who are not members of a group, a proportion of seats on committees equal to the proportion of council members who do not belong to a political group are reserved, with appointments to these seats being made by the council at its discretion.
5. Cabinet is excluded by law from the calculations under s.9GC Local Government Act 2000. Where the local authority chooses to disregard the rules of political proportionality for a particular committee then that committee is also excluded from the calculations. If the authority wants to agree an alternative scheme that does not comply with the principles, it can only do so with no members voting against.
6. The calculations also only apply to "ordinary" committees, which are ones empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council and the scrutiny committees. The principles do not formally apply to advisory bodies, such as the constitution working party, however the Council elects to follow the principles as far as possible on its advisory bodies.
7. In March 2023, Council agreed new arrangements for the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, with the division of functions between two committee meetings. However, Council also agree the principle that the

members of the two committees should be the same, and this principle has been adopted in this report.

8. It is for the Council to establish the number of places in each committee and in so doing it will need to be mindful of the functions of the committee, the number of members it needs for the best possible governance and the overall availability of members to serve on committees.
9. **Appendix 1** sets out the allocation of places to the Council's committees, calculated in a manner that is consistent with the legislation and on the basis that the rules of political proportionality are applied to all ordinary committees.
10. Council are only required to confirm the number of seats allocated to each political group. Individual Councillors are then allocated to fill the committee places based on the wishes of the political groups.
11. Having reviewed the provisional political balance, officers recognised that it would have meant trade-offs between political groups as to which seats they took on individual committee meetings and it would therefore be challenging to apply the principles effectively. However, increasing the size of the planning applications committee, scrutiny committee, licensing and regulatory committees to 14 members each meant that there would be a near-perfect allocation of seats. This change has been proposed within this report.
12. It is recognised that this change may have an impact on councillor workloads. To support Councillors in fulfilling their roles effectively, some minor reductions in membership of advisory bodies (which are not considered as part of this report) have been proposed to compensate for the increasing membership of ordinary committees.

Consultation

13. The proposals within this report have been subject to consultation with the political groups. No objections have been received.

Implications

Financial and resources

14. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.
15. There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report; there is unlikely to be a direct impact on members allowances (which are funded through the Council's budget)

Legal

16. This report fulfils the Council's obligations under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to review the political balance, and has been compiled in line with the requirements under the Act and the Committee and Political Group Regulations 1990

Statutory considerations

| Consideration | Details of any implications and proposed measures to address: |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Equality and diversity | None |
| Health, social and economic impact | None |
| Crime and disorder | None |
| Children and adults safeguarding | None |
| Environmental impact | None |

Risk management

| Risk | Consequence | Controls required |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| The Council fails to agree a scheme of committee apportionment that is compliant with the principles | Inability to appoint members to committees, and therefore decisions cannot be made | Agreement of a scheme by the Council |

Other options considered

17. Other options have been considered in recommending a scheme to Council, however the option proposed provides the most equitable apportionment in accordance with the principles

Reasons for the decision/recommendation


18. It is a statutory requirement for the Council to apportion seats on committees to Councillors. Without this, committee meetings cannot take place in order to make decisions

Background papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1, Allocation of seats on Council Committees

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Political Balance 2023-24

| Group | Seats on Council May 2023 |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Labour | 23 |
| Greens | 13 |
| Liberal Democrats | 3 |

| Cabinet | Labour |
|--|--|
| Leader and at least 2 and no more than 9 other members | Based on the nominations of the leader |

| Main Committees | No of Members | Labour | Greens | Lib Dem |
|---|----------------------|--------|--------|---------|
| Scrutiny | 14 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| Audit | 8 Q = 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Planning applications | 14 Q = ¼ | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| Licensing and regulatory (same members) | 14 Q = ¼ | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| Norfolk Joint Museums | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Norfolk Joint records | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Standards | 7 (+ 2 independent) | 4 | 2 | 1 |

Q = quorum