



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Council

Committee date: 10/01/2024

Report title: Allocation of seats to committees

Portfolio: Councillor Stonard, Leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: All Wards

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to re-calculate the allocation of seats to the Council's committees.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council adopt the allocation of seats included at Appendix 1 to this report

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 priority for Norwich City Council to be in good shape to serve the city

Report details

1. On 28 November, 4 members of the Council left the Labour Group and formed the Independent Norwich Group.
2. In December, the Lord Mayor received a request from 5 members to call an extraordinary meeting in order to re-allocate seats to the Council's committees.

3. Ahead of the calling of the meeting, the Lord Mayor consulted with political groups on the timing of the meeting, and proposals for a revised political balance were shared with group leaders by the Head of Legal and Procurement.
4. The rules for allocating seats on committees are determined by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, supplemented by the Committees and Political Group Regulations (England) 1990. In essence, Council determines how many seats each group has on committees. Political groups then determine which members shall take those seats.
5. There are usually 4 principles that the Council has to apply in calculating the entitlement to seats; however, the second rule (that if a group has a majority of Councillors, it also has the majority on the committees) does not apply to the Council at present. As a result, the Council has to apply the following principle:
 - a. That not all seats on the Council are allocated to a single group;
 - b. That the number of seats allocated to each group on the ordinary committees (decision making committees appointed by Council) is proportionate to their membership of the Council
 - c. That the number of seats allocated to each group on the ordinary committees, advisory bodies and joint committees where the Council appoints 3 or more members is proportionate to their membership of the Council
6. The Council has to try to achieve this allocation as fairly as is practicable. It is hard to achieve a perfect solution, and so different scenarios are explored to achieve a fair distribution. It is also possible for Councillors to propose alternatives that still meet this criteria. Nonetheless, if the Council is minded to allocate seats in a way that is contrary to the principles above, it has to do so without any member voting against the proposal.
7. If agreed, these proposals have immediate effect. Officers are mindful that there are committee meetings over the next week, most notably the planning applications committee on 11 January. In advance of this meeting, officers have asked group leaders to provisionally nominate Councillors to seats based on the proposals in Appendix 1 to ensure Councillors are aware they are expected to attend meetings and give sufficient opportunity to prepare for the meeting.

Consultation

8. The proposals in this report have been subject to circulation amongst group leaders for comment.

Implications

Financial and resources

9. 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.

10. The proposals in this report identify a marginal reduction in ordinary committee places. Members receive an allowance for sitting on ordinary committees, this could result in a marginal decrease in the level of allowances payable.

Legal

11. Calculation of political balance must be in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Committee and Political Group Regulations (England) 1990

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	There are no equality implications from this report
Health, social and economic impact	There are no health, social or economic implications from this report
Crime and disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications from this report
Children and adults safeguarding	There are no safeguarding implications from this report
Environmental impact	There are no environmental implications from this report

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Failure to agree a political balance	Council committees cannot meet	Agreement of this report

Other options considered

12. Alternative options have been considered however do not deliver the same equitable balance as is included in appendix 1.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

13. It is a legal requirement that where there is the creation of a new political group, the Council re-considers its allocation of seats as soon as practicable.

14. Although this is often done at the next meeting of Council, a legitimate request has been made to convene an extraordinary meeting.

Background papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1: Revised allocation of seats, 2023/24

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Appendix 1: Revised Allocation of Seats on Committees

Proportion of members from each Political Group

	Total members	%
Labour	19	49%
Green	13	33%
Independent Norwich	4	10%
Liberal Democrat	3	8%
	39	100%

Committee	Total seats	Labour	Green	Ind. Norwich	Lib. Democrat
Ordinary					
Planning	12	6	4	1	1
Licensing and Regulation Committees	12	6	4	1	1
Scrutiny	12	6	4	1	1
Audit	10	5	3	1	1
Standards	6	3	2	1	0
Total that has been allocated	52	26	17	5	4
% that has been allocated		50%	33%	10%	8%
Advisory and Joint Committees					
Treasury Management	4	2	1	0	1
Constitution	6	3	2	1	0
Polling Districts	6	3	2	1	0
Joint museums	3	2	1	0	0
Joint records	3	1	1	0	1
Total that has been allocated	22	11	7	2	2

Overall:

Total number of seats on committees		74
Labour	37	50%
Green	24	32%
Independent Norwich	7	9%
Liberal Democrat	6	8%