



Committee	Full Council
Date	22/05/2024
Subject	Political Balance and allocation of seats on Committees 2024/25
Cabinet Member	Councillor Caroline Topping Leader of the Council
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Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
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Purpose/Summary

Membership of the Committees of East Suffolk Council is determined under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

Those provisions require the Authority to review the representation of political groups and individuals on the Committees, Sub-Committees, and other appropriate bodies to ensure that the seats on Committees are allocated by Group Leaders in proportion to the political groups' membership of the Council.

This report contains recommendations on the allocation of seats on the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees, reviewed to reflect the Council's political balance. The number of Green Members on the Council is 16, there are 15 Conservative Members, 12 Labour Members, 11 Liberal Democrat Members and 1 Independent Member.

The Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Members have formed a coalition, called the GLI.

There are currently no vacancies on the Council.

Recommendation(s)

That Full Council approves:

1. That, with effect from 22 May 2024, in order to meet statutory requirements, seats on Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council be allocated in accordance with the contents of this report and Appendix A.
2. That the Leader be granted Delegated Authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the Committees for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

Environmental Impact	Delivering positive climate, nature and environmental impacts through the decisions we make and actions we take.
Sustainable Housing	All homes in East Suffolk are safe, suitable and sustainable, in communities where residents are proud to live.
Tackling Inequalities	Improving quality of life across the district by tackling financial, social and health inequalities.
Thriving Economy	Enabling residents to benefit from, and contribute to, a thriving economy.

**Our Foundations /
governance of the
organisation**

Membership of Committees of East Suffolk Council is determined under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. The Regulations require that the total number of seats for each group equates to the number of places on each Committee to which political balance requirements apply.

Appointment to these bodies gives Members an opportunity to carry out their community leadership role and enables cross party views to be given on specific issues which is healthy for democracy and good decision-making.

Justification for recommendations

1. Background

- 1.1 Membership of Committees of East Suffolk Council is determined under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

Those provisions require the Council to review the representation of political groups and individuals on Committees, Sub-Committees, and other appropriate bodies in order to ensure that:

- (1) No single political group has all seats on a Committee.
- (2) The majority of seats on a Committee is allocated to the majority political group.
- (3) The total number of seats on a Council's Committee is allocated in proportion to political groups' membership of the Council.
- (4) The seats on Committees are allocated in proportion to the political groups' membership of the Council.

- 1.2 This report contains recommendations on the allocation of seats on the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees. There are 55 Council seats in total, on the Council.

- 1.3 The Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Councillors have formed a Group, which is known as the GLI.

2. Introduction

2.1 THE COUNCIL'S DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

Cabinet

The Full Council appoints the Leader of the Council for a four year term of office and it then rests for the newly appointed Leader to appoint his / her Cabinet, including the Deputy Leader.

The Cabinet (including the Deputy Leader) can be comprised of up to 10 Members and is exempt from the political proportionality rules under the Local Government Act 2000. It does not therefore form part of the Council's Committees. The Leader will determine the nature of the different portfolios that the Cabinet Members will be responsible for.

Audit and Governance Committee

The Audit and Governance Committee is comprised of 9 Members and the political proportionality rules apply.

Members of the Cabinet are not able to sit on the Audit and Governance Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is comprised of 13 Members and the political proportionality rules apply.

Scrutiny activity is undertaken by one Committee. The Committee will carry out detailed reviews, policy development and may call-in Cabinet decisions. It may appoint task and finish groups, which will be established for a specific purpose and be time bound. It may also undertake joint reviews or those involving the Council's partners.

Members of the Cabinet are not able to sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Planning Committee (North)

The Planning Committee has 9 seats, which are allocated on a politically proportionate basis. This Committee considers planning applications which relate to the North of the District.

All Members and Substitute Members are required to have undertaken recent and relevant training on planning matters before they are able to serve on this Committee or instigate the Call-in process for planning applications.

All Members of the Planning Committee (North) also sit on the Strategic Planning Committee, along with the Members of the Planning Committee (South) and they provide high level, strategic direction regarding planning matters.

Planning Committee (South)

The Planning Committee has 9 seats, which are allocated on a politically proportionate basis. This Committee considers planning applications which relate to the South of the District.

All Members and Substitute Members are required to have undertaken recent and relevant training on planning matters before they are able to serve on this Committee or instigate the Call-in process for planning applications.

All Members of the Planning Committee (South) also sit on the Strategic Planning Committee, along with the Members of the Planning Committee (North) and they provide high level, strategic direction regarding planning matters.

Strategic Planning Committee

As the Strategic Planning Committee is made up of the Members of the North and South Planning Committees and the Cabinet Member who is the Portfolio Holder for Planning, the seats on the Strategic Planning Committee have not been included in the total number of Committee seats, below.

Licensing

The Licensing Committee is comprised of 15 seats.

The size of the Committee reflects both the statutory licensing responsibilities and the need to appoint Members to Licensing Sub-Committees (3 Members plus one Substitute) and to hear licensing appeals. All Members serving on the Licensing Committee are required to have received appropriate training before they undertake their role on the main Committee or serve on a Licensing Sub-Committee given their quasi-judicial nature.

Appointments Committee

The Appointments Committee has three seats.

The Committee must comprise the Leader (or Deputy Leader in their absence).

The Appointments Committee is politically balanced.

The purpose of the Committee is to appoint the Heads of Service for the Council. The Committee can also consider the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

2.2 The Regulations require that the total number of seats for each group equates to the number of places on each Committee to which political balance requirements apply.

Under the Council's current structure, there are 58 seats available on Committees to which the Regulations will apply:

- Audit and Governance Committee: 9 seats
- Licensing Committee: 15 seats
- Planning Committee (North): 9 seats
- Planning Committee (South): 9 seats
- Scrutiny Committee: 13 seats
- Appointments Committee: 3 seats

3. Proposal

3.1

	Seats	GLI	Conservative	Labour
Current Seats as at May 2024 number of Councillors - 55	55	28	15	12
Distribution of the 58 Committee placings	58	32	14	12
	Number of places	GLI	Conservative	Labour
Audit & Governance Committee	9	5	2	2
Licensing Committee	15	8	4	3
Planning Committee North	9	5	2	2
Planning Committee South	9	5	2	2
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13	7	3	3
Appointments Committee	3	2	1	0

3.2 It is proposed that the allocation of Committee places to the different political groups be allocated, as above.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Councillors can claim expenses for attending Council meetings which will be met from within the Council's agreed Scheme of Members' Allowances. In addition, positions such as Chairmen of Committees are awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance recognising the additional responsibilities that these positions have.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 Membership of the Committees and Sub-Committees of East Suffolk Council is determined under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. Specific legislation applies to the regulatory committees that exercise quasi-judicial powers and separate legislation is in place for the Cabinet.

6. Risk Implications

6.1 Not appointing Councillors to the Committees. This is not an option, as the Council needs to appoint to its Committees and Sub-Committees in order to carry out its business effectively.

7. Options

7.1 None. The Council needs to appoint to its Committees and Sub-Committees to carry out its business effectively. Appointment to these bodies gives Members an opportunity to carry out their community leadership role and enables cross party views to be given on specific issues which is healthy for democracy and good decision-making.

8. Recommendations

- a) That, with effect from 22 May 2024, in order to meet statutory requirements, seats on Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council be allocated in accordance with the contents of this report and Appendix A.
- b) That the Leader be granted Delegated Authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the Committees for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1 To ensure that Members are appointed to Committees for the 2023/24 Municipal Year in accordance with the political proportionality rules and that decision-making is undertaken in a democratic way.

10. Conclusions/Next Steps

- 10.1 That the appointments to Committees be approved as per Appendix A to this report.

Areas of consideration comments

Section 151 Officer comments:

Councillors can claim expenses for attending Council meetings which will be met from within the Council’s agreed Scheme of Members’ Allowances. In addition, positions such as Chairmen of Committees are awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance recognising the additional responsibilities that these positions have.

Monitoring Officer comments:

Membership of the Committees and Sub-Committees of East Suffolk Council is determined under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. Specific legislation applies to the regulatory committees that exercise quasi-judicial powers and separate legislation is in place for the Cabinet.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:

Appointments to Committees enable Members to carry out their community leadership role and in considering the issues before them, help build a stronger, healthier, and just society.

The decision to constitute and appoint to Committees will not in itself lead to the tackling of inequality, disadvantage, and discrimination (particularly for the most vulnerable), but it will provide the framework for those issues to be addressed when making decisions or reviewing policies / services.

Safeguarding:

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder:

Not applicable

Corporate Services implications:

Not applicable

Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:

External consultation is not required. The Leaders of the Political Groups were asked to nominate the members of the Council whom they wish to see occupy certain seats.

Appendices:

Appendix A	The nominations from the Group Leaders for the allocation of Members to each Committee – appendix to follow
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Background reference papers:

None.