



Northumberland

County Council

COUNCIL

DATE: 6 SEPTEMBER 2023

Political Proportionality

Report of the Director of Law and Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer,
Stephen Gerrard

Link to the Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report links to all aims and priorities of the 2023-2026 Corporate Plan.

Purpose of report

To determine the political proportionality of the registered political groups on the council and to allocate seats on committees in accordance with that proportionality in accordance with the provisions of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- 1. Notes that following the notification by the Labour and Independent Group Leaders of changes to the number in the Labour and Independent groups, the total number of councillors in each political group on the County Council is now Conservative 33, Labour 19, Independent 8, Liberal Democrat 4, Green 2 and 1 un-grouped member.**
- 2. Confirms that the political proportionality of the Groups is as follows: Conservative 49.25%, Labour 28.36%, Independent 11.94%, Liberal Democrat 5.97%, Green 2.99% and un-grouped 1.49%.**
- 3. Agrees to continue to use the method for determining allocations to Committees as agreed by Full Council at its meeting of 30 March 2022.**
- 4. Approves the provisions of Appendix 1 which sets out the proportional allocation of places on committees in accordance with the proportionality approved above.**

5. **Agrees the allocation of seats to Northumberland County principal/decision making Committees set out in Appendix 2 to this report.**
6. **Agrees allocations to working groups set out in Appendix 3 to this report.**
7. **Authorises the Director of Law and Corporate Governance, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to give effect to the wishes of the Group Leaders to fill the committee places allocated to their respective Groups in accordance with the provisions of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.**

Link to Corporate Plan

This report links to all aims and priorities of the 2023-2026 Corporate Plan.

Key issues

Democratic Services has received notice that one councillor who was previously a Labour Group member is now a member of the Independent Group. In accordance with the provisions of Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, as amended, the County Council is under a legal obligation to review its proportionality and re-allocate seats on committees to reflect the new political balance of Council.

Background

1. Section 15 of the 1989 Act (Duty to Allocate Seats to Political Groups) sets out the requirements as to political proportionality on Council bodies and requires the Council, in allocating seats on committees and sub-committees of the Council to political groups, to give effect, so far as practicable, to the following four principles:
 - (a) that not all seats on the committee/sub-committee are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that a political group having a majority of seats on the Council should have a majority on each committee and sub-committee;
 - (c) that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on the Council's committees and sub-committees allocated to each political group, bears the same proportion to the total number of such committee/sub-committee seats as the number of members of that group bears to the membership of the full Council; and
 - (d) that, subject to (a) to (c) above, seats will be allocated on each committee and sub-committee in the same ratio as exists on the full Council.
2. Section 16 of the 1989 Act (Duty to Give Effect to Allocations) requires the Council to give effect to the allocations determined as set out above in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group.

3. The precise methodology for determining allocations to Committees is not prescribed in the legislation. In March 2022, Council resolved to continue with the convention in Northumberland on its method of allocating Committee seats. This convention is that having calculated the overall proportion of Council seats held by each party, places on individual Committees are allocated on the basis of whole numbers, and adopting this approach again has been endorsed by the Group Leaders. Using this method, remainders of over '0.5' are rounded up to whole numbers and any remainders below '0.5' allocated to a pool from which seats are allocated to minority groups to achieve the correct overall proportionality.
4. This results in over or under representation at the level of individual committees. However, given the duty to look at proportionality overall, when all the seats on committees are aggregated, the Council can agree adjustments to correct, so far as reasonably practicable, any imbalance and ensure that any ungrouped members are allocated seats on committees and indeed this is normal practice. It is also open to the Council to change the number of seats on individual Committees should members wish. This often assists in adjusting imbalances or lack of representation of particular groups on some committees.
5. Appendix 1 to this report sets out a table showing the proportional allocations to committees based on the overall number of Committee seats, worked out to two decimal places.
6. Appendix 2 shows group allocations to principal/decision making Committees. Appendix 3 shows group allocations to working groups. In each case the over or under allocation of seats to each group relative to overall proportionality is shown.
7. If Recommendation 7 above is approved, the Director of Law and Governance will write to all Group Leaders asking them, within 5 working days, to specify names of councillors to be appointed for each committee (including working groups). The Director of Law and Governance will ensure that Members fill the seats on each committee (including working groups), as per the seats allocated to the political groups in accordance with the nominations of the Group Leaders.

Decision Options

The following decision options are available for consideration by Council:

Option 1 - Accept all of the recommendations and proposals

Option 2 - Make amendments to the recommendations; or

Option 3 - Reject some or all of the recommendations

Option 1 is the recommended option.

Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

It will ensure that the Council acts in accordance with the provisions of Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, as amended.

Implications

| | |
|---|---|
| Policy | This report links to all aims and priorities of the 2023-26 Corporate Plan. |
| Finance and value for money | No direct costs will be incurred |
| Legal | The rules on political balance are contained in Sections 15 to 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, as amended. This report is consistent with these. |
| Procurement | N/A |
| Human Resources | N/A |
| Property | N/A |
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A |
| Risk Assessment | N/A |
| Crime & Disorder | N/A |
| Customer Consideration | N/A |
| Carbon reduction | N/A |

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Health and Wellbeing | N/A |
| Wards | All Wards |

Background papers:

N/A

Linked Reports

- Full Council report and Mins of the 30th March 2022.
[01.1 Proportionality.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
[02.01 Council 200220 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Full Name of Officer |
| Director of Law and Governance/Legal | Stephen Gerrard |
| Executive Director | N/A |
| Chief Executive | Dr Helen Paterson |
| Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) | N/A |

Report Author:

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Appendix 1 Proportionality Table

| Number of seats on committees | Cons 33 49.25% | Lab 19 28.36% | Ind 8 11.94% | Lib Dem 4 5.97% | Green 2 2.99% | UG 1 1.49% |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 3 | 1.48 | 0.85 | 0.36 | 0.18 | 0.09 | 0.04 |
| 4 | 1.97 | 1.13 | 0.48 | 0.24 | 0.12 | 0.06 |
| 5 | 2.46 | 1.42 | 0.60 | 0.30 | 0.15 | 0.07 |
| 6 | 2.96 | 1.70 | 0.72 | 0.36 | 0.18 | 0.09 |
| 7 | 3.45 | 1.99 | 0.84 | 0.42 | 0.21 | 0.10 |
| 8 | 3.94 | 2.27 | 0.95 | 0.48 | 0.24 | 0.12 |
| 9 | 4.43 | 2.55 | 1.07 | 0.54 | 0.27 | 0.13 |
| 10 | 4.93 | 2.84 | 1.19 | 0.60 | 0.30 | 0.15 |
| 11 | 5.42 | 3.12 | 1.31 | 0.66 | 0.33 | 0.16 |
| 12 | 5.91 | 3.40 | 1.43 | 0.72 | 0.36 | 0.18 |
| 13 | 6.40 | 3.69 | 1.55 | 0.78 | 0.39 | 0.19 |
| 14 | 6.90 | 3.97 | 1.67 | 0.84 | 0.42 | 0.21 |
| 15 | 7.39 | 4.25 | 1.79 | 0.90 | 0.45 | 0.22 |
| 16 | 7.88 | 4.54 | 1.91 | 0.96 | 0.48 | 0.24 |

67 Members

Total Committee Places
Decision Making 168

Total Committee Places
Working Groupsg67

Cons 33 (49.25%)
Lab 19 (28.36%)
Ind 8 (11.94%)
LD 4 (5.97%)
Green 2 (2.99%)
UG 1 (1.49%)

83
48
20
10
5
2

33
19
8
4
2
1

Principal Decision-Making Committees (168 total committee places)

Committees of 4 (1)

Appointments Committee – School Governors and Academies

Committees of 5 (2)

Employment Appeals Committee (from a pool of 20)

Grievance Committee

Committees of 8 (4)

Audit Committee

County Emergency Committee

Dismissal Advisory Committee

Disputes Panel (FRS)

Committees of 9 (4)

Petitions Committee

Rights of Way Committee

Staff and Appointments Committee

Standards Committee

Committees of 10 (4)

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committees of 15 (2)

Licensing Committee

Licensing and Regulatory Committee

Committees of 16 (1)

Strategic Planning Committee

Appendix 2 – Group Allocations (Decision Making Committees)

| Number Seats (on Ctees) | Cons 33 49.25% | Lab 19 28.36% | Ind 8 11.94% | Lib Dem 4 5.97% | Green 2 2.99% | UG 1 1.49% | Pool |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|------|
| 3 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 (1) | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 (2) | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 6 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 (4) | 16 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 9 (4) | 16 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 (4) | 20 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 (2) | 14 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 16 (1) | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 80 | 48 | 20 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| =/- | -2 | 0 | 0 | +1 | -5 | -2 | +9 |

Appendix 3 Group Allocations (Working Groups)

Committees of 4 (2)

Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education
Town and Parish Liaison Working Group

Committees of 6 (1)

Local Plan Working Group

Committees of 8 (1)

Inequalities Working Group

Committees of 9 (5)

Climate Change Working Group
Constitution Working Group
Member Services Working Group
Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Working Group
VCS Liaison Group

| Number Seats (Ctees) | Cons 33 49.25% | Lab 19 23.36% | Ind 8 11.94% | Lib Dem 4 5.97% | Green 2 2.99% | UG 1 1.49% | Pool |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|------|
| 4 (2) | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 6 (1) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8(1) | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 9 (5) | 20 | 15 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 31 | 21 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| +/- | -2 | +2 | -1 | +1 | -2 | -1 | +3 |