



# Northumberland

## County Council

COMMITTEE: COUNCIL

DATE: 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

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Political Proportionality

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader

Report Authors: Monitoring Officer and Interim Senior Service Director

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### **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 immediately following the Hexham East By-election and notified changes to the Independent Group, the total number of councillors in each political group on the County Council was Conservative 33, Labour 21, Independent 6, Liberal Democrat 4, Green 2 and 1 un-grouped independent member.**
- 2. Confirms that the political proportionality of the Groups is as follows: Conservative 49.25%, Labour 31.34%, Independent 8.96%, Liberal Democrat 5.97%, Green 2.99% and un-grouped 1.49%.**
- 3. Approves the provisions of Appendix 1 which sets out the proportional allocation of places on committees in accordance with the proportionality approved above.**
- 4. Consider the two suggested methods for allocation of seats to Northumberland County principal/decision making Committees and accordingly agree which method will be applied. To agree one of the following methods:**
  - 4i) Method 1 which is attached at Appendix 2 to this report or;**
  - 4ii) Method 2 which is attached at Appendix 3 to this report.**

5. **To consider Appendix 4 as attached to this report which shows group allocations to advisory/non-decision-making committees (based on both methods) and, agree one of the two methods outlined above in Recommendation 4.**
6. **Agree Group Leaders will appoint members to fill the committee places allocated to their respective Groups and agree that Group Leaders will provide a finalised list of members for each committee (in line with their respective allocations) to the Head of Democratic Services to fill the allocated positions.**

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

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

### **Key issues**

Following a local by-election conducted on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the Hexham East electoral division is now held by a member of the Liberal Democrat Group. Democratic Services has also received notice that two councillors who were previously un-grouped independents have joined 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. The convention in Northumberland 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. 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. In this report, and appendices, we refer to this as 'Method 1'. There does not appear to be any evidence that the statutory duties or this methodology has previously been provided to members for approval, it is nevertheless the custom and practice.
4. The report presented to County Council on 5th January 2022 set out the statutory duties and proposed a methodology, which allocates the first place to the Group with the largest percentage, the second to the Group with the second largest percentage, and so forth. When the percentages with whole numbers have been allocated, the largest remainder (i.e. percentage below 1) takes the next seat, and so forth, until all of the seats are filled. In this report, and appendices, we refer to this as 'Method 2'.
5. Both methodologies result 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 particular size of committees.
6. Appendix 1 to this report sets a table showing the proportional allocations to committees based on the overall number of Committee seats, worked out to two decimal places.
7. Appendices 2 and 3 show group allocations to principal/decision making Committees applying both Methods 1 and 2.
8. Appendix 4 shows group allocations to advisory/non-decision-making committees, again using each of the two methods outlined above. In each case the over or under allocation of seats to each group relative to overall proportionality is shown.
9. All the numbers in this report (including in methods 1 and 2) have been checked and validated by the S151 officer and the Interim Senior Service Director.

10. If Recommendation 6 above is approved, the Head of Democratic Services will write to all Group Leaders asking them to specify names of councillors to be appointed, including chairs and vice chairs for each committee (including non-decision-making committees). The Head of Democratic Services will appoint members to fill the seats allocated to political groups in accordance with the nominations of the Group Leaders.

**Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	This report links to all aims and priorities of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	No direct costs will be incurred
<b>Legal</b>	As set out in the report to make appointments in line with the requirements of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	N/A
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	N/A
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	N/A

<b>Wards</b>	All Wards
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**Background papers:**

Sections 15 to 17 Local Government and Housing Act 1989

The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, as amended

**Report sign off.**

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

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	-
Deputy Chief Executive	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth

## Appendix 1 Proportionality Table

Number of seats on committees	Cons 33 49.25%	Lab 21 31.34%	Ind 6 8.96%	Lib Dem 4 5.97%	Green 2 2.99%	UG 1 1.49%
3	1.48	0.94	0.27	0.18	0.09	0.04
4	1.97	1.25	0.36	0.24	0.12	0.06
5	2.46	1.57	0.45	0.30	0.15	0.07
6	2.96	1.88	0.54	0.36	0.18	0.09
7	3.45	2.19	0.63	0.42	0.21	0.10
8	3.94	2.51	0.72	0.48	0.24	0.12
9	4.43	2.82	0.81	0.54	0.27	0.13
10	4.93	3.13	0.90	0.60	0.30	0.15
11	5.42	3.45	0.99	0.66	0.33	0.16
12	5.91	3.76	1.08	0.72	0.36	0.18
13	6.40	4.07	1.16	0.78	0.39	0.19
14	6.90	4.39	1.25	0.84	0.42	0.21
15	7.39	4.70	1.34	0.90	0.45	0.22
16	7.88	5.01	1.43	0.96	0.48	0.24

67 Members

Total Committee Places  
Decision Making 154

Total Committee Places  
Non-Decision Making 68

Cons	33 (49.25%)
Lab	21 (31.34%)
Ind	6 (8.96%)
LD	4 (5.97%)
Green	2 (2.99%)
UG	1 (1.49%)

76
48
14
9
5
2

34
21
6
4
2
1

## **Principal Decision-Making Committees (154 total committee places)**

### Committees of 4 (1)

Appointments Committee – School Governors and Academies

### Committees of 5 (1)

Employment Appeals Committee (from a pool of 20)

### Committees of 8 (4)

Audit Committee

County Emergency Committee

Dismissal Advisory Committee

Disputes Panel (FRS)

### Committees of 9 (3)

Petitions Committee

Staffing 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) Method 1**

Number Seats (on Ctees)	Cons 33 49.25%	Lab 21 31.34%	Ind 6 8.96%	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 (1)	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
6 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8 (4)	16	12	4	0	0	0	0
9 (3)	12	9	3	3	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	10	2	2	0	0	2
16 (1)	8	5	1	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>=/-</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>+5</b>



**Appendix 3 – Group Allocations (Decision Making Committees) Method 2**

Number	Cons 33 49.25%	Lab 21 31.34%	Ind 6 8.96%	Lib Dem 4 5.97%	Green 2 2.99%	UG 1 1.49%
3 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 (1)	2	1	1	0	0	0
5 (1)	3	2	0	0	0	0
6 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
7 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
8 (4)	16	12	4	0	0	0
9 (3)	12	9	3	3	0	0
10 (4)	20	12	4	4	0	0
11 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
13 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
14 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
15 (2)	14	10	2	2	2	0
16 (1)	8	5	1	1	1	0
Total	75	51	15	10	3	0
+/-	-1	+3	+1	+1	-2	-2

**Appendix 4 Group Allocations (Advisory/Non-Decision Making Committees)**

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 9 (6)

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

**Method 1**

Number Seats (Ctees)	Cons 33 49.25%	Lab 21 31.34%	Ind 6 8.96%	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
9 (6)	24	18	6	6	0	0	0
Total	31	22	7	6	0	0	2
+/-	-3	+1	+1	+2	-2	-1	+2

**Method 2**

Number	Cons 33 49.25%	Lab 21 31.34%	Ind 6 8.96%	Lib Dem 4 5.97%	Green 2 2.99%	UG 1 1.49%
4 (2)	4	2	2	0	0	0
6 (1)	3	2	1	0	0	0
9 (6)	24	18	6	6	0	0
Total	31	22	9	6	0	0
+/-	-3	+1	+3	+2	-2	-1