

To: Annual Council
Date: 16 May 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Appointment of Committees for the Council Year 2024/25

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	For Council to appoint committees and the members serving on those committees for the Council year 2024-25
Legislation:	Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Section 15)
Recommendation(s): Council is recommended to:	
1.	Approve the structure of the Council committees, as defined within the Council's Constitution and set out in <i>Appendix 1: Committee structure 2024/25</i> ;
2.	Approve the methods, calculations and conventions used in determining political representation on committees as outlined in the report and shown in <i>Appendix 2: Political proportionalities on Council committees 2024-25</i> ;
3.	Appoint to committee seats in accordance with the requirements of political proportionality and the nominations made by political groups, as shown in <i>Appendix 3: Committee nominations 2024-25</i> ;
4.	Agree that all members of Council will form the pool of members able to observe on appeals and some grievances panels in accordance with the Council's policies;
5.	Appoint three non-executive members to the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel (see <i>Appendix 3: Committee nominations 2024-25</i>);
6.	Appoint one non-executive member to the Joint Oxfordshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see <i>Appendix 3: Committee nominations 2024-25</i>).

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Committee structure 2024/25
Appendix 2	Political proportionalities on committees 2024/25
Appendix 3	Committee nominations 2024/25 (to be circulated separately in the Briefing Note)

Introduction and background

1. This report invites Annual Council to appoint non-executive committees for the 2024/25 Council year in accordance with the Council procedures set out in the Constitution (Section 11.1 (i) and (j)).
2. The committee structure that Council is asked to approve is attached as Appendix 1. There are no changes to the committee structure from last year. The programme of committee meeting dates was agreed by Council on 27 November 2023.
3. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Section 15) (“The Act”) provides a statutory basis for the allocation of committee seats to political groups based on principles of political proportionality. To enable this the Council has to provide for:
 - a. Political Groups to be formed and Group Leaders elected.
 - b. Seats on committees to be allocated to political groups in accordance with the requirements of the Act.
4. The political balance of the Council and its committees has been reviewed in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Appendix 2 shows the political proportionalities on the committees the Council is asked to appoint to.
5. Appendix 3 (to be circulated in the Briefing Note) shows the nominations to the seats on committees.

Political Groups

6. Individual members are required to indicate a wish to be a member of a particular political group (or cease to be a member of a political group). Political groups comprise two or more members who have indicated that they wish to be a member of that group by signing a notice to the proper officer, the Head of Law and Governance. The Group Secretaries of established groups will normally hold and co-ordinate these notices (commonly known as political group forms). The notice must include the name of the Group Leader and may include the name of the Deputy Group Leader.
7. Once political groups have been formed, changes to the membership and leadership of groups can be made by notice to the Head of Law and Governance. A change of group leader must be notified by a majority of group members.

Political balance calculations

8. Council has a duty to appoint to most committees using the principles of political proportionality set out in the Act. These principles should be read hierarchically:
 - Where there is more than one political group, all seats must not be allocated to the same group.
 - The majority of seats must be allocated to the group with the majority on the Council.
 - When considering all seats available for allocation the total of those given to each group should match their representation on the Council overall.
 - The number of seats on each individual committee allocated to groups should match their representation on the Council overall.

9. Applying these principles may not result in a precise mathematical allocation of seats. In these cases the allocations will rounded up at 0.5 and above.
10. In the event that achieving political proportionality on all committees results in an overall over-allocation of seats to a particular group, the group with the over-allocation will be asked which seat(s) they wish to relinquish. Any such seats will then be reallocated to group(s) with an overall under-allocation of seats. This process may involve some discussion between political groups.
11. Non-grouped independent members are not treated as political groups but do affect overall proportionality. As such they should be offered any seats that remain unallocated once all groups have received their full proportional allocation of seats.
12. Appendix 2 shows the numbers of committee seats allocated to political groups for the 2024/25 council year on the basis of the methods, calculations and conventions described in paragraphs 8-11. A total of 85 committee seats are included in political balance calculations.
13. The requirements of political proportionality do not apply to the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee but the convention is that Council will apply the same principles when appointing to this committee. For simplicity Council has agreed that political groups will be encouraged to nominate the same members to both licensing committees.

Appointments to Council Committees

14. Appendix 3 shows the nominations to committee seats made by political groups, in accordance with the seat allocations shown in Appendix 2. Council is recommended to appoint the nominated members to committees as set out in Appendix 3.
15. There will be a standing item on Council agendas to enable political groups to propose any changes to their committee appointments, should they wish to do so.

Appeals and grievances

16. The Council's HR policies require that should an appeal be received against a decision to dismiss an employee, then a hearing should be observed by an elected member. The same applies to certain appeals within the Council's grievance procedure. A pool of members is required and Council is recommended to agree, as in previous years, that this pool consists of all members of Council.

Future Oxfordshire Partnership appointments

17. Appointments to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (previously Oxfordshire Growth Board) and its four advisory sub-groups are matters for the executive and will be announced separately by the Leader.
18. Council is invited and recommended to appoint three non-executive members to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel, having regard to the political balance of Council. This is a non-statutory body that exists to scrutinise the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. It comprises three members from each of the six constituent councils and the quorum is one member from each council. Meetings of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel have been scheduled on the following dates (all 6.30pm):

18 June 2024
23 July 2024

25 August 2024
19 November 2024
20 January 2025
12 March 2025

19. The convention established when the Panel was formed in 2018 is to appoint one member from each of the three political groups.

Appointment to the Joint Oxfordshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20. Oxfordshire County Council invites the Council to appoint one non-executive member to sit on the Joint Oxfordshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which delivers the health scrutiny function for Oxfordshire. The member nominated by the controlling political group will be named in Appendix 3. Meetings have been scheduled on the following dates (all 10.00am):

6 June 2024
12 September 2024
21 November 2024
30 January 2025
3 April 2025

Appointments to Scrutiny Panels and Review Groups

21. The Scrutiny Committee may establish informal standing panels or review groups (otherwise known as ‘task and finish’ groups) and appoint members to them in accordance with ‘operating principals’ agreed by the Committee. Membership of these bodies will be cross-party and can be drawn from all non-executive members but the principles of political proportionality do not strictly apply. Nominations to these bodies will be handled separately, once those bodies have been established by the Scrutiny Committee.

Financial issues

22. There are no financial issues to consider. The recommendations in this report do not have any financial impacts.

Legal issues

23. The legal issues including the Council’s duty to appoint to committees in accordance with the provisions of S15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are contained within the report.

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Background Papers: None