



Report to: Meeting of the Full Council – 11 February 2025
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance
 Director Lead: John Robinson, Chief Executive
 Lead Officer: Nigel Hill, Business Manager Elections & Democratic Services, Ext. 5243

Report Summary	
Report Title	Political Composition of the Council and allocation of seats on Committees
Purpose of Report	To inform the Council of the political composition of the Council following a further change, and to consider allocation of seats on Committees and changes to the Audit & Governance Committee.
Recommendations	<p>That the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) approve the changes in the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with the matrix at Appendix A to the report; (b) approve the changes to the appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee and other Members to Committees as per the schedule to be circulated once changes are confirmed by political groups; (c) endorses the Constitution review work outlined in paragraph 2.7 of the report.
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure the Council complies with Section 15 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees & Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

1.0 Background Information

Political Composition

1.1 Section 15 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to consider the political composition of the Council. The Act, together with Local Government (Committees & Political Groups) Regulations 1990, require local authorities to allocate seats on Committees of a local authority on a proportional basis, in accordance with the number of seats on the Council held by each political group.

- 1.2 Councillor J Lee gave notice on 16 January 2025 that he had left the Conservative Group on the Council and advised that he would sit as an Independent non-aligned Member.
- 1.3 This has resulted in a change in the political composition of the Council which now is as follows:

Political Group	Membership	Percentage of Council (rounded)
Conservative	11	28.21
Labour	10	25.64
Independents for Newark & District	6	15.38
Liberal Democrats	3	7.69
Green	2	5.14
Newark & Sherwood Independents	2	5.14
Cllr Amer	1	2.56
Cllr Brown	1	2.56
Cllr Dales	1	2.56
Cllr Holloway	1	2.56
Cllr Lee	1	2.56

Audit & Governance Committee

- 1.4 In October 2024, the Council hosted a team of senior councillor and officer peers as part of the national Corporate Peer Challenge programme. The peer challenge focused on 5 core elements: local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership, governance and culture, financial planning and management, and capacity for improvement. The final report of the Corporate Peer Challenge team has been received and shared with all Members, and an action plan is intended to be developed and progressed with input from Cabinet, Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and the Audit & Governance Committee.
- 1.5 One of the areas for improvement identified by the Peers was the effectiveness of the Audit & Governance Committee. The Peers suggested a number of improvements including role, remit and elected member understanding and involvement.

2.0 Proposals

- 2.1 As with all the recommendations from the Peer Challenge, it is important that they are given thoughtful consideration and not simply accepted at face value. In due course, it is proposed to review the wider role and responsibilities of the Audit & Governance Committee. This would include reviewing the size of the Committee and whether the functions should be divided between two separate audit and governance/standards committees in future.
- 2.2 Given the change in composition set out in paragraph 1.2, a recalculation of seats to political groups is required. The current number of seats is set out in the table below:

Committee	No. of Members
Policy & Performance Improvement Committee	15
Planning Committee	15
Licensing Committee	15
General Purposes Committee	15
Audit & Governance Committee	12
Board of Gilstrap Trustees	5
Total	77 seats

2.3 Based on the new political composition the following calculations can be made in terms of allocation of seats on Committees:

			<u>Rounded</u>
Conservative	77 x 28.21%	21.72	22* 23
Labour	77 x 25.64%	19.74	20
Independents for Newark & District	77 x 15.38%	11.84	12
Liberal Democrats	77 x 7.69%	5.92	6
N&S District Independents	77 x 5.14%	3.95	4
Green	77 x 5.14%	3.95	4
Ind N/A (Amer)	77 x 2.56%	1.97	2
Ind N/A (Brown)	77 x 2.56%	1.97	2* 1
Ind N/A (Dales)	77 x 2.56%	1.97	2* 1
Ind N/A (Holloway)	77 x 2.56%	1.97	2
Ind N/A (Lee)	77 x 2.56%	1.97	2
			77

*Following discussions with groups and the Independent Non-aligned Members.

2.4 As a result of Councillor J Lee becoming an Independent Non-aligned Member, the Conservative Group loses three seats overall. If the Council were minded to allocate two seats to Councillor J Lee as an Independent Member, it is proposed that he is given seats on the Licensing and General Purposes Committees. It is proposed for the third seat to be re-allocated on the Audit & Governance Committee.

2.5 In order to enable the Audit & Governance Committee to be representative of the wide political representation at Newark & Sherwood, it is proposed to allocate the seat to Councillor R Holloway as an Independent Non-aligned Member. The matrix at **Appendix A** to the report reflects this change.

2.6 It is further proposed to appoint Councillor R Holloway as Chair of Audit & Governance Committee and to consider appointment of a new Vice Chair following Councillor S Forde's recent appointment as Portfolio Holder for Climate & the Environment. A revised schedule of Member Appointments will be circulated once political groups have advised of their changes in committee memberships.

2.7 In terms of a wider review of the Council's governance arrangements, an informal working party of Audit & Governance Committee has been established to review the Council's Constitution. The working party has asked Officers to consider whether two

separate committees are needed going forward for Licensing and General Purposes functions. The Leader has also requested a review of the membership of the Planning Policy Board, to reflect the wide diversity of representation at Newark & Sherwood and ensure geographical representation is balanced too. It is proposed therefore to consider the Planning Policy Board membership at this informal working party. This workstream will progress in parallel with the Peer Challenge Action Plan.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

3.1 Legal Implications (LEG2425/270)

Full Council is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. There is no legal requirement for Non-aligned Independent Members to be allocated Committee seats.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Corporate Peer Challenge Report <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/councilpriorities/>

24 April 2024 Audit & Governance Committee <https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/documents/s19652/Item%2012%2024.04.24%20-%20Annual%20Review%20of%20the%20Constitution.pdf>