

Council – 9th September 2026

Report by: Elections and Democratic Services
Manager



Wards
All

Open / Exempt
Open

Key Decision?
No

Representation of Political Groups on District Council Committees and Panels

Executive Summary: The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated Regulations describe arrangements for achieving a balance on Committees etc, to reflect the representation of political groups and independent Members on the District Council. The Act requires the District Council to review the representation of different political groups at the time when the Authority holds its Annual Meeting and as soon as practicable and over one month after the last review if the Proper Officer receives a request to undertake a further review of the allocation of seats given a change to membership of a political group.

The requirement to review the representation since the last meeting of Council is necessary as a direct result a by-election held on 20th August 2026 in the St Neots Eynesbury ward.

The proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet and its membership will be determined by the Executive Leader.

Recommendations

1. to determine the allocation of seats on District Council Committees/ Panels to political groups and to the non-aligned Member in accordance with the distribution illustrated in the attached Appendix A.

Report Author(s)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated Regulations describe arrangements for achieving a balance on Committees etc, to reflect the representation of political groups and independent Members on the District Council.
- 1.2** A by-election was held on 20th August 2026 in the St Neots Eynesbury ward that resulted in a change to the constitution of the political groups.

2. PRINCIPLES OF PROPORTIONALITY

- 2.1** Members are reminded that in performing the duty to review representation, the Council must, so far as reasonably practicable, only determine the allocation of seats having regard to the following principles –
- a) that not all the seats are allocated to the same political group;
 - b) that the majority of seats are allocated to the political group which forms a majority of the Council's membership;
 - c) that subject to a) and b) above, the number of seats allocated on ordinary committees allocated to each political group is the same proportion to the total of all seats on committees as is borne by the number of Members of a political group to the membership of the Council; and
 - d) that subject to a) to c) above, the number of seats allocated to each political group is the same proportion to the number of seats as is borne by the number of Members of that group to the membership of the Council.
- 2.2** It is open to the Council to approve alternative arrangements otherwise than in accordance with the principles of proportionality providing that the alternative arrangements are approved without any Member voting against them. The apportionments set out in this report are in accordance with the principles of proportionality and so can be determined by simple majority.

3. CONSTITUTION OF POLITICAL GROUPS

- 3.1** Following the by-election, the constitution of political groups on the Council is currently as follows:-

Name of Group	No. of Members
Liberal Democrat	21
Conservative	15
Reform	9
HDC Independent Group	4
Green	2

- 3.2** One Labour and Co-operative Member is not aligned to a political group. Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the rule states that only political groups of two or more Members can be formally recognised and therefore included in the calculations under the political balance rules.

3.3 The membership of groups in proportion to the total membership of the Council is therefore as follows:-

	%
Liberal Democrat	40.38
Conservative	28.85
Reform	17.31
HDC Independent Group	7.69
Green	3.85

3.4 The total proportion of all of the groups as compared to the total membership of the Council is 98.08%. The remaining 1.92% relates to the non-grouped Member.

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

4.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000, the proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet or to any Sub-Groups or Sub-Committees, which the Cabinet may appoint. Appointment of the Cabinet also lies with the Executive Leader of the Council. The number of seats to which the Council can appoint to is 64.

4.2 The following requirements of the Act also need to be adhered to by the Council in determining the membership of Panels, etc. –

- the Cabinet may not include either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Council;
- Overview and Scrutiny Panels may not comprise any Member of the Cabinet;
- the Executive Leader, Deputy Executive Leader and any Member of the Cabinet shall not be elected as Chair of any Committee or Panel other than any that may be appointed by the Cabinet.

4.3 The Constitution also provides for the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing and Protection Committee and the Employment Committee to include the relevant Executive Councillor within their respective membership.

4.4 The Constitution provides that every Member of the Council shall be appointed to serve on a minimum of one Overview and Scrutiny Panel, or Committee of the Council or the Cabinet.

5. PROPORTIONALITY

5.1 Excluding the Cabinet, the aggregate number of seats on Committees is 64. Using the proportionality percentage referred to in paragraph 3.3 and rounding up or down as appropriate, produces the following entitlement –

	Seats
Liberal Democrat Group	26
Conservative Group	19
Reform Group	11
HDC Independent Group	5
Green Group	2

5.2 As the Labour and Co-operative Member cannot form a political group this member is treated as non-aligned and after the proportionality calculation on

number of seats for the political groups (63), there is one seat remaining. This remaining seat remains allocated to the non-aligned Member as designated at the discretion of Council. Having regard to paragraph 4.4 this fulfils this requirement of the Constitution.

- 5.3** Applying the principles of the Act and, similarly, rounding the figures as necessary, gives the distribution as set out in Appendix A. Officers have shared the indicative proportionality with Group Leaders in considering the impact of the reduction of seats in the calculations and agreement has been reached on the allocation set out.

6. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 6.1** The Council is invited to determine the allocation of seats on District Council Committees to political groups and to the non-aligned Member in accordance with the distribution illustrated in Appendix A. The proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet, and its membership is determined by the Executive Leader.
- 6.2** The opportunity otherwise is available currently to allocate seats in accordance with an alternative arrangement, with the exception of the Cabinet, provided this arrangement is approved by the Council with no Member voting against.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

- 7.1** Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Local Government Act 2000
Localism Act 2011
District Council Constitution
- 7.2** Appendix A – Schedule of Allocations