

**Committee:** Annual Council

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 12 May 2009

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**Title:** Political Balance on the Council

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## Summary

- 1 This report considers the political composition of the Council and recommends that seats on the main committees be allocated to the three political groups as detailed in the report.

## Recommendations

That the Council reviews its political composition and achieves political balance by allocating seats on its ordinary and other committees as detailed in the report.

## Background Papers

None

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	Political parties to consult within their groups to determine their views on the recommendation
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Finance	N/A
Human Rights	N/A
Legal Implications	To comply with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

- 2 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to review the representation on them of different political groups at the Annual Meeting or as soon as practicable thereafter. It further requires them to allocate the seats on their committees to political groups represented in

accordance, so far as reasonably practicable, with the following four principles of proportionality:-

- (a) that not all seats on the body concerned are allocated to the same political group;
- (b) that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership;
- (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of an authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority;
- (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

### Current Situation

- 3 The Council currently has 78 seats on ordinary committees made up as follows:-

Committee	Members
Operations	14
Community	15
Environment	15
Development Control	15
Performance Select	8
Scrutiny	<u>11</u>
	<b>78</b>

- 4 The current political composition of the council is as follows

Group	Members	Percentage	Total Seats
Conservative	27	61.36%	47
Liberal Democrat	14	31.82%	25
Independent	3	6.82%	6

- 5 Had the 78 seats been divided on the basis of political balance the total number of seats would have been Conservatives 48, Liberal Democrats 25 and Independents 5. However Members wished to give the Independent Group an additional seat on the Development Control Committee. The fact that this allocation infringed the rules on political balance was permissible as no Member present at the meeting voted against the proposal.

### Allocation of Seats – Committees

6 The current seats available on the Council's main committees are as follows:

Committee	Members
Finance and Administration	14
Community	15
Environment	15
Development Control	15
Performance Select	8
Scrutiny	<u>11</u>
	<b>78</b>

7 Accordingly the Conservative Group is entitled to 48 of the 78 main committee seats available, the Liberal Democrats to 25, and the Independents to 5. The Licensing Committee cannot be taken into account for the purposes of this calculation because it was not established under the Local Government Act 1972. However, the eleven places on offer can be allocated on the same basis of proportionality, that is, 7/3/1, or can be allocated on any other basis that the Council determines. The Standards Committee is also not taken into account as the rules of political balance do not apply to Standards Committees.

8 The Independent group has requested to swap one of its allocated seats from the Scrutiny Committee to the Performance Select Committee. This would have the effect of reducing the number of seats on Scrutiny Committee to 10 and increasing the numbers on Performance Select to 9. This change to the size of the committees requires the agreement of the Council.

9 If approved, the allocation of the 78 seats could be as follows:

<b>Policy Committees</b>		<b>Con</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Finance & Administration	[14]	9	4	1
Environment	[15]	9	5	1
Community	[15]	9	5	1
<b>Regulatory/Scrutiny and Overview</b>				
Development Control	[15]	9	5	1
Scrutiny	<b>[10]</b>	7	3	
Performance Select	<b>[9]</b>	5	2	1

10 However if it is the wish of Members that the Independent Group have an additional Member of Development Control that committee would be as at present namely 8 Conservatives, 5 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independents. As this infringes the rules on political balance such a result could only be achieved if none of the Members attending the meeting vote against the proposal.

## Risk Analysis

There are no risks associated with this report.