

Committee: Annual Council

Agenda Item

Date: 24 May 2011

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Title: Political Balance on the Council

Author: Maggie Cox – Democratic Services officer Item for decision

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 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. In the event that members decide an allocation of seats which does not accord with the principles of political balance set out above this can only be achieved if no members attending the meeting dissent.
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 53 seats on ordinary committees made up as follows:-

Committee	Members
Development Control	14
Licensing and Environmental	
Health	11
Scrutiny	10
Performance and Audit	10
Staff Appeals	8

	53

NOTE:

The council's constitution states that the Scrutiny Committee and the Performance and Audit Committee should have 'at least' 10 members. The calculations in this report have been based on that number of seats. If the Council wishes to increase the number of the seats on either of these committees the calculations will need to be amended accordingly.

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

Group	Members	Percentage
Conservative	34	77.27%
Liberal Democrat	8	18.18%
Independent	2	4.55%

Based on the 53 seats, the number of seats available to each group is as follows

Group	Percentage	Total Seats
Conservative	77.27%	(40.95) 41
Liberal Democrat	18.18%	(9.64) 10
Independent	4.55%	(2.41) 2

Allocation of Seats – Committees

- 5 The Conservative Group is entitled to 33 of the main committee seats available, the Liberal Democrats to 8, and the Independents to 1. 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, and the Licensing Committee has been included in the calculation of the number of seats. The Standards Committee is not taken into account as the rules of political balance do not apply to Standards Committees.
- 6 If approved, the allocation of the 53 seats (including Licensing Committee) could be as follows:

Policy Committees		Con	LD	Ind
Development Control	[14]	11	2	1
Licensing & EH	[11]	8	2	1
Scrutiny	[10]	8 (7)	2	0 (1)
Performance & Audit	[10]	8	2	0
Staff Appeals	[8]	6	2	0

Total	53	41 (40)	10	2 (3)

* The Conservative group has agreed to allocate one of its seats to the Independent Group. The effect of this is shown in bold above. The fact that this allocation infringes the rules on political balance is permissible as long no Member present at the meeting votes against the proposal.

Risk Analysis

There are no risks associated with this report.