

Review of Political Balance

Full Council, item 10

Committee: Full Council

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Title: Review of Political Balance

Author: Peter Snow, Committee and Electoral Services Manager, 01799 510430

Agenda Item

10

Item for decision

Summary

A review of the Council's political balance arrangements has been requested by the Leader of the Conservative group following the recent by-election in Great Dunmow North Ward. Councillor Davey has formally requested to join the Conservative group.

Recommendations

That the Council reviews its political composition and fills vacant seats on its ordinary and other committees accordingly.

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	None
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

- 1 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to review the representation on them of different political groups at the Annual Meeting and at certain other times prescribed by regulations. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require a review if a political group requests it within 28 days of a by-election. The

Review of Political Balance

Full Council, item 10

Conservative Group made such a request following the by-election for Great Dunmow North. The Act 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 the 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.

At the Annual Meeting in May, Members agreed to allocate seats as follows:

Policy Committees		Con	LD	Ind
Finance and Administration [14] *		8	4	1
Environment [15]		9	5	1
Community [15]		9	5	1
Regulatory/Scrutiny and Overview				
Development Control [15]		8	5	2
Scrutiny [11]		6	4	1
Performance Select [8] *		5	2	0
Total membership [78]		45	25	6 #

* denotes one vacancy on each committee

by agreement, the Independent group is allocated one additional seat on Development Control Committee

Review of Political Balance

Full Council, item 10

The current political composition of the Council, taking account of the recent by-election result, is as follows:

Group	Members	Percentage	Total Seats
Conservative	27	61.36	48
Liberal Democrat	14	31.82	25
Independent	3	6.82	5

If Members wish the Independent Group to have an additional seat on the Development Control Committee (giving a 47/25/6 split) this would mean that the Council would not be politically balanced. This can only be achieved if none of the Members present at the meeting vote against the proposal. Since the present Constitution was adopted, it has been the convention for all Members to serve on at least one policy committee and one scrutiny or regulatory committee.

Members should decide upon the political balance of the Council and then decide to allocate the two available places. The Conservative group is entitled to fill both of the vacancies and one solution would be to appoint Councillor Davey to fill the vacant positions on the Finance and Administration and Performance Select Committees. Alternatively, a re-allocation of seats could take place to enable Councillor Davey to be accommodated elsewhere, so long as the total number of seats on the committees listed above corresponds to the total seat entitlement.

It should be noted that Councillor Davey is automatically entitled to attend South Area Forum meetings as this is determined by ward representation rather than by balance considerations. There are no other vacancies within any of the Council's committees, working or task groups.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the allocation of seats does not meet statutory requirements	1	1	1 Use of proper controls and appropriate decisions