

Committee: Annual Council

Agenda Item

Date: 13 May 2014

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Title: Political Balance on the Council

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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.

Recommendation

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

Financial Implications

None

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
Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/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.
Sustainability	n/a
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

- 2 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to review the representation of the 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	No of seats
Planning	14
Licensing and Environmental Health	11
Scrutiny	10
Performance and Audit	10
Staff Appeals	8
Total	53

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

Group	Members	Percentage
Conservative	34	77.27%
Liberal democrat	7	15.91%
Independent	3	6.82%
	44	100%

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

Group	Percentage	Calculated seats	No. of seats
Conservative	77.27%	40.96	41
Liberal democrat	15.91%	8.43	8
Independent	6.82%	3.61	4
	100%	53	53

Allocation of Seats – Committees

(i) Licensing Committee

6 The Licensing Committee cannot be taken into account for the purposes of the 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.

(ii) Standards Committee

7 The Localism Act 2011 set out changes to the Standards regime. There is now no statutory power to appoint a Standards Committee, the Standards functions are to be performed by the Full Council. However it was agreed in 2012 that the Council would not be an appropriate forum for dealing with individual allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct and a Standards Committee was appointed to undertake this function.

8 In the absence of a statutory power, a Standards Committee is required to be appointed under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and is subject to the rules of political balance. If this committee was including within the calculations the result would be as follows:-

59 seats (6 for Standards Committee) - the number of seats available to each group would be:-

Group	Percentage	Total Seats
Conservative	77.27%	(45.59) 46
Liberal Democrat	15.91%	(9.39) 9
Independent	6.82%	(4.02) 4

9 The Council's Constitution recognises that that the rules of political balance contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 apply but acknowledges that a politically balanced Standards Committee would be undesirable. It provides that subject to no member present voting against the proposal each political group on the Council would have at least one member on the Standards Committee and each political group could nominate up to three members. The aim is to achieve an even balance on the Committee and ideally there will be two members appointed from each group.

Proposal for allocation of seats

- 10 Based on the principles outlined in paragraph 9, the allocation of the 59 seats (including the Standards and Licensing Committees) could be as follows:-

Committees	Seats available	Conservative	Lib Dem	Independent
Planning	14	11	2	1
Licensing and EH	11	8	2	1
Scrutiny	10	7	2	1
Performance and Audit	10	8	1	1
Staff Appeals	8	7	1	0
Standards	6	2	2	2
	59	43	10	6

Risk Analysis

There are no risks associated with this report.