

**MEETING:** Annual Council

**DATE:** Wednesday 16 May 2007

**SUBJECT:** Application of Political Balance Rules to the Allocation of Seats on Council Bodies

**REPORT OF:** David Robinson, Local Democracy Manager

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**Purpose:** To bring before the Annual meeting of the Council information governing the allocation of seats for the 2007/08 Council year.

**Contact:** David Robinson, Local Democracy Manager. Telephone 01323 415022 or internally on extension 5022.

**Recommendation:** That the allocations set out in this report be adopted by the Council.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 A meeting of Group Leaders and Deputy Leaders was held on 8 May 2007. An earlier version of this report was presented to that meeting.
- 1.2 The election outcome has changed the overall distribution of seats between the 2 political groups currently represented on the Council. The split is now 20 seats to 7 (instead of 15 to 10, plus one independent and one vacancy). This affects the overall seat allocations set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.7 below.

## **2. Current Structure (Leader and Cabinet Model)**

- 2.1 This paper is based on the current structure, however the Council's current constitutional arrangements allow for either a 7 or an 8 member Scrutiny Committee. The option of an 8 member Scrutiny Committee is not being put forward on this occasion:-

### **2.2 Base percentages:-**

<i>No. of Councillors: 27</i>	<i>% seats on Council</i>
<i>Liberal Democrats 20</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Conservatives 7</i>	<i>26</i>

- 2.3 **Committees.** The allocation of seats in accordance with the rules is as follows:-

<b>Committee</b>	<b>No. of Seats</b>	<b>Controlling Group</b>	<b>Opposition</b>
Scrutiny	7	5	2
Planning	8	6	2
General Licensing	15	11	4
Annual Accounts Committee	5	4	1
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>

- 2.4 **Standards Committee.** The political balance rules do not apply to the Standards Committee, however the Council has previously amended their Constitution to provide for both Groups to be equally represented on this Committee. This is in line with Government guidance on the establishment of Standards Committees. The Committee has 4 seats for elected councillors.
- 2.5 **Licensing Act Committee.** This committee is not listed as the political balance rules do not apply. It is done so as a matter of local discretion. See below as to committee membership numbers.
- 2.6 **Licensing Committees.** No recommendation is made at present with regard to reducing the membership of these committees nor in respect of the number of standing sub-committee chairmen. The law requires there to be not less than 10 members and not more than 15 members of a Licensing Act Committee. The Council has previously agreed that the membership of both Licensing Committees should be the same and that the same person should chair both committees. There is some benefit in being able to select members for sub-committees from as wide a pool as possible.
- 2.7 **Other (Advisory) Bodies.** A 4 member Conservation Area Advisory Group and a 3 member Downland Forum are being proposed.

<b>Body</b>	<b>No. of Seats</b>	<b>Controlling Group</b>	<b>Opposition</b>
Cons Area Adv.	4	3	1
Grants Task Group	3	2	1
Audit Task Group	2	1	1
Cleansing and Highways Forum	2	1	1
Downland Forum	3	2	1
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

- 2.8 **Joint Staff Committee.** The current constitution provides for the 6 seats to be shared equally between the two largest groups. In view of the change in the respective proportions Council, is asked to adopt

a 4/2 split. The nominations are made on this basis. It should also be noted that there are proposals (as yet to come before members for decision) to amend the constitution of the Joint Staff Committee which will result in a smaller overall membership and for there to be 3 councillor members in future.

- 2.9      **Eastbourne Buses Board.** The tradition has been for the Board to comprise 2 members from each of the largest political groups. This has held true irrespective of the overall proportion of seats. The Chairman of the Board has come from the controlling group. Nominations have been made on this basis.
- 2.10     **Eastbourne Homes.** Last year it was established that the non-executive directors on the board comprise 4 councillors plus a council officer. As with Eastbourne Buses, 2 councillors were appointed from the 2 main political groups. Nominations have been made on this basis.
- 2.11     **Other Task Groups and Boards.** So far as is possible, groups are recommended to retain existing membership so as to maintain continuity and allow members to continue or complete work already begun.

**David Robinson**  
**Local Democracy Manager**

**10 May 2007**

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