

MEETING: Annual Council

DATE: 21 May 2008

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

REPORT OF: David Robinson, Local Democracy Manager

Purpose: To bring before the Annual meeting of the Council information governing the allocation of seats for the 2008/09 Council year.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Group Leaders have received an earlier version of this report prior to submitting their respective nominations.
- 1.2 With no elections held this year, the distribution of seats between the 2 political groups has not changed. The split remains 20 seats to 7. The seat allocations are 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:-**

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

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 now has 6 seats for elected councillors and provision for 3 independent members following the decision of the Council on 30 April 2008.

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.**

Body	No. of Seats	Controlling Group	Opposition
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
Totals:	14	9	5

- 2.8 Adjustments may be made to give the controlling group a majority of seats, however, past Borough Council practice has been to allow an equality of seats on some advisory and consultative bodies notwithstanding one party's superior number of Council seats.
- 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.
- 2.10 **Eastbourne Homes.** The established practice is 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. Last year, one of the seats was allowed to be held by a former councillor (Mrs Ann Murray) for reasons of continuity and it is proposed that this arrangement continue for 2008/09.
- 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

13 May 2008

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