

MEETING: Annual Council

DATE: Wednesday 9 May 2018

SUBJECT: Application of political balance rules to the allocation of seats on Council bodies

REPORT OF: Head of Democratic Services

Purpose: To bring before the annual meeting information governing the allocation of seats for the 2018/19 Council year in order that proposals and nominations can be put before the annual meeting of the Council.

Contact: Jackie Gavigan, Head of Democratic Services, telephone 01323 415033 or internally on extension 5033.

Recommendations: To agree the seat allocations set out in this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Whole council elections were last held on 7 May 2015. No changes have occurred since the last Annual Council meeting. Thus, the total number of councillors used in the calculation of committee seat numbers is 27 and the break down of seats between the two recognised groups of 18 Liberal Democrats and 8 Conservatives, with 1 Independent Conservative. The seat allocations are set out below.

2. Current Structure

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. An 8 seat option is currently in place and this paper assumes the continuation of the 8 seat option. Similarly, the size of the 2 Licensing Committees may be between 10 and 15. This paper assumes that membership of these committees will be 13 for 2018/19 (as in previous years). Leaders have submitted nominations on this basis.

2.2 **Base percentages:-**

<i>No. of Councillors: 27</i>	<i>% seats on Council</i>
<i>Liberal Democrats 18</i>	66.66
<i>Conservatives 8</i>	29.63
<i>Independent Conservative 1</i>	3.70

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

Committee	No. of Seats	Controlling Group	Opposition Group
Planning	8	5	3
General Licensing	13	9	4
Audit and Governance	8	5	3
Totals:	29	19	10

Note: Committee seats are allocated to groups. An independent councillor is not a group. A minimum of 2 councillors are required to form a group under the rules. The council does however have the option of appointing an independent member to committees but is not required to do so. Having regard to the proportion of seats allocated to the 2 groups shown above, the Opposition group (Conservatives) are marginally over represented. One committee seat could be allocated to the independent member and this would need to be taken from within the number allocated to the Conservative group. Any decision to suspend the rules to make this adjustment would require that no one member of the council vote against the proposition.

This paper assumes continuation of the current arrangements and no seats (either committee, sub-committee or other bodies) will be allocated to the independent member.

2.4 **Scrutiny Committee.** This committee is not listed above as although the political balance rules apply the calculation and allocation of seats is required to be done separately. The reason for this has to do with the legislation under which "Scrutiny and Overview" committees are constituted. Although there is provision for an 8 seat committee, the practice before 2015/16 had been to have 7 members. Given the change in political proportions following the 2015 elections the 8 seat option was chosen. The proposed allocation of seats in accordance with the rules is therefore as follows for the 2 options:-

No. of Seats	Controlling Group	Opposition
7	5	2
8	5	3

2.5 **Licensing Act Committee.** This committee is not listed above as the political balance rules do not apply. It is however politically balanced as a matter of local discretion. See the paragraph below as to committee membership numbers.

2.6 **General Licensing Committee and Licensing Act Committee.** 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 the Licensing Committees should be the same and that the same member should chair both committees. There is some benefit in being able to select members for sub-committees from as wide a pool as possible. The nominations made last year were for a 13 member committee. 5 members are appointed as chairs of Licensing sub-committees.

2.9 **Advisory Bodies**

Body	No. of Seats	Controlling Group	Opposition
Conservation Area Advisory Group	4 (or 3)	2	2 (or 1)
Downland Forum	3 (or 4)	2 (or 3)	1

In 2017/18 the Conservation Area Advisory Group had 4 members. Past Council practice has been to allow the opposition an equality of seats.

In 2017/18 the Downland Forum had 3 members and nominations have been made on the basis that this continues.

2.10 **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.

Jackie Gavigan
Head of Democratic Services

9 May 2018