

MEETING: Annual Council

DATE: 6 May 2009

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 2009/10 Council year.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Group Leaders and Deputy 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 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. A 7 seat option was chosen in 2008/09. This paper assumes continuation of the 7 seat option:-

2.2 Council, on 25 February 2009 agreed to increase the size of the Cabinet. Cabinet may now comprise between 4 and 6 members including the Leader. For the present, a Cabinet size of 6 is assumed.

2.3 The new Audit Committee, also agreed at Council on 25 February 2009, (replacing the Annual Accounts Committee and the Audit Task Group) is also featured in this paper.

2.4 **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>

- 2.5 **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
Audit	5	4	1
Totals:	35	26 (74.2%)	9 (25.7%)

- 2.6 **Standards Committee.** This committee is not listed above as the political balance rules do not apply to the Council's Standards Committee. The Council's Constitution provides 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 6 seats for elected councillors and 3 for independent members.

- 2.7 **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 paragraph below as to committee membership numbers.

- 2.8 **General Licensing Committee and Licensing Act Committee.** 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 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.

- 2.9 **Other (Advisory) Bodies**

Body	No. of Seats	Controlling Group	Opposition
Cons Area Adv.	4 (or 3)	3 (or 2)	1
Grants Task Group	3	2	1
Cleansing and Highways Forum	2	1	1
Downland Forum	3 (or 4)	2 (3)	1
Totals:	12 (11/13)	8 (7/9)	4

In 2008/09 the Conservation Area Advisory Group had 4 members and the Downland Forum had 3 members.

- 2.10 Adjustments may be made to give the controlling group a majority of seats, however, past Borough Council practice has been to allow the opposition a greater share of seats on some advisory and

consultative bodies.

- 2.11 **Eastbourne Homes.** The established practice is that the non-executive directors on the board comprise 4 councillors plus a council officer. Two councillors are appointed from each of the 2 main political groups. For the last 2 years, one of the seats was allowed to be held by a former councillor (Mrs Ann Murray) for reasons of continuity.
- 2.12 **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

27 April 2009

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