

Council report



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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To: COUNCIL

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Review of appointments to committees, panels and joint committees 2014/15

Recommendations

That Council:

1. allocates seats to each political group in accordance with the decision made at the annual meeting of Council in May subject to a reduction of one seat allocated to the Conservative Group on both the Planning Committee and Licensing Acts Committee and an increase by one in the number of seats allocated to the Independent Group on the Planning Committee and Scrutiny Committee;
2. allocates seats to each political group as set in the schedule to be circulated at the meeting with nine seats being allocated on the Scrutiny Committee and seven on the General Licensing Committee to the Conservative Group, one seat on the NNDR Appeals Panel being allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group and one seat each on the Housing Appeals Panel being allocated to the Independent and Labour groups;
3. appoints councillors and substitutes to sit on the committees and panels as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
4. appoints councillors to the Licensing Acts Committee as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
5. appoints Mr N Harris to the Independent group's seat on the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and Housing Appeals Panel and one of the Conservative group's seats on the NNDR Panel;
6. appoints Mr M Welply as the council's representative on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel;
7. appoints one of the non group councillors to the Planning Committee and the Licensing Acts Committee

8. authorises the head of legal and democratic services to make appointments to any vacant committee or panel seat and substitute positions in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

Purpose of report

1. This report invites Council to review the political balance and consider proposed changes to the make-up and membership of committees following the resignation of Mrs Hodgkin and Mrs Wood from the Henley Residents Group and them joining the Independent Group. Mrs Collett, Independent Group Leader, requested a review of the political balance.

Background

2. The Council is required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to appoint committees, review the political balance and to appoint councillors to the committees annually. It did so at the annual meeting in May.
3. In summary the Council has a duty to ensure the following principles are adhered to:
- (i) not all seats are allocated to the same political group
 - (ii) a majority group should get the majority of seats on each committee
 - (iii) the seats allocated to groups on a committee reflect the membership of the Council as a whole
 - (iv) the allocation of the total number of seats on all committees reflects the membership as a whole
4. Ordinary committees are those that have decision-making powers but excluding the Licensing Acts Committee.

Political balance

5. The number of seats held by the various political groups is currently as follows:

Conservative	31	(64.58%)
Independent	6	(12.5%)
Labour	4	(8.33%)
Liberal Democrat	4	(8.33%)
Non-group councillors	2	(4.17%)
Vacancy	1	

6. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require a constituted political group to be two or more members. Mr Neville Harris and Mr Chris Quinton are not members of any political group and are therefore designated as non-group councillors. There is currently one vacancy.

Composition of committees

7. The ordinary committees and panels that are required to be politically balanced both individually and overall are as set out below.

Scrutiny Committee	13 members
Audit and Corporate Governance Committee	8 members
Planning Committee	14 members
General Licensing Committee	10 members

NNDR Appeals Panel
Housing Appeals Panel

5 members
5 members

8. The terms of reference of the committees and panels are set out in the constitution. No changes are proposed. However, the Communities Capital Grant Scheme Panel has not been included as it will not meet prior to May 2015.
9. The political balance calculation and the entitlements to seats on committees are set out in the tables below. Fractional entitlements of less than one half are rounded down and entitlements of one half or more are rounded up. Once the political groups have been allocated their entitlement any remaining seats should be offered to the non-group councillors.

Group	Group members/ Total of Council	Total number of committee seats	Proportionate number of seats on committees
Conservative	31/48	55	36
Independent	6/48	55	7
Labour	4/48	55	5
Liberal Democrat	4/48	55	5
TOTAL	46/48	55	53 (+2)

Committee	Total number of seats	Conservative	Independent	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Scrutiny	13(12+1)*	8	2	1	1
Audit and Corporate Governance	8	5	1	1	1
Planning	14(13+1)* *	9	2	1	1
General Licensing	10(9+1)*	6	1	1	1
NNDR Appeals	5	3	(1)*	(1)*	(1)*
Housing Appeals	5	3	(1)*	(1)*	(1)*
Total	55	34(+2)	6 (+1)	4(+1)	4 (+1)

*To obtain balance across the committees and overall the Conservative Group must gain two seats and the Independent, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups must gain a seat each. Council needs to decide where these adjustments should be made. The Conservative Group should

gain an additional set on the General Licensing Committee and Scrutiny Committee. Fractional entitlements suggest the allocation of additional seats to the other groups should be on the panels. At the annual Council meeting in May the Liberal Democrat Group was allocated a seat on the NNDR Appeals Panel and the Labour Group was allocated a seat on the Housing Appeals Panel. Both groups are content with this arrangement which is reflected in the recommendation. The Independent Group was allocated a seat on the Housing Appeals Panel which it offered Mr N Harris. The Independent Group has again offered this seat to Mr N Harris.

The Independent Group has confirmed its continued offer of its seat on the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee to Mr N Harris.

The remaining seat on the NNDR Appeals Panel should be offered to a non-group councillor. At the annual meeting Council appointed Mr C Quinton to this seat. No change is proposed.

** Council needs to agree the allocation of a seat on the Planning Committee to one of the non group councillors.

If the Council wishes to allocate any seats not in accordance with the political balance requirements it can only do so if no councillor votes against the proposal.

Substitutes

10. Each political group is entitled to the same number of substitutes as the number of ordinary seats it holds on a committee or panel, and up to a maximum of three named substitutes where it has fewer than three members on a committee or panel.

Licensing Acts Committees

11. The Licensing Acts Committee is a statutory committee and is not required to be included in the calculation of political balance. The committee meets rarely to deal with licensing and gambling policy matters but a membership of 10 provides a pool of councillors from which panels of three can be drawn to deal with hearings relating to personal licence holders and premises licence applications and reviews.
12. At its meeting in February 2005 Council agreed to appoint a committee in accordance with the political balance of the Council. This would result in seats being allocated amongst the groups as follows: six Conservatives, one Independent, one Labour, one Liberal Democrat with one seat to be allocated to a non group councillor.
13. As a statutory committee with a specified membership substitutes may not be appointed.

Appointments

14. Officers have invited group leaders to submit the names of councillors they wish to sit on each of the above bodies. A table of nominations will be circulated prior to the meeting.

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

15. At the annual meeting Council appointed Mr B Service as the council's representative on this body and Mr J Cotton as an observer. Following the changes to Cabinet portfolios in October Mr Service has resigned as this council's representative. Council is invited to appoint Mr M Welply as the council's representative.

Financial implications

16. There are no direct financial implications.

Legal implications

17. These are set out in the body of the report.

Conclusion

18. In accordance with the request of the Independent Group Leader a review of the allocation of the seats available to each of the political groups represented on the council has been undertaken.

Background Papers: None

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