

Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

Report of the Clerk

For further information about this report please contact Sharon Lloyd, Corporate Support Manager, on 01743 260210.

1 Purpose of Report

This report asks the Fire Authority to agree both the composition of its Committees and the allocations of seats on its committees to political groups.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to decide upon Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, specifically:

- a) Whether the political balance requirements should apply to the Authority's Pensions Panel; and
- b) The allocation, as proposed in the Appendix to this report.

3 Background

In accordance with the Fire Authority's Standing Order 7(2) (for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business), the Fire Authority is required to review at its Annual Meeting the constitution and composition of any committees or sub-committees, which have been appointed.

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and Regulations made thereunder, require that seats on standing committees are politically balanced across the total number of committee places (i.e. in aggregate) and, subject to that overriding requirement, each committee has to be politically balanced, as far as reasonably practicable.

4 Pensions Panel

At its Annual Meeting in July 2010, and at successive Annual Meetings since then, the Fire Authority agreed that its Pensions Panel would comprise of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority and the Chair of the Human Resources (now Standards and Human Resources) Committee and that it would not be subject to the political balance requirements.

Members are asked to consider whether they wish this arrangement to continue. In order for it to do so, Members must take a vote on the motion and there must be no votes against it.

5 Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats

The proposed committee composition and allocation of seats is set out in the Appendix to this report, which Members are requested to consider and decide upon.

In May of this year local elections took place at Telford & Wrekin, which has resulted in an increase of the total number of Conservative seats on the Fire Authority from seven to eight, at the expense of one Labour seat (reduced from five to four). This change is reflected in the figures set out at the Appendix.

6 Financial Implications

There are no material direct costs arising out of the recommendations of this report, although many decisions of committees will impact on budgets and need financial approval.

7 Legal Comment

The Fire Authority must comply with the political balance requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and its Regulations, when allocating seats on its standing committees.

Under the provisions of Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the decision not to apply political balance requirements for the Pensions Panel can only be implemented, if no Member of the Authority votes against it.

8 Initial Impact Assessment

As this report merely proposes allocations of seats to political groups in order to meet legislative requirements, an Initial Impact Assessment has not been completed.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

As this report has no differential impacts on people, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

10 Appendix

Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

Key

- * **Cons** Conservative
 Lib Dem Liberal Democrat
 Lab Labour

- ** These rows indicate the actual number of Members each political group should have, based on the percentage of Members it has of the Fire Authority as a whole.

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
Shropshire Council	8	1	2	11
Telford & Wrekin Council	3	3	0	6
Total	11	4	2	17

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
** Pensions Panel Members: 3	1.94	0.71	0.35	3.00
Allocation to be decided				3

The Fire Authority established the Pensions Panel at its meeting in June 2010 and agreed that it would be made up of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Human Resources (now Standards and Human Resources) Committee.

Under section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Fire Authority can agree that the political balance requirements do not apply to the Panel, provided no Member votes against the motion. In this case allocation of these seats would **not** need to be taken into account in the overall political balance calculations, which would then be as shown on the following page. This is the approach, which the Fire Authority first agreed at its Annual Meeting in July 2010 and has reconfirmed at its Annual Meetings since that time.

In light of this Members are asked to consider whether or not they wish the political balance requirements to apply to this Panel.

The following allocation of seats on the Fire Authority's committees is proposed.

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
** Strategy and Resources Committee Members: 7	4.53	1.65	0.82	7
Allocation	5	1	1	7
** Audit and Performance Management Committee Members: 7	4.53	1.65	0.82	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Standards and Human Resources Committee Members: 7	4.53	1.65	0.82	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Brigade Managers Employment Panel Members: 7	4.53	1.65	0.82	7
Allocation	5	1	1	7
** Aggregate Seats	18.12	6.60	3.28	28
Total Seats Allocation	18	6	4	28

As can be seen from the Aggregate Seats and Total Seats Allocation, technically Labour should have a total of 7 seats and the Liberal Democrats only 3. An additional seat on one of the committees could be taken by Labour but this would leave the Liberal Democrats with no seats on one committee. The Fire Authority has always been of the view that, if at all possible, each political group should have representation on each committee.

Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group

Although Members agreed that this Group should be politically balanced, it does not form part of the political balance calculations, as, being a Working Group, it is not a fully constituted committee of the Fire Authority. The following allocations is proposed.

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Members: 8	5.18	1.88	0.94	8
Allocation	5	2	1	8