

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, including whether the political balance requirements should apply to the Authority's Pensions Panel, and specifically:

- a) The allocation, as proposed in Appendix A, for the period 10 to 17 July; and
- b) The increase in membership of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel from 6 to 7 and the allocation, as proposed in Appendix B, with effect from 17 July 2014, provided Shropshire Council agrees to increase the Conservative membership of the Fire Authority from 7 to 8; and
- c) Whether the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group should include the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

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.

Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and its Regulations, seats on standing committees have to be balanced proportionately across all 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 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 appendices to this report, which Members are requested to consider and decide upon.

In May of this year a member of the Independent Group at Shropshire Council crossed the floor to UKIP. The effect of this will be to increase the number of Conservative seats on the Fire Authority from seven to eight, at the expense of the one independent seat, currently held by Councillor Cherrington. Unfortunately, the official decision on this matter will not be made by Shropshire Council until it next meets on 17 July. Until that time the status quo remains.

In light of the above, two appendices, setting out the proposed allocation of seats to political groups, have been prepared:

Appendix A

This reflects the current situation, as agreed by the Fire Authority in December 2013 (which took effect from 1 April 2014, when the merger of the Standards and Human Resources Committees took place). Members are asked to consider and agree that this allocation remains in place until 17 July. It should be noted that the Independent Member is not included in the calculations, as one person does not constitute a political group.

Appendix B

This reflects the situation as it is likely to be from 17 July onwards. Members are asked to consider and agree that this allocation takes effect from 17 July, provided this reflects the decision made by Shropshire Council. Should this not be the case, then it would be necessary to call an urgent meeting of the Fire Authority to agree an allocation, which accords with the Council's decision. This Appendix includes the proposal that membership of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel be increased from 6 to 7 in order for the figures to balance.

No other changes have occurred in either Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin Council relating to the allocation of seats on the Fire Authority to political groups. There has, however, been a change in the Labour membership from Telford & Wrekin Council, with Councillor Austin replacing Councillor Picken.

Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group

Until last year this Group had a membership of seven. In July 2013, however, this was increased to eight to include Councillor Carter, who had been elected Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee. In light of this the Authority is asked to consider whether it wishes to stipulate formally that the Chair of Strategy and Resources should sit on the Group. If so, this will be included in the Group's terms of reference (see report 10b).

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 Appendices

Appendix A

Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups from 9 July to 17 July 2014

Appendix B

Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups from 17 July 2014

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 with effect from 9 to 17 July 2014

Key

*	Cons	Conservative
	Lib Dem	Liberal Democrat
	Lab	Labour
	Indep	Independent

** 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	7	1	2	10
Telford & Wrekin Council	2	4	0	6
Total	9	5	2	16

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
** Pensions Panel Members: 3	1.59	0.88	0.35	3
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 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 each Annual Meeting 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 for the period 9 to 17 July.

This reflects the current situation, as agreed by the Fire Authority in December 2013 (which took effect from 1 April 2014, when the merger of the Standards and Human Resources Committees took place).

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
** Strategy and Resources Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Audit and Performance Management Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Standards and Human Resources Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Brigade Managers Employment Panel Members: 6	3.18	1.76	0.71	
Allocation	3	2	1	6
** Aggregate Seats	14.31	7.94	3.17	27
Total Seats Allocation	15	8	4	27

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
** Members: 8	4.24	2.35	0.94	
Allocation	5	2	1	8

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups with effect from 17 July 2014

Key

*	Cons	Conservative
	Lib Dem	Liberal Democrat
	Lab	Labour
	Indep	Independent

** 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	2	4	0	6
Total	10	5	2	17

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
** Pensions Panel Members: 3	1.76	0.88	0.35	2.99
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 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 with effect from 17 July.

This includes the proposal that membership of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel be increased from 6 to 7 to enable the figures to balance.

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Total Seats
** Strategy and Resources Committee Members: 7	4.12	2.06	0.82	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Audit and Performance Management Committee Members: 7	4.12	2.06	0.82	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Standards and Human Resources Committee Members: 7	4.12	2.06	0.82	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Brigade Managers Employment Panel Members: 7	4.12	2.06	0.82	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Aggregate Seats	16.48	8.24	3.28	28
Total Seats Allocation	16	8	4	28

As can be seen from the Aggregate Seats and Total Seats Allocation, technically the Conservatives should have a total of 17 seats and the Liberal Democrats only 3. An additional seat on one of the committees could be taken by the Conservatives 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	4.71	2.35	0.94	8
Allocation	5	2	1	8