

Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

Report of the Clerk

For further information about this report please contact Sharon Lloyd, Corporate Services 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 consider and decide Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, as proposed in the Appendix to this report, including whether the political balance requirements should apply to the Authority's Pensions Panel.

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 appendix to this report, which Members are requested to consider and decide upon.

There has been one change to membership of the Fire Authority following the May elections at Shropshire Council, namely one Independent Member has been appointed (Councillor Cherrington) and, as a result, there is one less Conservative Member (Councillor Roberts).

Following the annual Meeting at Telford & Wrekin Council the seat on the Fire Authority, which had been 'gifted' by the Labour Group to the Liberal Democrats (Councillor Mrs Blundell) has now been taken by a Labour Member (Councillor Picken).

As Members will know it is difficult to ensure both that seats on committees are balanced proportionately across all committee places and also that each committee is politically balanced. It should also be pointed out that officers appreciate that the Fire Authority has always expressed a wish that each party should be represented on the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel, when recruitment is taking place. This can, however, be accommodated at the time of any recruitment process by appointing a different panel with this specific remit (as has happened in the past).

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

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

9 Appendix

Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

10 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
	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*	Indep*	Total Seats
Shropshire Council	7	1	2	1	11
Telford & Wrekin Council	2	4	0	0	6
Total	9	5	2	1	17

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Indep*	Total Seats
** Pensions Panel Members: 3	1.59	0.88	0.35	0.18	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 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*	Indep*	Total Seats
** Strategy and Resources Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	0.41	7
Allocation	4	2	1	0	7
** Audit and Performance Management Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	0.41	7
Allocation	4	2	1	0	7
** Human Resources Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	0.41	7
Allocation	4	2	0	1	7
** Brigade Managers Employment Panel Members: 6	3.18	1.76	0.71	0.35	6
Allocation	3	2	1	0	6
** Standards Committee Members: 5	2.65	1.47	0.59	0.29	5
Allocation	2	1	1	1	5
** Aggregate Seats	16.96	9.41	3.76	1.87	31.9
Total Seats Allocation	17	9	4	2	32

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 allocation is proposed.

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	Indep*	Total Seats
** Members: 7	3.71	2.06	0.82	0.41	7
Allocation	4	2	1	0	7