

Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

Report of the Clerk

For further information about this report please contact Jonathan Eatough, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, on 01952 380103.

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;
- b) The allocation, as proposed in the Appendix to this report;
- c) If membership of the Strategic Planning Working Group should be reduced to 7; and
- d) To determine whether there is a requirement for the Strategic Planning Working Group to continue to be politically balanced

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.

An Independent member was appointed to the Fire Authority by Shropshire Council in May 2017. The member concerned has affiliated to the Liberal Democrat Group in order that they can participate in the Fire Authority's Committees. The proposed allocations therefore reflect this.

6 Strategic Planning (StraP) Working Group

At present the StraP Working Group consists of 8 Members and is politically balanced, even though it is not a fully constituted committee of the Fire Authority and therefore is not part of the political balance calculation.

Membership of the Working Group was increased to 8 in July 2013 to incorporate the Chair of the Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee and the Fire Authority formally stipulated in July 2014 that the Chair of the S&R Committee should sit on the Working Group.

The Fire Authority is asked to agree that the membership of the StraP Working Group now be reduced from 8 to 7, to bring it back in line with the Fire Authority's other Committees. If agreed this change will be incorporated into the Working Group's Terms of Reference.

The Fire Authority is also asked to consider if the StraP Working Group should remain politically balanced. If not, then the Fire Authority is asked to set out how the Working Group should be appointed to.

7 Financial Implications

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

8 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.

9 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.

10 Equality Impact Assessment

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

11 Appendix

Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

12 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
 Lab Labour
 Lib Dem / Indep Joint Liberal Democrat and Independent Group

- ** 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	3	11
Telford & Wrekin Council	2	4	0	6
Total	9	5	3	17

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem / Indep*	Total Seats
** Pensions Panel Members: 3	1	1	1	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 / Indep*	Total Seats
** Strategy and Resources Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.03	1.26	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Audit and Performance Management Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.03	1.26	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Standards and Human Resources Committee Members: 7	3.71	2.03	1.26	7
Allocation	3	2	2	7
** Brigade Managers Employment Panel Members: 7	3.71	2.03	1.26	7
Allocation	4	2	1	7
** Aggregate Seats	14.84	8.12	5.04	28
Total Seats Allocation	15	8	5	28

The proposed allocation of seats on the Standards and Human Resources (S&HR) Committee varies from that of the other committees in order to ensure that the overall aggregate seat allocation is correct.

All members of the S&HR Committee are eligible to sit on the Appeals Panel, which consists of 3 members. As far as practicable, the aim is for any Appeals Panels to be politically balanced. Having a minimum of 2 members from each Political Group on the S&HR Committee will assist with this.