
Representation of Political Groups on District Council Panels, etc.

Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated Regulations describe arrangements for achieving a balance on Panels etc, to reflect the representation of political groups and independent Members on the District Council. The Act requires the District Council to review the representation of different political groups at the time when the Authority holds its Annual Meeting - or on subsequent occasions when the constitution of political groups on the Council changes for any reason.

2. PRINCIPLES OF PROPORTIONALITY

- 2.1 In performing the duty to review representation, the Council must, so far as reasonably practicable, only determine the allocation of seats having regard to the following principles -

- ◆ that not all the seats are allocated to the same political group;
- ◆ that the majority of seats are allocated to the political group which forms a majority of the Council's membership; and
- ◆ that the number of seats allocated is in the same proportion as is borne by the number of Members of a political group to the membership of the Council.

- 2.2 Currently it is open to the Council to approve alternative arrangements otherwise than in accordance with the principles of proportionality providing that the alternative arrangements are approved without any Member voting against them.

3. CONSTITUTION OF POLITICAL GROUPS

- 3.1 Following the by-election in the Huntingdon North Ward on 29th October 2009, the constitution of political groups on the District Council has varied as follows:-

Name of Group	No. of Members
Conservative	37
Liberal Democrat	11
Independents	2

3.2 The membership of groups in proportion to the total membership of the Council is therefore as follows:-

	%
Conservative	71.15
Liberal Democrat	21.15
Independent Members	3.84
Other	3.84

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

4.1 Members are reminded that under the Local Government Act 2000, the proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet and the Standards Committee nor to any Sub-Groups or Sub-Committees, etc which either of them may appoint. It is therefore open to the Council to determine the membership of those bodies, irrespective of the composition of political groups and their membership. However, the Standards for England believe that Standards Committees should include appropriate political representation which has the support of all political parties.

4.2 The following requirements of the Act also need to be adhered to by the Council in determining the membership of Panels, etc -

- ◆ the Cabinet may not include either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council;
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny Panels may not comprise any Member of the Cabinet;
- ◆ the Standards Committee may not include the Leader, although it must include one Cabinet Member within its membership but that person may not Chair the Committee; and
- ◆ the Leader, Deputy Leader and any Member of the Cabinet shall not be elected as Chairman of any Committee or Panel other than any that may be appointed by the Cabinet.

4.3 The Constitution also provides for the Development Management Panel, Licensing and Protection Panel, the Employment Panel and the Licensing Committee to include the relevant Executive Councillor within their respective membership. Following the recent review of the democratic structure, the membership of the Corporate Governance Panel shall include the Executive Councillors whose portfolios include finance and corporate governance in an ex-officio capacity. **Every Member of the Council shall be appointed to serve on a minimum of one Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Committee or Panel of the Council or the Cabinet.**

5. PROPORTIONALITY

- 5.1 Excluding the Cabinet and Standards Committee the aggregate number of seats on Panels remains at 80, notwithstanding the change in the number of Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Using the proportionality percentage referred to in paragraph 3.2 and rounding up or down as appropriate, produces the following entitlement -

	Seats	
Conservative Group	56.92	57
Liberal Democrat Group	16.92	17
Independent Members	3.07	3
Other	3.07	3

- 5.2 Applying the principles of the Act and, similarly, rounding the figures as necessary, gives the distribution as set out in the Appendix.
- 5.3 The principles of proportionality apply similarly to advisory/sub-groups appointed or nominated by panels and regard must be given to the following examples of entitlements to seats:-

No. of Members on Sub-Group, etc	Proportion of Members from Political Groups			Other
	Cons	Lib Dem	Indep	
3	2	1	0	0
4	3	1	0	0
5	4	1	0	0
6	4	2	0	0
7	5	2	0	0
8	6	2	0	0
9	7	2	0	0
10	7	2	1/0	0/1

- 5.4 However, the Cabinet may not delegate any of its functions to non-Cabinet Members. Therefore any Sub-Group of the Cabinet that is exercising any decision-making powers delegated to it by the Cabinet must include only Cabinet Members. This does not prevent any Advisory Group appointed by the Cabinet that has no decision-making powers and whose terms of reference are merely advisory from including non-Cabinet Members. However, if a Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel is appointed to an Advisory Group by the Cabinet, that person will have a prejudicial interest and will be required to leave the room in the event of the Scrutiny Panel of which he or she is a member scrutinising any decisions or recommendations of that Advisory Group.
- 5.5 It should be noted that the 2000 Act requires the appointment of a minimum of one Cabinet Member to a Joint Committee exercising executive functions. Other Members may be appointed to a Joint Committee and the political balance requirements do not apply although circumstances will vary as to whether those Members can vote on executive decisions.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Although invited to determine the allocation of seats on District Council Panels to political groups and to the non-aligned Members in accordance with the distribution in paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 above, the Council may decide to defer to the next meeting in December, further variation of Panel memberships pending the outcome of the by-election in Huntingdon North Ward.
- 6.2 As the proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet and Standards Committee it is for the Council to determine their membership.
- 6.3 The opportunity otherwise is available currently to allocate seats in accordance with an alternative arrangement, provided this arrangement is approved by the Council with no Member voting against.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Local Government Act 2000
District Council Constitution

APPENDIX

	No. of Seats*	No. of Ex-officio	Title of Ex-officio	Cons	Lib Dem	Indep	Other	Cons	Lib Dem	Indep	Other
Corporate Governance Panel	7	2 max	Executive Cllrs for Finance and Governance	4.98	1.48	0.26	0.26	5	2	0	0
Development Management Panel	16	1	Not defined	11.38	3.38	0.61	0.61	11	3	1	1
Elections Panel	7	0		4.98	1.48	0.26	0.26	5	2	0	0
Employment Panel	8**	1	Not defined	5.69	1.69	0.30	0.30	6	2	0	0
Licensing & Protection Panel/ Committee	12	1	Not defined	8.53	2.53	0.46	0.46	8	2	1	1
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)	10	0		7.11	2.11	0.38	0.38	7/8	2	1/0	0/1
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)	10	0		7.11	2.11	0.38	0.38	7/8	2	1/0	0/1
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)	10	0		7.11	2.11	0.38	0.38	7/8	2	1/0	0/1
Total	80			56.89	16.89	3.03	3.03	57	17	3	3

Standards	7	0		5.07	1.37	0.27	0.27	5	2	0	0
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* the allocation of these seats must be balanced so that the total entitlement to seats on each group is not exceeded.

** pending further review