

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>THE FULL COUNCIL</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>14 JULY 2011</b>
<b>TITLE OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>To review the Council's Political Balance</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>To allocate seats on the Council's Committees</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Head of Democracy and Legal Department</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO LEADER</b>	<b>Councillor Dyfed Edwards</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council must ensure that the constitution of its committees and sub-committees reflects the strength of various political groups on the Council.
- 1.2 The Council is required to do so at least annually as this needs to be done at the Annual Meeting of the Council and at any other meeting of the Council when there is a change to the political balance.
- 1.3 The resignation of Councillor Dylan Edwards from the Plaid Cymru Group was received and he expressed his wish to be an individual member and not join any other group.
- 1.4 At the end of May, the sad news was received of the death of Councillor Dai Rees Jones.
- 1.5 A by-election was held in the Arllechwedd Ward on 16 June when Councillor Dafydd Meurig was elected as a member of Plaid Cymru on the Council.
- 1.6 The resignation of Councillor Richard Lloyd Jones, the member for Diffwys and Maenofferen Ward, Blaenau Ffestiniog was received on 1 July, 2011.
- 1.7 As a consequence the Council's political constitution is as follows:-

Plaid Cymru	36
Independent	16
Llais Gwynedd	12
Liberal Democrats	4
Labour	4
Individual Member	1
Vacant Seat	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>

## **2. ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES**

- 2.1 To remind members, noted here are the four main rules included in the Local

Government and Housing Act 1989 regarding the allocation of seats:-

- 2.2 (a) Every seat on a committee cannot be allocated to the same political group;
- (b) The majority of seats on a committee must be allocated to a political group if the number of persons who are members of that group constitute a majority of the Council's members;
- (c) Subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on ordinary committees allocated to each political group will be the same as the number of all seats that members of that group has on the Council;
- (ch) Subject to paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) above, the number of seats on a committee allocated to each political group will be the same proportion of seats on the committee as the number of seats that members of that group has on the Council.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that these rules are adhered to, the Council has been dealing with committees in different blocks in the past. Also, this makes it easier to ensure that rule (c) in paragraph 2.2 above is adhered to.
- 2.4 Following the decision of one member to be an individual member and that the Liberal Democrats Group, Llais Gwynedd Group and Independent Group have one member less, the Council needs to consider how it will deal with the allocation of seats on the Council's committees.
- 2.5 In accordance with the procedure of this Council the Council Business Group was asked to meet to discuss the matter in order to present a recommendation to the Full Council.
- 2.6 The Council Business Group met on 5 July, 2011.
- 2.7 Two options were discussed namely (a) leave the committees as they are at present until the result of the by-elections in the Glyder Ward, Bangor and Diffwys and Maenofferen, Blaenau Ffestiniog are known and present recommendations to the Full Council meeting in October and (b) make the minimum changes to the seats on the committees in order to offer two seats on the committees to the Individual Member.
- 2.8 The opinion of the Council Business Group was that, in order to be fair to the Individual Member, the second option should be adopted and therefore decided to recommend making the minimum changes possible to the seats on the Council committees and present further recommendations to the Council in October.
- 2.9 This means that the Independent Group gives one seat to the Individual Member on the Audit Committee and on the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee.
- 2.10 That the Liberal Democrats Group gives a seat on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to the Independent Group and a seat on the Licensing Committee to the Plaid Cymru Group. (see **Appendix A**)
- 2.11 As the recommendation does not truly reflect the political balance as it is at present the members vote will have to be unanimous.

### **3. CHAIRPERSONSHIPS AND VICE-CHAIRPERSONSHIPS**

- 3.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Alternative Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2007, it is required to allocate the chairpersonships of committees in order to ensure, as far as practically possible, that the political balance of the authority is reflected in those chairpersonships.
- 3.2 The procedure in this Council is to also allocate the vice-chairpersonships according to political balance and for the Council's Business Group to discuss the arrangements beforehand.
- 3.3 In accordance with rule 6.2 of the Local Authorities (Alternative Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2007, no member of the same political group as the chair of the Board can be the chair or vice-chair of the Principal Scrutiny Committee or chair of the Audit Committee.
- 3.4 Since May the Council has faced difficulties in electing vice-chairpersonships of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Meirionnydd Area Committee and because of this asked that the Business Group look at the matter.
- 3.5 A number of possible options for the vice-chairpersonships were noted which had an effect on the Liberal Democrat, Plaid Cymru and Llais Gwynedd groups, but did not change the political balance, namely to keep the vice-chair of the Meirionnydd Area Committee vacant, or that the Llais Gwynedd Group take the vice-chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Plaid Cymru Group take the vice-chair of the Meirionnydd Area Committee while the Liberal Democrat Group take the vice-chair of the Human Resources Committee.
- 3.6 At the Council's Business Group meeting held on 5 July, it was agreed that, the leaders of the political groups would discuss the possible options for the vice-chairpersonships with the members of their group in order to present recommendations to the Full Council.

### **4. PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- 4.1 A seat on the Planning Committee is vacant as a member from the Plaid Cymru group, Dwyfor area has accepted a seat on the Council Board.
- 4.2 In May, 2010 the Council decided to elect members on the Planning Committee in accordance with the Council political balance and area balance.
- 4.3 This means that a seat for a member from the Dwyfor area is vacant but an expression of interest to be a member of the Planning Committee was received from a member of the Plaid Cymru group in Arfon which therefore has an effect on the area balance on the committee.
- 4.4 The matter was referred to the Business Group in order to get a recommendation for the Full Council but the political leaders were of the opinion that it was a matter for discussion in the Council as an agreement to delete the need for area balance would be required.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 The Council is asked to:-**

- i. change the allocation of seats on the committees as noted in points 2.9 and 2.10 above, and that the Independent Group gives one seat to the Individual Member on the Audit Committee and on the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee, while the Liberal Democrats Group gives a seat on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to the Independent Group and a seat on the Licensing Committee to the Plaid Cymru Group;
- ii. allocate the vice-chairpersonships of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Meirionnydd Area Committee in accordance with the Council political balance;
- iii. decided to delete the need for area balance on the Planning Committee in order to allow the member from Arfon to be elected on the Planning Committee.

## APPENDIX A

### COUNCIL BOARD AND PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Liberal Democrats	Labour	Indiv. Member
Council Board	7	4	2	1	1	
Principal Scrutiny Committee	7	3	3	1	1	

### OTHER SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Liberal Democrats	Labour	Indiv. Member
Development	8	3	3	1		
Environment	7	3	3	1	1	
Children and Young People	7	4	3		1	
Care	8	3	2	1	1	

### OTHER COMMITTEES

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Liberal Democrats	Labour	Indiv. Member
Audit	7	3	3		1	1
Human Resources	6	2	2	1		
Planning	7	4	2	1	1	
Central Licensing	6	3	2			
Employment Appeals	3	1	1	1	1	
Pensions	2	2	1	1	1	
Local Joint Committee	6	2	2		1	
Special Education Joint Committee	4	1	1			1
Joint Planning Policy Committee	3	2	1	1	1	
Language	3	2	2			
SACRE	3	2	1	1		