

MEETING	FULL COUNCIL
DATE	17 MAY 2012
TITLE OF THE REPORT	THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE
PURPOSE	To review the Council's Political Balance
RECOMMENDATION	Allocation of Seats on the Council's Committees and Confirm the Allocation of the Posts and Hours of the Members' Support Officers.
AUTHOR	Head of Democracy and Legal Department

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 in any other meeting of the Council when a change to the political balance occurs.
- 1.3 At the beginning of the new Council term we are also required to review the allocation of any political posts between the groups.
- 1.4 At the time of writing this report, the exact political balance of the Council was not known.
- 1.5 In accordance with this Council's procedures, the Council's Business Group was asked to discuss the matter in order to submit a recommendation to the Full Council.
- 1.6 The Business Group will meet on 16 May 2012 and an oral report on the recommendations of the Business Group will be given to the Council.
- 1.7 If the recommendations of the Business Group are contrary to the political balance rules the recommendations must be accepted by the Council without any member voting against them.
- 1.8 There were no candidates standing in the Bryncreg Ward and, therefore, no election was held there on 3 May, 2012. A by-election will be held on 14 June 2012 and the Council's political balance will be reviewed following the result of the by-election.

2. ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

- 2.1 In order to remind members, the four main rules included in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in relation to the allocation of seats are noted here:-
- 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.

3. MEMBER SUPPORT OFFICERS

3.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Regulations (Committees and Political Groups) 1990 we are also required to review the allocation of political support between the groups in accordance with the strength of the groups eligible for them.

3.2 The Council is reminded that there are some limitations on such posts; only groups which have 10% of seats on the council are eligible to have political support and there is a restriction of three to each council.

3.3 Therefore, in the case of this Council, only Plaid Cymru, Independent and Llais Gwynedd groups are eligible. Within the budget available, the hours are divided between the groups in accordance with the comparative strength of the groups. The hours will be divided according to the political balance of the Council.

4. CHAIRPERSONSHIPS AND VICE-CHAIRPERSONSHIPS

4.1 In order to respond to the requirements of the Local Government Bill (Wales) 2011 in terms of allocation of chairpersonships and vice-chairpersonships the committees are divided into separate blocks.

4.2 In accordance with the requirements of sections 66-75 of the Local Government Bill (Wales) 2011 ("the Bill") it is a requirement to allocate the chairpersonships of scrutiny committees in order to ensure, as far as possible, that political balance is reflected in those chairpersonships and that the groups that are not represented on the executive are give a fair proportion of the chairpersonships.

4.3 In accordance with section 83 of the Bill, the chairperson of the Audit Committee can not be a member of a political group which is represented on the executive.

4.4 In accordance with section 14 of the Bill, the chairperson of the Democratic Services Committee shall be appointed by the Full Council and it can not appoint a member of a political group which is represented on the executive.

4.5 As membership of the executive was not known at the time of publishing the Council agenda and as there has not been an opportunity for the Business Group to meet to

discuss the allocations, recommendations on chairpersonships, in accordance with the statutory rules, will be submitted at the Council meeting.

- 4.6 There are no statutory or constitutional provisions to control the appointments to the vice-chairpersonships or to the chairpersonships of the remaining committee (other than a member of the executive can not chair the Licensing Committee). The committees themselves will elect their chairpersons in these cases subject to the procedural rules limiting the term of a Chairperson to two years.

5. EXTERNAL BODIES

- 5.1 There is a long list of external bodies on which the Council has representatives. These bodies vary significantly; some are national others local in nature, some are charities, companies and so forth. The majority of representatives are nominated by the Council's Business Group.
- 5.2 However, it is the Council that decides on allocations of the seats to bodies that require political balance. There are two of these, namely the Snowdonia National Park Authority and the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and the Council is asked to approve the political balance for these two bodies.
- 5.3 The members nominated to represent the Council on external bodies will serve on these bodies for the Council term.
- 5.4 The Council is also required to nominate two members, who do not want to be considered to serve on the Police Authority, to be members on the Joint Committee which will elect members to take seats on the Police Authority.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Council is asked to:-
- (a) adopt the political balance recommended by the Council's Business Group
 - (b) delegate the power to the Monitoring Officer to make appointments to the committees on the basis of political balance and in accordance with the wishes of the political groups
 - (c) appoint a chairperson for the Democratic Services Committee from amongst the members who are not members of a political group represented on the executive
 - (ch) adopt the allocation of the chairpersonships of the scrutiny committees on the basis of political balance as noted in paragraph 4.2 other than if there is no agreement
 - (d) confirm the allocation of the member support officers posts
 - (dd) confirm the hours of the Member Support Officers
 - (e) confirm the political balance for the external bodies named in paragraph 5.2
 - (f) nominate two members, who do not want to be considered to serve on the Police Authority, to be members on the Joint Committee which will elect members of the Police Authority.