

Council report

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Author: Steven Corrigan

Telephone: 01235 547675

E-mail: steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk

To: Council

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Appointments to committees, panels and joint committees

Recommendations: that Council

1. appoints the committees and panels for the 2013/14 year, allocates seats to each political group and appoints councillors and substitutes to sit on them in accordance with paragraphs 7-9 of this report and as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
2. appoints chairmen and vice-chairmen as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
3. appoints councillors to the Licensing Acts Committee in accordance with paragraphs 10-11 of this report and as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting ;
4. appoints all local members representing the wards covered by the relevant area committees as set out in minute Co.16 of the Council held on 21 May 2003 to those committees for the 2013/14 municipal year;
5. appoints chairmen and vice-chairmen as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
6. appoints a representative and a substitute on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
7. appoints a representative and an observer substitute on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel;
8. authorises the head of legal and democratic services to make appointments to any vacant committee or panel seat and substitute positions in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

Purpose of Report

1. This report invites Council to appoint those committees required to be politically balanced together with the Licensing Acts Committee and area committees. It also invites Council to make appointments to joint bodies.

Background

2. The Council is required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to appoint committees, review the political balance and to appoint councillors to the committees annually.
3. In summary the Council has a duty to ensure the following principles are adhered to:
 - (i) not all seats are allocated to the same political group
 - (ii) a majority group should get the majority of seats on each committee
 - (iii) the seats allocated to groups on a committee reflect the membership of the Council as a whole
 - (iv) the allocation of the total number of seats on all committees reflects the membership as a whole
4. Ordinary committees are those that have decision-making powers but excluding the Licensing Acts Committee.

Political balance

5. At the three by elections held on 2 May 2013 Mr Andrew Skinner (Liberal Democrat) was elected as a councillor for the Abingdon Peachcroft ward, Mr Charles St.John Dickson (Conservative) was elected as a councillor for the Greendown ward and Mrs Catherine Webber (Liberal Democrat) was elected as a councillor for the Marcham and Shippon ward. On 3 May Councillor Holly Holman (Conservative) resigned leaving a vacancy in the Fitzharris ward. With these changes the political balance is currently as follows:

Conservative – 28
Liberal Democrat – 20
Labour – 1
Independent – 1

1 vacancy

6. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require a constituted political group to be two or more members. Councillor Angela Lawrence and Aidan Melville are not members of any political group and are therefore designated as non-group councillors.

Composition of committees

7. The ordinary committees and panels that are required to be politically balanced both individually and overall are as set out below.

Scrutiny Committee - 12 members
Planning Committee – 14 members
General Licensing Committee – 15 members
Audit and Governance Committee – 10 members
Appeals Committee – 3 members

8. The terms of reference of the committees and panels are set out in the constitution. No changes are proposed.

9. The political balance calculation and the entitlements to seats on committees are set out in the tables below. Fractional entitlements of less than one half are rounded down and entitlements of one half or more are rounded up. Once the political groups have been allocated their entitlement any remaining seats should be offered to the non-group councillors.

Group	Group Members/ Total on Council	Total number of committee seats	Proportionate number of seats on committees
Conservative Group	28/51	of 54 =	30
Liberal Democrat Group	20/51	of 54 =	21
Labour	1 – no group entitlement		
Independent	1 – no group entitlement		
		TOTAL	51(+3)

Committee	Total Membership	Conservatives	Lib Dems
Scrutiny Committee	12	7	5
Planning	14*	8	5
General Licensing Committee	15*	8	6
Audit and Governance Committee	10*	5	4
Appeals Committee	3	2	1
TOTAL	54	30	21

*There is a vacancy on the Planning Committee, General Licensing Committee and Audit and Governance Committee. These unallocated seats must be offered to the non group councillors - Councillors Aidan Melville and Angela Lawrence.

Licensing Acts Committees

10. The Licensing Acts Committee is a statutory committee and is not required to be included in the calculation of political balance. Council has previously agreed to appoint a committee in accordance with the political balance of the Council. This would therefore comprise eight conservatives, six Liberal Democrats and a seat to be filled by one of the non-group councillors.
11. As a statutory committee with a specified membership substitutes may not be appointed.

Area Committees

12. In 2003, the Council established area committees with the terms of reference set out in the council's constitution. In January 2011 the Executive delegated the

award of community grants to the area committees. The area committees consist of councillors for the relevant area only. Council is invited to confirm the membership of the area committees for the next municipal year as those local members representing those areas. The Council is asked to note that the area committees do not need to be politically balanced and therefore the area committees are not included in the calculation of seats to political groups. Council is requested to appoint councillors to the area committees as set out in the schedule circulated prior to the meeting.

Appointments

13. Officers have invited group leaders to submit the names of councillors they wish to sit on each of the above bodies. A table of nominations will be circulated at the meeting.

Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

14. Council is invited to appoint a representative and a named substitute to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

15. Council is invited to appoint a representative to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. The constitution of the panel does not provide for formally appointed substitutes but Council may appoint one in an observer capacity.

Financial implications

16. There are no direct financial implications.

Legal implications

17. These are set out in the body of the report.

Conclusion

18. In deciding the committees and panels it wishes to establish for the 2013/14 year, Council is required to allocate seats to political groups in the same proportion as they hold on the council as a whole. Against that background, Council is invited to establish the committees and panels set out in the table in paragraph 9 of this report and to appoint councillors to them. Council is also invited to appoint councillors to the Licensing Acts Committee, the area committees and to appoint representatives to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. If all committee and panel seats and substitute places are not filled at the meeting, Council is invited to delegate authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make appointments in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

Background Papers: None