

Council report



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Author: Steven Corrigan

Tel: 01235 547675

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

To: COUNCIL

DATE: 17 July 2013

Abingdon Fitzharris by election – review of political balance

Recommendations

That Council:

1. agrees the revised membership of the Planning Committee as 8 Conservative and 6 Liberal Democrat members
2. allocates an additional seat on the Planning Committee to the Liberal Democrat Group and appoints a councillor to sit on it.

Purpose of report

1. This report invites Council to review the political balance and consider proposed changes to the make-up and membership of the Planning Committee following the Abingdon Fitzharris by election on 4 July 2013.

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 or following any change in the composition of political groups.
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.

5. At the Annual Meeting on 15 May 2013 Council allocated seats in accordance with the political balance noting that a vacancy existed in the Abingdon Fitzharris Ward following the resignation of Councillor Holly Holman on 3 May 2013.

Political balance following the Abingdon Fitzharris by election

6. At the by election held on 4 July 2013 Mrs Jeanette Halliday (Liberal Democrat) was elected as a councillor for the Abingdon Fitzharris ward. The political balance is now as follows:

Conservative – 28
 Liberal Democrat - 21 (20 prior to by election)
 Independent – 1
 Labour – 1

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

Composition of committees

8. 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
- Audit and Governance Committee – 10 members
- Planning Committee – 14 members
- General Licensing Committee – 15 members
- Appeal Committee – 3 members

9. The revised 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	21/51	of 54 =	22
Labour	1 – no group entitlement		
Independent	1 – no group entitlement		
		TOTAL	52

Committee	Total Membership	Conservatives	Lib Dems
Scrutiny Committee	12	7	5
Planning	14	8	6
General Licensing Committee	15*	8	6
Audit and Governance Committee	10*	5	4
Appeals Committee	3	2	1
TOTAL	54	30	22

*** The vacant seats on the Audit and Governance Committee and the General Licensing Committee were offered and filled by the non-group councillors at the annual meeting of Council in May 2013.**

10. The current review of the allocation of seats results in the Liberal Democrat Group gaining a seat on the Planning Committee previously offered to Councillor Aidan Melville, a non-group councillor, by Council at its annual meeting in May. All the other seat allocations remain as agreed by Council at its annual meeting in May.

Licensing Acts Committees

11. There is no change to the seat allocation agreed by Council at its annual meeting in May - eight conservatives, six Liberal Democrats and one seat allocated to a non-group councillor, Councillor Aidan Melville.

Appointments

12. Officers will invite Councillor Richard Webber, Liberal Democrat Group Leader, to submit the name of the councillor he wishes to sit on the Planning Committee.

Financial implications

13. None.

Legal implications

14. As set out in the body of the report.

Conclusion

15. The result of the Abingdon Fitzharris by election has led to a change in the overall balance of the political make-up of the Council. This has led to a review of the allocation of the seats available to each of the political groups represented on the council and the need to revise the membership of the Planning Committee.

Background Papers: None