

	<p style="text-align: center;">COUNCIL MEETING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">19th May 2008</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Borough Solicitor</p>
<p>For Action</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Wards Affected: ALL</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">REVIEW OF REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON COMMITTEES</p>	

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report deals with rules to be applied on the allocation to political groups of seats on committees established by the Council.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Council:

- (i) determines the size of each committee
- (ii) determines (where the rules of political balance apply) the allocation of seats on committees to each of the political groups;
- (iii) notes that the political balance on sub-committees will be reviewed at the first meetings of the General Purposes Committee, the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Council is required to review and determine the representation of the political groups on committees and allocate committee places to political groups accordingly at, or as soon as practicable after, its Annual meeting.

3.2 The allocation is determined by applying the “political balance rules” under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. These are designed to ensure that

the political composition of the Council's decision making and deliberative committees as far as possible replicates the political composition of the full Council. Committees are subsequently required to carry out a similar process in relation to any sub-committees they may have.

- 3.3 The rules are that seats must be allocated so far as reasonably practicable in accordance with 4 overriding principles:
- (a) that not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership (this rule does not apply to the Council as no party currently has an overall majority of seats);
 - (c) subject to paragraph (a) above (and to (b) above if it had been applicable), that each political group is allocated the same proportion of the total seats across all the ordinary committees of the Council as the proportion of the members of the authority that belong to that group; and
 - (d) subject to paragraph (a) and (c) above, that each political group is allocated the same proportion of the seats on each relevant body as the proportion of the members of the authority that belong to that group.

Principles (b) and (d) refer to a "body" which under the rules means ordinary council committees and sub-committees, overview and scrutiny committees and sub-committees and advisory committees and sub-committees. Principle (c) refers to "committees" which under the rules means only the "ordinary committees" of the Council, namely the General Purposes, Audit and Planning.

The effect of the rules is that the political balance on each body will be the same as far as possible as that on full Council, subject to ensuring that there is always more than one party represented, the majority party (if there is one) has the majority of seats and that the allocation of seats across the "ordinary committees" is the same as on full Council.

- 3.4 This means that the General Purposes Committee, the Audit Committee and the Planning Committee have an extra criterion to satisfy and have to be taken together in determining the number of seats that should be allocated to each group, but all other committees are considered individually.
- 3.5 The current membership of the authority is 63 consisting of 27 Liberal Democratic Group, 20 Labour Group, 16 Conservative Group.
- 3.6 The table below sets out the political balance position as it applies to the committees set out in the Constitution.

Committee	Size	Liberal Democrats 42.86%	Labour 31.75%	Conservative 25.40%
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8	3	3	2
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8 (plus 4 voting co-opted members and 2 non-voting co-opted members)	3	3	2
General Purposes Committee	11	5	4	2
Planning Committee	10	4	3	3
Audit Committee	3	1	1	1
In accordance with principle (c) above the balance across these three committees taken together:	24	10	8	6

- 3.7 In addition, the Council has two committees which are not required by law to be subject to the political balance rules described above but to which appointments fall to be made at this meeting. These are the Standards Committee and the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee. Although not a statutory requirement the Council agreed some time ago that the Standards Committee would have 3 members in addition to the Independent Members, one from each party group. It was also agreed that the political balance rules would as a matter of policy (not law) be applied to the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee. The effect of this is that the allocation of seats on those committees is as follows:

Committee	Size	Liberal Democrat 42.86%	Labour 31.75%	Conservative 25.40%
Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee	15	6	5	4

Committee	Size	Liberal Democrat 42.86%	Labour 31.75%	Conservative 25.40%
Standards Committee	3	1	1	1

- 3.8 The political balance rules do not apply to the London Councils Joint Committees to which the Council is required to make appointments because only one appointment is made to each.
- 3.9 If any member wishes to put forward an alternative proposal to the above they are invited to submit their proposals to the Borough Solicitor who will check them for legality before they are proposed at the Council meeting. As the mathematics can prove quite complex, it would be helpful if details could be provided at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.10 It will be for committees to review the political balance of sub-committees. The review and a determination of the allocation of seats on sub-committees must be carried out as soon as practicable after any occasion on which the members of the committee are changed in consequence of a determination under the 1989 Act and may be carried out on other occasions. It is proposed that such a review take place at the first meeting of the General Purposes Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which are the only committees to have sub-committees to which the political balance rules apply. It is proposed that a similar review take place at the first meeting of the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee, although this is not a legal requirement

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 These are addressed in the body of the report.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 This report has been screened by officers and there are not considered to be any diversity implications arising from it.

Background Papers

The Brent Constitution

Contact Officers;

Terry Osborne, Borough Solicitor or Dan Bonifant, Solicitor at the Town Hall Annexe, Town Hall, Wembley Tel: 020 8937 1310.

Terry Osborne
Borough Solicitor