

## Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Dave Myers, Assistant Chief Fire Officer on 01743 260280

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report outlines the changes to the Committee structure of the Fire Authority and asks the Authority to agree the numbers on its Committees, together with the allocations of seats on those Committees to political groups.

### 2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the report
- b) Agree the number of Members on its two Committees; and
- c) Agree the allocation of seats to political groups on each of the two Committees and the associated sub-committees, as proposed in the Appendix to the report.

### 3 Background

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and Regulations made thereunder, require that seats on standing committees are politically balanced across the total number of committee places (i.e. in aggregate) and, subject to that overriding requirement, each committee has to be politically balanced, as far as reasonably practicable.

The number of Fire Authority Members will directly influence the representation on the committees. The fewer Members, the more difficult it is to maintain an even spread of political and technical experience. Following the decision to reduce from 17 Members to 15, the current political balance of each constituent authority based upon 15 members is as follows:

	Cons	Lab	Lib Dem / Indep	Total
Shropshire Council	6	1	3	10
Telford & Wrekin Council	1	3	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>

The two-committee structure is formed of a Strategy and Resources Committee and a Standards, Audit and Performance Committee.

### **Strategy and Resources Committee (SaR)**

Looking Forward - this committee would have responsibility for planning and preparing, for resourcing the Service and driving change across the Authority. Giving greater delegated authority to SaR to approve policy decisions on behalf of the Authority will provide the time and capacity to allow these decisions to be made. However, the Fire Authority would still retain the primary authority to take policy decisions when there may be any unnecessary delay for important decisions to be made at Committee level.

### **Standards, Audit and Performance Committee (SAP)**

Looking Back - This committee would be responsible for holding-to-account the delivery of the Authority's decisions, by auditing and checking, reviewing and giving assurance, either through standing reporting methodologies or through thematic reviews. It will be able to provide challenge to the decisions made at SaR, scrutinise the performance of the Service, holding officers to account, and provide assurance by reporting back to the FRA. It would also perform the function of holding to account the performance and standards of Members and the Authority. This would include the duty of management of the Pensions Fund. This committee could also perform the function of scrutinising decisions in their formative stage in support of SaR and the FRA.

## **4 Membership of the Committees**

The Committees will have a split membership, with all Fire Authority Members holding a position on one or the other Committee.

Members will note the different functions of the two committees described above. The separation of the Members and the political balance of each Committee is important to demonstrate transparency and accountability across all the delegated decisions made and to give assurance that each committee is able to hold Officers to account on behalf of the Fire Authority.

The numbers on each committee are advised to be held as high as possible. This is to ensure that the business of the Fire Authority can be maintained and meetings are quorate. It is recommended that the quorum should be no lower than 3.

Membership of 8 on one Committee and 7 on the other involves all members of the Fire Authority and accords with the principles detailed in previous paragraphs to this report.

Members are asked decide which of the two Committees should have the larger number, taking into account the following:

- The greater number of standing items and reports to review are held by the SaR Committee. This Committee will spend much of their time debating new initiatives and agreeing financial spending.
- The SAP Committee will spend much of their time reviewing decisions and receiving assurance on performance.

The Chair or the Vice Chair of the Fire Authority will hold the Chairing role of the SaR Committee and the Leader of the highest representing opposition party will be the Chair of the SAP Committee.

To ensure political balance and equality of influence, the Membership numbers of each Committee is proposed as 7 Members on Strategy and Resources Committee and 8 Members on the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee.

### **Committee representation**

The Political balance of each of the Committees is calculated by the following ratios:

- The first and overriding criteria is that the majority of seats on any committee are held by the Group, if any, having a majority on the Council
- Numbers can then be informed by the number in the political group being divided by the total number of Fire Authority members to give the ratio;
- Subject to the first criteria, multiply the number of seats on the committee by the ratio to give allocated number of seats to each political group

Using this formula, the representation of political groups against each of the Committee and Sub-Committee groups is shown in the Appendix to the document.

Members are asked to review the Appendix and agree the proposed representation and numbers of Members against each of the Committees and Sub-Committees.

## **5 Capacity**

There are no capacity impacts arising from this report.

## **6 Collaboration / Partnership Working**

There are no impacts on opportunities for Collaboration

## **7 Community Safety**

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

## **8 Environmental**

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

## **9 Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An e-EQIA is not, therefore, required.

## **10 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **11 Health and Safety**

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

## **12 Human Rights (including Data Protection)**

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

## **14 Legal Comment**

The Fire Authority must comply with the political balance requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and its Regulations, when allocating seats on its standing committees, as described elsewhere in this report.

The report has been shared with the Monitoring Officer and the content and detail agreed as appropriate and accurate

## **15 Public Value / Service Delivery**

The restructure of the Authority has been agreed with the recognition that effectiveness and efficiencies are created by doing so. These have been detailed in previous reports.

## **16 Reputation**

There are no reputational impacts arising from this report.

## **17 Security**

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

## **18 Training**

Depending on which Members are assigned to which Committee, there may be training required for Members to support them in any new roles.

## **19 Appendix**

Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

## **20 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.

## Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Proposed Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

### Key

*	<b>Cons</b>	Conservative
	<b>Lab</b>	Labour
	<b>Lib Dem / Indep</b>	Joint Liberal Democrat and Independent Group

\*\* These rows indicate the actual number of Members each political group should have, based on the percentage of Members it has of the Fire Authority as a whole.

	<b>Cons*</b>	<b>Lab*</b>	<b>Lib Dem / Indep*</b>	<b>Total Seats</b>
<b>Shropshire Council</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>

The following allocation of seats on the Fire Authority's committees is proposed.

	<b>Cons*</b>	<b>Lab*</b>	<b>Lib Dem / Indep*</b>	<b>Total Seats</b>
** <b>Strategy and Resources Committee Members: 7</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>
** <b>Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Members: 8</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>2.12</b>	<b>2.12</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>
** <b>Brigade Managers Employment Panel Members: 7</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>
** <b>Pensions Panel Members: 3</b>	<b>1.40</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem / Indep*	Total Seats
** <b>Aggregate Seats</b>	<b>11.64</b>	<b>6.64</b>	<b>6.64</b>	<b>24.92</b>
<b>Total Seats Allocation</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>

### **Pensions Panel**

It is recommended that the seats on the Pensions Panel be allocated as follows:

- 1 seat to be taken by Chair or Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority;
- Remaining seats to be taken by balancing members.

### **Strategic Advisory Group**

Although Members agreed that this Group should be politically balanced, it does not form part of the political balance calculations, as being a Working Group, it is not a fully constituted committee of the Fire Authority. The following allocations are proposed.

	Cons*	Lab*	Lib Dem / Indep*	Total Seats
** <b>Members: 7</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Allocation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>