

## West Wiltshire District Council

### Council

23 June 2004

### Political Balance

#### 1. Purpose

To determine the size of and allocate seats on the politically balanced committees.

#### 2. Background

It is necessary to review political balance on committees due to the recent:

- formation of the West Wiltshire Independent Group (WWIG); and
- the temporary reduction in the number of members on the Council.

The Council must therefore allocate seats to the politically balanced committees below. At the same time it must also decide the size of the Committees marked \*.

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Internal Overview Committee* | • Licensing Committee             |
| • External Overview Committee* | • Joint Health Overview Committee |
| • Planning Committee*          |                                   |

The following 3 rules of political balance apply because the Council is "hung".

- Rule 1** Places on committees are allocated in proportion to the number of members in each group: the bigger group; the more places.
- Rule 2** Each group must receive, as far as practicable, a **total** number of places across all the politically balanced committees in proportion to the number of councillors it has on the Council as a whole.
- Rule 3** Each group must receive, as far as practicable, a total number of places on **each** committee in proportion to the number of councillors it has on the Council as a whole.

We must try to follow all three rules but Rule 2 is more important than Rule 3.

Therefore the number of places each group has on a committee may have to be adjusted so that a group does not get more or less than its share of the total number of places.

#### 3. Key Issues

The recent CPA report said at paragraph 45

"Recent changes to the planning committee structure are not yet working effectively. ... the agenda for the new central committee tends to be very long, hampering effective decision making."

The size of the Committee appears to be a significant factor in the length of meetings. I have therefore set out in the table below a suggestion to fix the size of the committee at a more manageable number of seats.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Total No. of Places</b>	<b>Con. 45.24%</b>	<b>L.Dem 40.48%</b>	<b>Ind. 4.76%</b>	<b>Lab. 4.76%</b>	<b>WWIG 4.76%</b>
<b>Allocation of places to comply with Rule 2</b>	<b>48</b>	22 (21.71)	20 (19.43)	2 (2.29)	2 (2.29)	2 (2.29)
<b>External Overview</b>	<b>9</b>	4 (4.07)	4 (3.64)	0 (0.43)	0 (0.43)	1 (0.43)
<b>Internal Overview</b>	<b>9</b>	4 (4.07)	4 (3.64)	0 (0.43)	1 (0.43)	0 (0.43)
<b>Joint Health Overview</b>	<b>4</b>	2 (1.81)	2 (1.62)	0 (0.19)	0 (0.19)	0 (0.19)
<b>Licensing</b>	<b>10</b>	5 (4.52)	4 (4.05)	1 (0.48)	0 (0.48)	0 (0.48)
<b>Planning</b>	<b>16</b>	7 (7.24)	6 (6.48)	1 (0.76)	1 (0.76)	1 (0.76)

**Legal Implications:** Counsel has advised that there is no obligation to give the smaller groups a seat on every committee, provided they receive their legal entitlement to seats overall. Although he has also advised that the groups with 2 members may lawfully receive a different number of seats overall, I have suggested a scheme which allocates an equal number of seats to each of them.

#### **4. Background Papers**

None.

#### **5. Conclusion**

When considered alongside the seats on the Standards Committee and LJCC, the size of committees suggested above will suit the needs of the Council.

#### **6. Recommendation**

- (i) That Council establish the number of seats on the following committees as shown below. These committee sizes will take effect for all meetings after the 1 July 2004.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Number of Seats</b>
a) External Overview	9

- |    |                    |    |
|----|--------------------|----|
| b) | Internal Overview  | 9  |
| c) | Planning Committee | 16 |
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- (ii) That seats on the External Overview, Internal Overview, Joint Health Overview Committee, Licensing and Planning Committees be allocated in accordance with this report.
  - (iii) That each group leader notifies the Legal Services Manager of that group's membership on the on the External Overview, Internal Overview, Joint Health Overview Committee, Licensing and Planning Committees.

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Plain English guidance given.