



## **REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - 27 JUNE, 2013**

### **COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES AND MISCELLANEOUS COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS AFTER CHANGES OF POLITICAL GROUP AFFILIATION**

#### **1 Recommendations**

The Council is recommended to:-

- (1) note that the standard model for a 14 member committee requires to be amended after recent changes of political group affiliation;**
- (2) agree to suspend Standing Order 18 so as to alter the Council's previous resolution on this matter within six months (Council decision of 17 January 2013) so as to agree that the new standard model for a 14 member committee is 8 Alliance, 5 Scottish National Party plus one other place allocated amongst the other councillors;**
- (2) agree to suspend Standing Order 18 so as to alter the Council's previous resolution on this matter within six months (Council decision of 17 January 2013) so as to agree the exact composition of the four Policy Committees and the Scrutiny and Audit Committee in light of the new standard model, having regard to the principle of each member being allocated one committee place and after considering the options detailed in the tables in 2.7,**
- (3) agree the composition of the 8 member miscellaneous committees, sub-committees and working groups listed in Appendix 1 of the report, after considering the options detailed in 2.9, and the Appeals Committee as detailed in 2.12, and**
- (4) agree the revised allocation of committee places on the Valuation Joint Board as detailed in 2.13.**

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Council at its meeting on 17 May, 2012 (Item 5, Page 3), agreed to appoint four Policy Committees of 14 members and a Scrutiny and Audit Committee of 12 members. This made a total of 68 committee places, with each member being allocated one committee place. Composition of committees was agreed having regard to the political proportionality of the Council.**

- 2.2 The Council also agreed that the standard model for a 14 member committee would be 7 Alliance, 6 Scottish National Party plus one other place to be allocated amongst the other councillors, and that the Scrutiny and Audit Committee would comprise 6 Alliance, 5 Scottish National Party plus one other place allocated amongst the other councillors.
- 2.3 The Council, at its meeting on 17 January 2013 (Item 5, Page 1405) affirmed the standard model and agreed the exact composition of the four policy Committees and the Scrutiny and Audit Committee after changes to political group affiliation. It also agreed that the impact on the 8 member miscellaneous committees, sub-committees and working groups and the Appeals Committee be the subject of a further report outlining options but meantime remain unchanged.
- 2.4 As a consequence of recent changes in political affiliation, the Alliance now has 37 members (previously 36), and the Scottish National Party now has 27 members (previously 28). The revised percentages are:-

Total Members		
Alliance	37/68	54.4%
SNP	27/68	39.7%
Green/DIG	2/68	2.9%
Unaligned Independent	2/68	2.9%

- 2.5 Consequently the standard model for a 14 member Committee to reflect this proportionality would be 8 Alliance, 5 Scottish National Party and 1 other place allocated amongst the other councillors. The standard model for a 12 member Committee such as Scrutiny and Audit would remain as 6 Alliance, 5 Scottish National Party and 1 other place allocated amongst the other councillors.
- 2.6 However, with each member being allocated one committee place, there is a requirement to deviate from the standard model so as to achieve proportionality across the Council and abide by the agreed principles upon which the work of the Council is shared across membership.

The current composition of the four policy committees and Scrutiny and Audit Committee is as follows:

	Policy and Resources	Education, Learning and Leisure	Infrastructure Services	Social Work and Housing	Scrutiny and Audit
Alliance	8	8	7	7	6
SNP	5	6	6	6	5
Green/ Democratic Independent/ Unaligned Independent	1	0	1	1	1

This however results in the Alliance having one fewer place than it should and the Scottish National Party having one more than it should and so adjustment is necessary.

## 2.7 Options

<b>Option 1</b>	Policy and Resources	Education, Learning and Leisure	Infrastructure Services	Social Work and Housing	Scrutiny and Audit
Alliance	9	8	7	7	6
SNP	5	5	6	6	5
Green/ Democratic Independent/ Unaligned Independent	0	1	1	1	1

<b>Option 2</b>	Policy and Resources	Education, Learning and Leisure	Infrastructure Services	Social Work and Housing	Scrutiny and Audit
Alliance	8	8	8	7	6
SNP	5	5	6	6	5
Green/ Democratic Independent/ Unaligned Independent	1	1	0	1	1

<b>Option 3</b>	Policy and Resources	Education, Learning and Leisure	Infrastructure Services	Social Work and Housing	Scrutiny and Audit
Alliance	8	8	7	8	6
SNP	5	6	6	5	5
Green/ Democratic Independent/ Unaligned Independent	1	0	1	1	1

<b>Option 4</b>	Policy and Resources	Education, Learning and Leisure	Infrastructure Services	Social Work and Housing	Scrutiny and Audit
Alliance	8	7	8	8	6
SNP	5	6	5	6	5
Green/ Democratic Independent/ Unaligned Independent	1	1	1	0	1

**2.8 Miscellaneous Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups -**  
Current membership of Miscellaneous Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups is 8, comprising 4 Alliance, 3 Scottish National Party plus one other place to be allocated amongst the other councillors. It was not adjusted on the last occasion that the political group affiliations changed in January this year but instead it was agreed that a report should be brought forward to look at the options to equitably share the work of the Council across its membership.

## 2.9 Options

There are currently eleven active 8 member groups. Three others were formally re-established after the 2012 election but have not yet been required to meet and do not have councillors appointed to them. A list of these groups is attached at Appendix 1.

### Option 1 - no change

- 2.9.1 The report to the Council on 17 January suggested that the membership of 8 member groups did not need any adjustment, on the basis that the percentage shift from the other councillors to the Alliance was not significant enough to justify making any changes. The smaller the group, the less likely it is that a slight percentage shift will have an effect. The Council may take the view that the current arrangements are working well, with members having settled into their roles on the groups and gained experience of the subject matter, and that there is no need to make any changes.

### Option 2 - revert to 7 member groups

- 2.9.2 When the composition of policy committees was first set at 14 after the 2007 election, the composition of miscellaneous committees was agreed to be 7. The number was chosen deliberately because it was half the size of the policy committees. Changes in political affiliation during the previous term meant that it was necessary to adjust this composition and the most efficient and expedient way of doing this was to increase the membership to 8. While the recent percentage shift from the other councillors to the Alliance is small, it results in the other councillors now being entitled to 0.47 of an 8 member group instead of 0.59. The significance of this is that 0.47 would normally be rounded down, which reduces the justification for having other councillors on miscellaneous committees. The Council may take the view that it is appropriate to revert to the original plan to have miscellaneous groups exactly half the size of the policy committees. The disadvantage of this option would be that the other councillors would be excluded from contributing to the discussion in these groups.

### Option 3 - aggregate committee places together before allocation

- 2.9.3 Although the available places on policy committees are aggregated together when deciding on composition, this has never been done for miscellaneous committees. To allow for new groups to be established during a Council term, it was decided to set a standard formula for these groups which would apply in all cases. However, if the places on the eleven active 8 member groups are aggregated together, there is a total of 88 committee places (currently 44 Alliance, 33 SNP, 11 other groups). Applying the new percentages would suggest that the Alliance would be entitled to a total of 48 places (up 4), SNP 35 places (up 2) and other groups 5 places (down 6). *If the three non-active groups are included in the calculation the total is 112 places (56 Alliance, 42 SNP, 14 other groups) and the new percentages would give the Alliance 61 places (up 5), SNP 44 places (up 2) and other groups 7 places (down 7).*

- 2.10 The effect of this would be that some groups would retain the 4:3:1 ratio, while others would become either 5:3 or 4:4. It would then be for the Council to decide which of the 8 member groups would no longer include one of the other councillors and whether they should be replaced by an Alliance or Scottish National Party councillor. If this approach was chosen, it is suggested that groups such as Appointments Committee, Procedures Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee should stay 4:3:1, while others which meet less often and/or do not have decision making powers could change to 5:3 or 4:4. That would be the fair and consistent way to deal with proportionality as it affects workload. The main disadvantage of this option would be the need to review the allocation of places every time a new group was established.
- 2.11 Members will be aware of other groups in existence whose composition differs from the 8 member group model (e.g. Employees' Joint Consultative Committee, North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group, North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership, Penalty Notice Hearing Panel). These groups have been established by policy committees and are not included in this report. Any changes to these groups would be for the appropriate policy committee to determine.
- 2.12 **Appeals Committee** - Membership of the Appeals Committee is 5, comprising 3 Alliance and 2 Scottish National Party. The revised percentages do not require any change to that.
- 2.13 **Joint Boards** - There were formerly 18 Joint Board places, comprising 9 Alliance, 7 Scottish National Party and 2 allocated amongst the other councillors. However the dissolution of the Joint Police Board and Joint Fire and Rescue Board has resulted in there being only 6 Board places now required to be filled on the Joint Valuation Board. The revised percentages mean that the Board should comprise 3 Alliance and 3 Scottish National Party.
- 2.14 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and any comments have been incorporated in the report.

### **3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the changes proposed are procedural matters and do not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 3.2 There are no staffing or financial implications arising directly as a result of this report.

**Christine Gore**  
**Director of Corporate Services**

## 8 MEMBER GROUPS

### Active

Appointments Committee  
Industrial Cases Committee  
Procedures Committee  
Gypsy Traveller Sub-Committee  
Licensing Sub-Committee  
Sustainability Sub-Committee  
Funding of Voluntary Social Work Organisations Sub-Committee  
Fisheries Working Group  
Planning and Building Standards Member/Officer Working Group  
Rural Affairs Working Group  
Waste Management Working Group

### Established but no members appointed

Education of Children at Home Sub-Committee  
Grants Sub-Committee  
Transportation and Infrastructure Member/Officer Working Group