

Item

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES FOR ANNUAL COUNCIL



To:

Civic Affairs Committee 16/05/2022

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report details the issues to consider following the local elections on 5 May 2022 and make recommendations to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 26 May 2022.
- 1.2 This report is being published on 6 May, the day the results of the city council elections are known, but the implications of them are yet to be worked through by officers and political groups. Therefore, there will be updated information published on 16 May, before the committee meeting.

2. Recommendations

To recommend to Council:

- (i) The city council committees and the nominations to the joint and partner bodies in paragraph 3.3 (as updated on 16 May).
- (ii) The nominations for Chairs and Vice Chairs in paragraph 3.4 (as updated on 16 May).

- (iii) Any Constitutional updates required as set out in 3.6 and/or circulated before committee.
- (iv) To continue with virtual Area Committees until further notice.
- (v) To agree that recorded meetings are removed from the Council's You Tube channel after one year and to support the continuation of hybrid meetings as set out in 3.7
- (vi) To give guidance on Council meetings for February/March 2023 (3.8)

3. Background

Appointing Committees

3.1 The rules on political balance set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 apply to both scrutiny and regulatory committee composition so that, once the size of committees has been determined, the division of seats among the political groups on the Council will be automatic and the Council must appoint those members which each political group puts forward for its seats.

In considering the allocation of committee places to political groups, the Council is legally required to take into account the following principles:

- i) That the controlling group should have a majority of seats on each committee.
- ii) That the total number of committee places allocated to each political group must be in proportion to the number of members of that group on the Council.
- iii) That on each committee the number of places allocated to each political group must be in proportion to the number of members of that group on the Council.

The order of precedence of these principles is the order in which they are given - i.e. (i) takes highest priority, then (ii) then (iii).

For May 2021, 42 councillors made up of 27 Labour, 12 Lib Dem and 3 Green/Independent, translated proportionally against a seat availability on ordinary committees of 58 seats at 36, 18 and 4 respectively. If you choose to depart from proportionality, Full Council must not only agree, but no single Member must dissent.

Alternate Members of Committees

3.2 The Council (or committees in respect of sub-committees) will appoint an alternate member in respect of each political group represented on that committee or sub-committee and two in the case of the major Scrutiny Committees for groups with more than one committee member (although a Group may choose to appoint just one). Unlike a substitute system, the city council use an Alternate Member where the councillor is a named member from a political group and (preferably) unchanged for the whole municipal year. The Alternate Member will sit in for any member of the same political group who is unable to attend a meeting.

3.3 The proportionality for both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee is set by the Combined Authority and the Council will be notified if it changes following elections on 5 May.

Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee

Current Numbers - 10 (6 Labour + 3 Lib Dem+1 G/I)

Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee
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Current Numbers - 10 (6 Labour + 3 Lib Dem + 1 G/I)

Housing Scrutiny Committee

Current Numbers - 9 (6 Labour + 2 Lib Dem +1 G/I)

Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
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Current Numbers - 6 (4 Labour+ 2 Lib Dem)

Civic Affairs Committee

Current Numbers - 6 (4 Labour + 2 Lib Dem)
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Licensing Committee

Current Numbers - 10 (6 Labour + 3 Lib Dem + 1G/I)
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Planning Committee

Current Numbers - 7 (5 Labour + 2 Lib Dem)
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Employment (Senior Officer) Committee
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Current Numbers - 6 (4 Labour + 2 Lib Dem)
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Employment Appeals Sub-Committee
Current Numbers - 6 (4 Labour + 2 Lib Dem)

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
Current Numbers - 1 (Leader of the Council) + 1 substitute (Deputy Leader)

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (numbers may change after elections)
Current Numbers - 2 Labour + 1 Labour alternate

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Audit and Governance Committee (numbers may change after elections)
Current Numbers 1 Labour + 1 Labour alternate

Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly
Current Numbers- 3 (2 Labour + 1 Lib Dem)

Joint Development Control Committee
Current Numbers- 6 (4 Labour + 2 Lib Dem + alternates)

Chairs and Vice Chairs

3.4 The Civic Affairs Committee is requested to make nominations for Chairs and Vice Chairs to the committees listed. A paper with any nominations will be circulated on 16 May:

Strategy and Resources

Environment and Community Services

Planning and Transport

Housing (note - Chair is a Councillor, the Vice Chair is a tenant/leaseholder)

Civic Affairs

Licensing

Planning

Joint Development Control Committee (City is due to Chair for 2022/23)

Committee working parties and appointments to outside bodies

- 3.5 Procedural meetings of the relevant scrutiny and regulatory committees are held at an adjourned point during the Annual Meeting of the Council to confirm working parties and to note the membership of them. Executive Councillors also agree appointments to outside bodies.

Constitutional matters

3.6 Virtual Area Committees

It is recommended that Area Committees continue to be held on-line whilst officers and Members review the options suggested in the Culture, Behaviours and Governance assessment by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (February 2022).

Whilst meeting on-line, decisions cannot be taken by the committee, but will be taken by the relevant officer following consideration by that committee as was the case on area committee grants in March 2022.

3.7 Hybrid meetings

The Council has been successfully running hybrid meetings from the Council Chamber since January 2022 and has meant contributions from Members, officers and the public could continue via Teams. This has proved very popular whilst society adapted to the gradual move to 'living with Covid'.

The more the hybrid meeting option is used and becomes an accepted norm, there is the risk that it sometimes may not work - so it is important to note that although participating in a hybrid way is a positive addition to decision making, the law requires decision makers be present in person to be able to make a decision and the public are reminded that they can attend meetings in person and if there is a technical issue, the meeting can and should continue. Democratic officers encourage public statements to be emailed in advance so that they can be read out if there are technical issues and public speakers register by noon two working days before the meeting so there is reasonable time to prepare for the meeting.

Since January, meetings have been streamed live to the Council's You Tube channel. They are then available as a recording. It is proposed that meetings remain on You Tube for one year after which time they are removed. Before January 2022, meetings from May 2020-April 2021

were available for 6 months (via Teams Live). Officers will review what is being practiced nationally as Councils get better at, and learn from, hybrid democratic decision making.

3.8 Council Meetings – February and March 2023

Members agreed to split the Council agenda in February 2022 so that the budget was debated at a stand-alone meeting, with other business adjourned to be dealt with the following week. The Committee is asked to consider whether the same approach should be taken in 2023 or that there is a bigger gap between the two Council meetings and officers report back with options.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications Not holding Area Committees in person will save approximately £5,000 in a full year (audio provision and room hire).

(b) Staffing Implications Running hybrid meetings requires two officers to manage the meeting.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications Hybrid meetings offer an additional way to access the Council's decision making.

(d) Environmental Implications Hybrid meetings offers less travel required by some participants.

(e) Procurement Implications not applicable

(f) Community Safety Implications not applicable

5. Consultation and communication considerations

None

6. Contact

If you have a query on the report please contact Gary Clift, Democratic Services Manager, tel: 01223 - 457011, email: gary.clift@cambridge.gov.uk.