

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Council  
**Date:** 19 February 2014  
**Report for:** To note  
**Report of:** Director of Legal and Democratic Services

### Report Title

**Review of Political Balance**

### Summary

The report updates members on the position regarding the political balance of the Council following the Broadheath by-election on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

### Recommendations

**1. That the report be noted**

### Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Peter Forrester, Democratic Services Manager  
Extension: 1815

### Background Papers:

None

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The rules relating to political balance are set out in section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and subsequent Regulations
- 1.2 In Summary, in making appointments to Council committees and other bodies covered by the regulations, the Council should, so far as reasonably practicable, make those appointments in accordance with the principles specified in the Act. This requires the Council to ensure where reasonably practicable:-
  - (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;

(c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority; and

(d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

1.3 The Council is required to review the arrangements for the allocation of seats at certain points, including following a by-election.

1.4 The Council has made allocations in the past in accordance with the rules. However, it is never possible to have “perfect allocations” and a group will always have slightly more places or slightly fewer places than they are entitled to.

1.5 Following her election at the Broadheath by-election, Councillor Helen Boyle has indicated that she wishes to join the Labour Group. The effect of this change based on the current model of committee places is to widen the gap between the Conservative and Labour groups in terms of their respective allocations.

## 2. Review

2.1 The key phrase in the legislation relating to the arrangements is “so far as reasonably practicable”. This recognises that it may not be possible in all cases to arrive at a perfect solution which accords with all the principles set out above. In this instance, a review of the allocations in the light of the change to the political make-up of the Council following the recent by election shows that it is difficult to achieve a near perfect result without substantially increasing the number of committee members across the board.

2.2 It is also noted that there are only 11 Committee Meetings after the date of this meeting. In addition, the Planning, Licensing, Employment and Accounts and Audit committees provide training for new members and this would need to be put in place for any potential new appointees to those committees. This is not practical at this stage.

2.3 Based on these factors, the Leaders of the Conservative and Labour Groups have agreed that there be no changes. A further significant review will be carried out after the Council elections in May 2014.

### Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	The report indirectly links to all of the corporate priorities as they are about the democratic arrangements of the Council
Financial	There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.
Legal	The main body of this report details the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and subsequent Regulations.

Equality & Diversity	There are no equality and diversity issues arising from the report
Sustainability Implications	There are no sustainability implications directly associated with this report.
Staffing/ E-Government/ Asset Management	There are no staffing, e-government or asset management implications directly associated with this report.
Risk Management	There are no risks directly associated with this report.
Health and Safety	There are no risks directly associated with this report.
Health and Well-being	There are no issues arising from this report