

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

27th June 2024 (AGM)

Title: Panel Membership Report

Recommendation: The Panel is invited to agree the new membership for 2024/25 following elections at Bristol City Council on 2nd May 2024.

1. Context

The composition of a Police and Crime Panel should take account of, as far as is practicable, both political and geographical proportionality, as well as necessary skills and experience.

Councillor membership should reflect the geography and population size of the force area, and when taken together should reflect the political balance of the force area. In essence, the local authorities combined must 'agree' to the balance of the Panel.

This forms a 'balanced appointment' objective specifically cited in Paragraph 31 of Part 4, Schedule 6 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Reaching the balanced appointment objective is a collective responsibility of the component authorities and the Panel. Whilst the Home Secretary has made it clear that the best arrangements are those which are locally determined, powers have been reserved under the Act to intervene if local agreement is not reached.

2. Unitary Councils

On 1st April 2023, the five councils in Somerset were replaced by a single unitary council. There are now 5 Unitary Councils in the force area from which

the Panel must draw its membership. The Panel consists of 14 elected members and 3 Independent Co-opted Members.

3. Elections 2nd May 2024

After elections on 4th May 2023, the ideal political scenario for the Panel's membership was 6:4:2:1:1 (LD/Con/Lab/Green/Independent) and the appointments provided by the component authorities aligned with this.

Elections took place again on 2nd May 2024 in Bristol. There was also a by-election in South Gloucestershire and some minor political churn identified in other areas over the last year. A reassessment of the 350 councillor seats across the force area has been undertaken and only Bristol's membership is affected by the recent election.

The nomination process is largely down to the authorities involved and there is no single right approach. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each authority to ensure that the member appointed has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience for their role on the Panel to enable the Panel to discharge its functions effectively.

Bristol has 3 seats, not because of the former elected mayor, but agreed by the leaders in 2012 because of Bristol's comparatively high crime levels. Accordingly, there is no change in relation to the number of seats notwithstanding Bristol's new political arrangements.

Before the 2024 election, Bristol's councillor appointments were 1 Labour, 1 Conservative and 1 Green. In strict percentage terms the Conservative seat is now replaced by another Green. Nominations have been sought and the appointments put forward by Bristol render the political allocation of seats on the Panel as follows:-

South Gloucestershire – 1 Labour 1 Liberal Democrat
North Somerset – 1 Independent 1 Conservative
Bath and North-East Somerset – 2 Liberal Democrats
Somerset – 3 Liberal Democrats 2 Conservatives
Bristol – 2 Green 1 Labour

These nominations comply with the desired political proportionality of 6:3:2:2:1.

4. Term of Office

The term of office of elected members is the same as the Commissioner, a four year term unless a Panel member ceases to be an elected Member or is removed from the Panel by their Authority. Members are entitled to be re-appointed for a maximum of two consecutive four year terms, provided that the balanced appointment objective is met by that re-appointment. The same applies to the Independent Co-opted Members.

As required, the Host Authority will retain a mechanism at all times to enable the membership to be reviewed following any significant change in the political balance on the councils following relevant elections.

Patricia Jones

Lead Officer

Patricia.Jones@Somerset.gov.uk