

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

27th June 2023 (AGM)

Title: Panel Membership

Recommendation: The Panel is invited to consider note the new membership notified to the Host Authority by the Constituent Authorities for 2023/2024.

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. This did not necessitate any change to the current allocation of places that make up the Police and Crime Panel. Somerset Council formally

notified both the Panel and the Constituent Authorities that it wished to retain its numerical representation of 5 elected members on the Panel post April 2023.

No objections were received and the resulting amendments to the membership paragraph of the Panel's Operating Arrangements have been endorsed by the Constituent Authorities.

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. Prior to the elections the political composition of the Panel was 6:4:2:1 (LD, Con, Lab, Green, 1 vacancy).

3. Elections 4th May 2023

Elections took place on 4th May 2023 in North Somerset, Bath and North-East Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Following a percentage assessment of the political churn across the force area, the desired geographical and political proportionality was considered to be 6:4:2:1:1 (LD/Con/Lab/Green/Independent).

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.

Nominations have been sought where changes are required and the appointments put forward by the component authorities 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 – 1 Labour 1 Conservative 1 Green

These nominations comply with the desired political proportionality of 6:4:2:1:1.

4. Term of Office

The term of office of elected members is the same as the Commissioner – a 4 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 4 year terms provided that the balanced appointment objective is met by that re-appointment and 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