

LGA Political Balance - City of London and Isles of Scilly

Purpose

For decision.

Summary

When the LGA was established in 1997, a decision appears to have been taken not to include the election results of Isles of Scilly and the City of London in the annual calculation of political balance. In relation to the City of London this may have been because of their unique methods of election, or because, like the Isles of Scilly, their population is so small as to have little impact on the overall figures.

Both councils are nevertheless in membership of the LGA and this paper proposes amending the process of calculation to include both City of London and the Isles of Scilly in future.

Recommendation

That the Leadership Board agrees that the election results of the City of London and Isles of Scilly are included in the annual proportionality calculations of the LGA.

Action/s

Research & Information Manager to amend process to include the two councils from the 2015/16 elections.

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Background

1. The political balance of the LGA is calculated by totalling the number of seats won by each party across all member authorities, and weighting them by their electorate (so that councillors representing small authorities are not over-represented). The resulting proportions are then applied to our governance structures.
2. Since the exercise was first conducted, the Isles of Scilly and City of London have been excluded from the balance calculation. This is likely to have been (a) because the numbers of councillors in these authorities, and the size of their electorate, are so small that they make little difference to the overall balance and (b) because the City of London electoral arrangements are unique.
3. Given that both councils are in full membership of the LGA their exclusion from our political balance seems incongruous. This paper summarises the effect of bringing them into the proportionality calculations.

Effect on Political Balance

4. The majority of members in the Isles of Scilly and City of London are classed as 'Independent'. **Table 1** shows the current political balance and the amended figure including the two authorities. The impact is marginal, because they have a small number of councillors and a small number of residents for the purpose of population weighting.

Table 1: Effect of Adding City of London and Isles of Scilly to LGA Political Balance 2014

2014	Conservative %	Labour %	Liberal Democrat %	Independent %
As now	38.3	40.6	10.8	10.4 (10.35)
with CoL and IoS.	38.3	40.6	10.8	10.4 (10.37)

5. Whilst elections and councillors on the Isles of Scilly are the same as in any other council in England and Wales, the City of London is different because the electorate includes both businesses and residents. In those wards with very few residents (six have fewer than ten electors) the electorate is primarily businesses. The Research team recommend that in order to treat the City of London in a comparable way to other councils, only residents' votes should be included. In effect the total impact on the overall figures is less than three decimal places.
6. All City of London members except one are currently classed as independent and so the majority would be counted in the Independent proportion of the LGA political balance. (Aldermen and Common Councilmen broadly equate to councillors in other councils, with the distinction being primarily one of seniority). However a minority have political

alignments to other political parties and may be nominated by those groups to represent them on the LGA's governance arrangements. To date, this has presented no problem because they have not been included in our political balance. In reality, given the infinitesimal impact on the overall political breakdown it is recommended that all Aldermen and Councilmen continue to be counted as independent whatever their declared alignment, if they stood as 'independent' candidates at their election.

Next steps

7. Subject to Leadership Board's decision, the Research Team will adjust their calculations and brief the Elections Centre at the University of Plymouth to do the same.

Financial Implications

8. None.