



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	Application of d'Hondt Principles to the Allocation of Committee Places and Choices for Civic Dignitaries in June, 2013
<b>Date:</b>	8th February, 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (Ext 6314)

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that, with effect from 14th November, 2012, Alderman Frank McCoubrey joined the Democratic Unionist Party which had the effect of increasing that Party's representation on the Council to 16 Members.
1.2	Members will also be aware that, for the purpose of the allocation of Committee places and Chairmanships and Deputy Chairmanships of the Standing Committees, under the Council's system of proportionality, the party strengths on the Council are taken to be those as at 1st May each year (Standing Order 37 (c) (iii) refers).

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<b><u>Allocation of Committee Places</u></b>
2.1.1	The 6 Standing Committees of the Council are required to be appointed at the Annual Council Meeting each year. In 2013, this meeting will be held on Monday, 3rd June.
2.1.2	Each Committee comprises 20 places giving 120 seats overall. The allocation of blocks of seats is carried out using the formula  $\frac{\text{Number of members of a Party}}{51} \times 120$

<p>2.1.3</p> <p>2.1.4</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.2.1</p> <p>2.2.2</p> <p>2.2.3</p>	<p>When this is applied to the current party strengths on the Council, the following result is arrived at:</p> <p>SF 37.65  DUP 37.65  SDLP 18.82  ALL 14.12  UUP 7.06  PUP 4.71</p> <p>If we take the whole numbers, this allocates 117 of the 120 available places. The 3 remaining places are allocated by rounding up those parties with the greatest remainder figure. The first additional seat goes to SDLP with .82, the second to PUP with .71 and the third remaining place is to be allocated between SF and DUP who both have .65. Standing Orders do not contain any provision as to how this additional place should be allocated between two parties who have the same remainder figure and the Committee needs to decide how best to proceed. One possible solution, which would be consistent with how the Council allocates Chairmanships and Deputy Chairmanships of Committees, would be for the party which achieved the highest 1st preference votes in the 2011 elections to have the additional place for the 2013/14 Council year (in this instance that would be SF) with the other party having the additional place for the 2014/15 year. I have attached at Appendices 1 and 2 tables showing how this would work across the parties for both of those years but it will be a matter for the Committee to decide upon.</p> <p><b><u>Allocation of Chairmanships and Deputy Chairmanships</u></b></p> <p>These positions are allocated using the d’Hondt table of choices (see Appendix 3) with the 6 positions of Chairman and the 6 positions of Deputy Chairman forming one pool of 12 places.</p> <p>Standing Order 42 makes it clear that, in relation to the appointment of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen, where political parties have an equal number of Members the first or earlier choice will be given to the political party which polled the higher number of 1st preference votes at the most recent Local Elections, with the first or earlier choices being passed to the other political party for the remaining year. In our current circumstances, that would mean that the first or earlier choices for the 2013/14 year would lie with SF with that position falling to DUP in 2014/15.</p> <p>Each party can choose whichever position they wish, subject to the restrictions that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No political party shall hold the same post for more than two years in a four year term and parties must make their selections on this basis provided that a party will not be required to select a post of Deputy chairman if a post of Chairman is available and provided that a party may select the same post if no other post is available to it;</li> <li>• The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of any Standing Committee shall not come from the same political party unless in the circumstances that a party has no other choice available to it.</li> </ul>
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2.2.4 In the first two years of the Council term the positions of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen have been allocated as follows:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Deputy Chairman</b>
Strategic Policy & Resources	SF	DUP
Parks & Leisure	SF	SDLP
Development	DUP	SF
Health & Env Services	SDLP	SF
Town Planning	DUP	SF
Licensing	ALL	DUP

It should be noted that parties will not be able to again choose these positions in June 2013 unless no other choice is available to them.

2.3 **Allocation of the Positions of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor**

2.3.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd October 2010, considered a report (Appendix 4) on the introduction of proportionality to the appointment of Lord Mayors and Deputy Lord Mayors. The Committee agreed to the extension of the proportionality arrangements to include the identification of those parties which would be entitled to nominate Members to fill the offices of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor on an annual basis for the full 4-year term and that those appointments be considered as a separate “pool” which would be allocated at the meeting of the party leaders immediately following the Local Government Elections every four years

2.3.2 At the meeting of the party leaders following the Local Elections in 2011 the following parties were identified as being entitled to nominate for the civic posts over the 4-year term:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Lord Mayor</b>	<b>Deputy Lord Mayor</b>
2011/12	SF	DUP
2012/13	DUP	SF
2013/14	SF	DUP
2014/15	SDLP	ALL

2.3.3 A question has been raised as to whether the change in party strengths on the Council will impact on these positions for the remaining two years of the Council term. It could be argued that the clear intent of the Committee when it established the policy was that these positions were to be allocated, at a meeting of the party leaders immediately after the Local Elections, for the full 4 year term. However, when the Committee agreed to apply proportionality to these positions in October 2010 there was not any specific consideration given as to what should happen if there was a change in party strengths during a 4-year term and therefore it is a matter for the Committee to give direction on.

2.3.4 It must be again pointed out that the election of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor is subject to statutory regulation. Section 11 (1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 makes it a requirement for these positions to be “elected” annually by the Council and, in order to fulfil this requirement, it is necessary for the election of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor to appear as separate items on the summons for the Annual Council

	Meeting. The introduction of the system of proportionality to the process cannot override this legal obligation.
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	None.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	None.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>The Committee is requested to note the information set out in the report and to decide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If it wishes to agree to the allocation of the additional Committee place between Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 Council years using the method outlined in paragraph 2.1.4 or if it wishes to allocate the additional place using a different methodology.</li> <li>2. If it wishes to continue with the procedure established in 2010 for the identification of the political parties entitled to nominate for the positions of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor for the full 4-year term, as set out in paragraph 2.3.2, or if it wishes to use a different approach following the change in party strengths on the Council.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
<p>Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager June, 2013</p>	

<b>7</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p>Appendix 1 – Allocation of Committee Places Table with SF extra seat in 2013/14</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Allocation of Committee Places Table with DUP extra seat in 2014/15</p> <p>Appendix 3 – d’Hondt Table of Choices</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Report to SP&amp;R in October, 2010 Re Introduction of Proportionality to the Appointment of Lord Mayors and Deputy Lord Mayors</p>	