

## **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**Council Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

### **Question 1 from Councillor Ayles to the Leader of the Council**

#### **Question**

Could someone explain why Councillors are not being issued with printers?

#### **Answer**

It is noted (and resolved) that in minute 274 (Cabinet, 22/9/15) where there was a discussion on Digital Strategy and paperless, it was stated that the Council must be prepared to look at going paperless. A requirement to achieve this ambition was to have the right technology in place, with training for both Councillors and officers. In the meantime it was confirmed that there would be no change to the provision of printers provided to Councillors. Where there are outstanding requests, this will be honoured and printers will be supplied.

As part of the response to the Council's commitment to the Climate Emergency, the council is seeking to reduce print and paper usage across the board. We are encouraging council staff to consider their paper and print consumption and would ask Councillors to do the same.

As part of the Southend 2050 refresh and the Covid-19, 6 Recovery Priorities that underpin the work, specifically 'How the council learns and recovers as an organisation,' we would like to use technology that we have embraced so well, to strengthen our understanding of our technology and phase out the provision and replacement of home printers and ink.

This does affect the printed packs associated with committees.

### **Question 2 from Councillor Ayles to the Leader of the Council**

#### **Question**

In the current Council practice only groups, that is a group of members register as a group, are taken into account when dealing with proportionality on committees and working parties. Any members who are not in a group are not allowed to form an understanding so that those

non group members may have proportionally on committees. For example there could be 8 non aligned members and a group of 6, the group of 6 would be allowed proportionate 6/50 on committees but the 8 would not be allowed 8/50.

Would the leader be prepared to re correct this unfair to residents unbalance of democracy?

## **Answer**

The rules governing places on committees are set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Political Groups) Regulations 1990 made under that Act. Essentially the law requires that seats on committees (and sub-committees) must be allocated on a political proportional basis between the political groups on the Council.

The Regulations deal with the treatment of Councillors who do not belong to a political group on the Council. If, following the completion of the calculations on committee places, there are any seats remaining unallocated to a political group after applying the proportionality principles in the 1989 Act, then the Council must allocate those seats to a Councillor who is not a member of a political group.

The last review of committee proportionality took place immediately after the May elections in 2019. The calculations resulted in Councillor Ayles being entitled to the three unallocated seats, but he decided to decline the offer of the seats which were then reallocated to the political groups.

The political proportionality rules do not apply to working parties, but the principles are applied by convention in allocating places on those bodies.

I would add that a review of political proportionality can only take place in prescribed circumstances in accordance with the Regulations, which include the formation of a new political group comprising two or more councillors.

## **Question 3 from Cllr Keith Evans to the Leader of the Council**

### **Question**

Has the policy changed regarding the provision of printers supplied to councillors?

**Answer**

I would refer you to my response to Councillor Aylen's question.

**Question 4 from Cllr Keith Evans to the Leader of the Council**

**Question**

Why does the current democratic process not give an equitable standing for representation on committees and working parties for non aligned Councillors?

**Answer**

I would refer you to my response to Councillor Aylen's question.