

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF MEDWAY COUNCIL**

**25 MAY 2011**

### **POLITICAL ASSISTANTS**

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

Author: Richard Hicks, Assistant Director, Customer First,  
Leisure, Culture, Democracy and Governance

#### **Summary**

This report asks the Council to make a decision in respect of the allocation of Political Assistant posts to each of the qualifying political groups represented on the Council.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

2.1 The allocation of Political Assistant posts is a matter for the Annual Meeting of the Council.

#### **2. Background**

2.1 A Local Authority has the power under section 9 of The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (the Act) to create up to three assistants for political groups subject to certain qualifying criteria. Under the Act a political group qualifies for a post if:

- (a) the membership of that group comprises at least one-tenth of the membership of the authority;
- (b) the number of other groups (if any) which are larger than that group does not exceed two; and
- (c) where the number of the other groups which are the same size as or larger than that group exceed two, the authority have determined that that group should be a group to which a post is allocated.

2.2 Currently three Political Assistants are in post; one each for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups.

- 2.3 Section 9 of the Act and the Council's own Constitution prohibit the Council from:
- 2.3.1 Making an appointment to any Political Assistant post unless and until it has formally allocated a Political Assistant to each of the qualifying groups;
  - 2.3.2 allocating a post to a political group which does not qualify for one or;
  - 2.3.3 allocating more than one post to any political group.
- 2.4 The decision on whom to select for appointment is made in accordance with the wishes of the political group in question. It is however a matter for the Council as employer to decide the terms on which the Political Assistant is employed.
- 2.5 Following the Council election on 5 May 2011 and in accordance with the Act and the Council's Constitution, the Conservative and Labour groups are entitled to a Political Assistant.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The loss of a Political Assistant from the Liberal Democrat Group will generate a saving in the order of £15,000 in the Members' Services budget.

### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of the report.

### **5. Risk Management**

- 5.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

### **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 The Council is asked to allocate Political Assistant posts to the Conservative and Labour groups.

### **Background papers**

None

### **Contact for further details**

Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services  
Telephone: 01634 332760  
Email: [julie.keith@medway.gov.uk](mailto:julie.keith@medway.gov.uk)