

## REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - 18 JUNE, 2015

### DEFINITION OF POLITICAL GROUPS, LEADERS AND SENIOR COUNCILLORS

#### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Council considers whether any further changes are required to its decision of 28 June 2012 wherein it agreed the recognition of the Political Groups, their Leaders and Senior Councillors for the purposes of consultation in relevant policies and procedures, following its decision of 8 June 2015 relating to the definition of Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Co-Leaders of the Council.

#### 2 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 28 June 2012 the Council considered that the term Leader of the Council was contained within the Remuneration Regulations but otherwise was not provided for within the Standing Orders of the Council. It recognised that convention and practice had seen the leader of the ruling administration as the Leader of the Council. Furthermore, it recognised that there was a need for a definition of the term senior councillor, again, other than defined in the remuneration regulations. The Council considered that scenarios often quite properly arise where it is necessary for officers to consult with elected members outwith the usual Council or Committee Meeting fora. It noted that a number of the Council's policies and procedures incorporated a role for Group Leaders or Senior Councillors (sometimes referred to as Senior Politicians). Without fettering or prejudicing in any way an officers obligation to be even handed in their dealings with councillors and groups of all political persuasions and affiliations on the Council, the Council agreed that it was necessary to be clear what definition is given to the terms Group, Group Leader, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and Senior Councillors by the Council. The Council therefore agreed certain definitions:
- 2.3 At its meeting on 8 June 2015 the Council reconsidered its decision of 28 June 2012 and took the opportunity to redefine a "Leader of the Council" and "Deputy Leader of the Council". It decided to remove the existing definition of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and in its place define those posts in accordance with other voted positions and agreed that the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee will be Leader of the Council and the Vice-Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee will be Deputy Leader of the Council. However, the Chair of P&R may elect to job-share the roles of Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council with the Vice-Chair of P&R and, if the Vice-Chair agrees, they will then be Co-Leaders of the Council. At the same meeting, the Chair of P & R elected to job-share the role and the Vice Chair agreed. Consequently, for the time being, the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council are the Co-Leaders who hold the posts of Chair of P & R and Vice Chair of P & R. It should be noted that by virtue of this definition, should the decision to job share end, the Leader of the Council will be the Chair of P & R Committee and the Deputy Leader of the Council will be the Vice-Chair of P & R Committee.

- 2.4 Having established the definition of Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader, the Council is asked to consider whether it wishes to make any further changes to the definitions agreed on 28 June 2012 for Group or Political Group, Group Leader and Senior Councillor. Council may wish to take into account the emergence of job-share arrangements and, if minded to incorporate this, the following consolidated amendment is offered for consideration (amendments are underlined):

**Group or Political Group** - any two or more members of the authority who wish to be treated as a group or political group and have formally notified the Chief Executive of this intention.

**Group Leader or Co-Leaders**- a member or members of the authority named to act as the leader of a group or political group and notified to the Chief Executive.

**Leader of the Council** - the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee\*

**Deputy Leader of the Council** - the Vice-Chair of Policy and Resources Committee\*

\*= The Chair of Policy and Resources Committee may elect to job-share the roles of Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council with the Vice-Chair of Policy and Resources Committee and, if the Vice-Chair agrees, they will then be Co-Leaders of the Council.

**Co-Leaders of the Council** - the combined roles of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council that is brought about in the circumstances whereby the Chair and Vice Chair of Policy and Resources Committee elect to job-share the role of Leader and Deputy Leader.

**Senior Councillor** - a Councillor who holds a significant position of responsibility in the Council's political management structure, namely the Provost and Deputy Provost, the Leader and Deputy Leader, a group leader, the Chair and Vice Chair of a Policy Committee (including Scrutiny and Audit Committee) and the Chair of an Area Committee.

- 2.5 The Monitoring Officer and the Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments incorporated.

### **3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The proposals in this report do not require any additional staffing or finance.
- 3.2 An equality impact assessment is not required because the changes proposed do not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

#### **Alan Wood**

Director of Business Services

Report prepared by: Karen F Wiles, Head of Legal & Governance

11th June 2015