

Committee on Seating Arrangements

Report to the National Assembly for Wales

Introduction

1. The Committee on Seating Arrangements was established under Standing Order 8.1 on 15 July 2003. The terms of reference were -

- to decide on seating arrangements for the Assembly Chamber for the course of the Second Assembly; and
- to report to the Assembly no later than 21 October 2003.

The Committee's decision shall constitute the arrangement for seating in the Chamber from 4 November 2003. The Committee will cease to exist when it has reported.

2. The Committee members were:

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM (Chair)
Leighton Andrews AM
Janet Davies AM
Jonathan Morgan AM
Lynne Neagle AM
Carl Sargeant AM
Karen Sinclair AM
Kirsty Williams AM

The Committee met informally on 28 July and 16 September. The Committee met formally on 2 October. Click [here](#) for the minutes of the formal meeting. (*Annex A*)

3. In reaching its conclusions the Committee considered the following -

- Chamber seating arrangements of a range of parliaments and assemblies across the world
- Principles for the allocation of seats in the Chamber in the new Assembly building
- The allocation of seats in the existing Chamber
- Equality of Opportunity for all Assembly Members

- A provision in Standing Orders to allow the Presiding Officer to take a decision on the allocation of seats if no agreement has been reached by party groups

Recommendations

1. Chamber Seating Arrangements in Other Parliaments and Assemblies

1.1 The Committee considered a document prepared by the Members' Research Service containing examples of the seating arrangements in other Parliaments and Assemblies (*Annex B*).

1.2 The Committee agreed that the document was helpful and should be made available to members of the public via the Assembly's Public Information and Education service.

Click [here](#) for Annex B

2. Allocation of seats in the Chamber in the new Assembly building.

2.1 The Committee agreed the following principles for the allocation of seats in the Chamber in the new Assembly building:-

- The Cabinet should occupy the front row
- The party of government should, as far as possible, sit in the middle block behind the Cabinet
- The other parties should sit in party blocks to either side.

2.2 The Committee recommends a draft seating plan for the new Chamber which reflects these principles (*Annex C*).

2.3 The Committee agreed that a revision to Standing Orders should be prepared to allow the Presiding Officer a default power to determine (so far as possible, in accordance with precedent) the allocation of seats in the Chamber following an ordinary election, if no prior agreement has been reached by representatives of each party group.

2.4 It was agreed that if the number of members of any party group alters between ordinary elections, the Presiding Officer should determine any adjustment which is necessary in the allocation of seats, following consultation with party groups. The Committee agreed that the revised Standing Order should reflect this.

2.5 The Committee invites the Business Committee to consider such a Standing

Order.

Click [here](#) for Annex C

3. Allocation of seats in the existing Chamber.

3.1 The Committee recommends the draft Seating plan at Annex D, in which each opposition party leader is allocated a front bench seat

3.2 An alternative draft seating plan was also considered (*Annex E*).

3.3 The Committee agreed that if the number of members of any party group alters between ordinary elections, the Presiding Officer should determine any adjustment which is necessary in the allocation of seats, following consultation with party groups.

Click [here](#) for Annex D

Click [here](#) for Annex E

4. Equality of Opportunity for all Assembly Members.

4.1 The Committee agreed that all Members should be able to participate equally in proceedings in the Chamber and asked the Presiding Officer to undertake a review of the provision for the hard of hearing.

Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas
Chair, Committee on Seating Arrangements
October 2003

Annex A**Committee on Seating Arrangements****MINUTES OF MEETING**

Date: 2nd October 2003
Time: 9 a.m.
Venue: Committee Room 1

Present: Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM (Chair)
Leighton Andrews AM
Janet Davies AM
Jonathan Morgan AM
Lynne Neagle AM
Carl Sargeant AM
Karen Sinclair AM
Kirsty Williams AM

Andrew George (Clerk to the Committee)
Marc Jones (Deputy Clerk to the Committee)

1. Apologies & announcements

1.1 There were no apologies or announcements.

2. Chair's Introductory Remarks

2.1 The Chair set out the terms of reference of the Committee. He said that the Committee was established under Standing Order 8.1 on 15 July 2003 and would decide on seating arrangements for the Assembly Chamber for the course of the Second Assembly. He said that the Committee had to report to the Assembly no later than 21 October 2003 and its decision would constitute the arrangement for seating in the Chamber from 4 November 2003. The Committee would cease to exist when it had reported.

3. Committee's Report to the Assembly (SC-02)

3.1 The Chair introduced the draft Report which contained draft seating plans for the existing Chamber and the new Assembly building.

3.1 Karen Sinclair said she had some concerns about paragraphs 2.3, 2.4 and 3.3 of the Report, which referred to proposed Standing Order changes which would enable the Presiding Officer to determine the seating arrangements in the

Chamber if no agreement had been reached by party groups. She said that the Presiding Officer should only be able to determine the seating arrangements until an agreement had been reached by a balanced representation of party groups. She also said that any adjustments to the allocation of seats should be minimal.

3.2 The Chair said that amendments to Standing Orders would be considered by the Business Committee in the first instance. The Committee agreed that the Business Committee should be advised of Karen Sinclair's concerns.

3.3 The Committee agreed the Report. It was agreed that these minutes would be included as an Annex.

4. Any Other Business

4.1 The Chair drew the meeting to a close and thanked the Members of the Committee for their co-operation.

**Secretariat, Committee on Seating Arrangements
October 2003**

