

Statement on accountability, scrutiny and local democracy

As a new councillor, I have been surprised by the lack of communication on the appointment of committee places to the various political groups.

While I appreciate that a proportional system based upon the number of seats gained is used to determine the overall split, this should not negate good relations through respectful and timely contact with all political groups to inform them of the intended allocation and to take on board suggestions.

On the training session about policy development and scrutiny last week, there was discussion around the accountability and good practice in councils being higher where the chairs of these committees were not automatically filled by members of the leading party.

While it is noted that one of the PDS committees is to be chaired by a member of the opposition during this term, it is disappointing to see that the other two are not.

What does this say about the leadership's consideration of accountability and scrutiny?

In addition, only a few months ago, this council resolved, "To write to his Majesty's Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws to enable Proportional Representation to be used for general and local authority elections."

In response to the request for better representation on the various committees, it appears that the aim of proportional representation has taken a backward step. While the leading party is keen to point out that they have gained the majority of the seats across the district, they simultaneously fail to acknowledge that their vote share actually went down, while most of the opposition groups gained greater support from voters district wide.

What does this say about the leadership's consideration of local democracy?

Finally, as a Ward Councillor in a rural area of NE Somerset, I would like to point out the impact of decisions which create inequity in small communities, where it is well known that needs are higher, but investment is significantly lower. This has been highlighted well tonight through statements relating to transport needs outside of the city of Bath.

I sincerely hope that the current level of communication between groups isn't an indicator of what can be expected going forwards. Respect for the breadth of knowledge and experience brought to the council from all democratically elected members is key and will allow effective collaboration and improvements to all areas of Bath and NE Somerset.

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