



**Report to: Policy and Resources Committee, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

**Report of: Corporate Director - Planning and Governance**

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**Subject: THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND:  
ELECTORAL REVIEW**

**1. Recommendation**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the contents of this report and provides feedback on the draft Council Size Submission set out in Appendix 1; and**
- 1.2 Authorises the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to finalise the Council Size Submission, based on the Committee's feedback, for referral to a special Council meeting for approval.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("the Commission") is an independent statutory body with responsibility for ensuring electoral equality in the English local authorities. The Boundary Commission notified the Council that Worcester City Council would be subject to a periodic review; the last review took place in 2002.
- 2.2 The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the number of councillors elected to the Council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward. The Commission points out that over time, electoral ward sizes can become unequal or less reflective of populations because of changes in the district.
- 2.3 At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021 the Committee received a report detailing the Commission's timetable and remit and the Council's work programme associated with this. The Committee noted that the first decision gateway for the Council would be in February, when the Council should seek to approve a "Council Size Submission" to the Commission.
- 2.4 The purpose of the Council Size Submission is to set out the Council's opinion of how many councillors it should have; this Submission is supported by a number of datasets and other information provided to the Commission, which will make the ultimate determination on the number of councillors the Council should have.
- 2.5 At the December meeting the Committee also gave delegated authority to the Managing Director to undertake a consultation on whether the Council should change its electoral cycle. The Council is under no obligation to change its electoral cycle but the frequency of elections is a factor that the Commission takes into account when

considering Council size as well as ward patterns within the city; therefore councillors agreed to take this opportunity to review the electoral cycle.

- 2.6 A special meeting of the Council will be convened, on the same night as the scheduled meeting (22 February) to consider: (a) the Council's electoral cycle and (b) the Council Size Submission.
- 2.7 This report provides the Committee with an update on the work underway in preparation for the Council meeting.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 The Commission provides a template for the Council Size Submission. The Submission is not principally focussed on statistics or ratios, rather it is for the Council to make arguments about the number of councillors that it considers will deliver effective governance for this particular local authority area, measured along three key dimensions: strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership.
- 3.2 If the Council chooses to continue to elect by thirds, then the Commission expects the number of councillors to be divisible by three. This requirement does not apply if the Council chooses to move to whole council elections.
- 3.3 The Committee is requested to review the draft Submission attached at **Appendix 1** which has been prepared in consultation with Group Leaders. The Committee is requested to provide any comments and authorise the Corporate Director- Planning and Governance to produce a final version in time for the special Council meeting on 22 February.
- 3.4 Separately, the special Council meeting will consider the Council's electoral cycle. Before this occurs, the law requires that a consultation process is undertaken. A consultation process commenced on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January and will close on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February. A summary of feedback from the consultation so far will be provided verbally at the Committee meeting and full response data will be shared with Group Leaders once the consultation has closed. This will accompany an officer report inviting the Council to vote on its preferred electoral cycle.

### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 There is no realistic alternative to making a Council Size Submission; it is an output required of the Council by the Commission. If agreement cannot be reached on the text of a Submission then it is open for Groups to make their own Submissions to the Commission. This is not the recommended option however; the Council's system of governance aims to achieve consensus and it is considered preferable to submit a response on behalf of the Council as a whole, if possible.
- 4.2 As noted in the Background section, there is no obligation on the Council to change its electoral cycle so the alternative options will all be considered at the special Council meeting.

### **5. Implications**

- 5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

There are no significant financial or budgetary implications identified by this work, at this stage. If the position changes as the work programme continues, this will be reported back to Committee for a further decision.

## 5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out duty placed on the Boundary Commission to undertake an electoral review of every principal local authority in England 'from time to time'. A review follows a prescribed process and the Council, as a body corporate, is one of the consultees.

As noted above, there is a separate consideration for the Council as to whether it wishes to change its electoral cycle, which is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The process requires the resolution of a two-thirds majority of the Council, taken at a special meeting convened for this purpose. The legislation also says that such a resolution cannot be passed unless the Council has taken reasonable steps to consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change.

## 5.3 Risk Implications

The Commission's review is a major piece of work for the Council to support over the next 12-18 months. Providing the Council applies sufficient resource to the project then there are no significant risks arising at this stage.

## 5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The Commission is undertaking a mandatory review, but the opportunity to review the electoral cycle, is an optional element. Depending on what the various stages of the review conclude, there may be some changes required to the Council's constitutional arrangements. However it should be noted that this process is not a review of the Council's Committee system.

## 5.5 Equality Implications

The consultation stages will need to ensure that all groups and communities have the opportunity to engage. Equality impact assessments will be undertaken at appropriate stages of the Council's work.

## 5.6 Human Resources Implications

The work will need to involve staff from a range of disciplines across the Council.

## 5.7 Health and Safety Implications

No implications have been identified.

## 5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The review of ward sizes and boundaries is intended to ensure electoral equality, which is intended to have a positive impact on individuals' satisfaction with local government representation.

## **Appendix 1: DRAFT Council Size Submission**

**Ward(s):** All wards  
**Contact Officer:** Sian Stroud Corporate Director- Planning and Governance;  
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**Background Papers:** None

Submission by Worcester City Council

# Council Size Submission: Template

[Worcester City Council]

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## How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

## About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

### Officers on behalf of the Council

## Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

N/A

## The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and

determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

The Council does not propose that any significant change is made to its size, that is, the number of councillors that it has. This is because the Council considers that its current size and governance arrangements have proved to be effective and leave it well positioned to manage its functions and any changes ahead.

No governance or capacity issues have been raised by any inspectorate or government body. Instead, the LGA Peer review process has recently praised the Council's organisational leadership and capacity (see further below). A copy of the LGA Peer Review Report is provided.

Last year the City Council celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when the City received a Royal Charter. The City Council is the only statutory agency with a specific focus on the city of Worcester itself. It has a clearly articulated set of statutory functions as a district council managing a discrete urban area, within a two-tier authority context. It has settled governance arrangements and clear plans and priorities. There are no current plans for local government reorganisation affecting Worcester City Council or plans to change the functions of the Council and how they are discharged. Copy of the City Plan is attached.

As an urban district area, the Council operates within constrained geographical boundaries and is meeting its housing needs through a joint plan with neighbouring more rural districts. As a consequence, only limited electorate population growth through development is predicted in the city itself, over the forecast period to 2028.

The Council last reviewed and reorganised its internal governance arrangements in 2017 when the Council moved to the Committee system of governance. This review process was informed by a comprehensive information gathering exercise and by external expertise. The move to the Committee system recognised that the Council had been finely balanced, politically, for a number of years and one of its objectives was to bring stability to the Council's decision-making functions and leadership.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny were commissioned to undertake a review of the effectiveness of Committee Meetings following the implementation of the Committee System and the overall findings were positive.

The Committee system has enabled the Council to undertake effective governance. There are now 4 political groups represented in the Council. The Chair and Vice Chair roles on Committees are shared and appointed under a Group Leaders Protocol, reflecting one scenario for no overall control and another scenario where there is one political party in



overall political control. In the main, the role of Chairs and Vice-Chairs are appointed from different political groups.

Evidence of the effective working of the current governance arrangements includes the commendation of the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge report of 2019. The Commission is respectfully requested to review the full LGA report, provided with this submission. The conclusion (given at a time of No Overall Control) was:

*“Overall, the Peer Team felt that Worcester City Council was a good, well-run Council with a governance arrangement that brings stability to decision-making in a potentially difficult No Overall Control situation. The Peer Team thought the organisations response to the political complexity was particularly commendable and were consistently impressed by the pride felt by the workforce and councillors when talking about their city.”*

In addition, for the past 4 years the Council has unanimously agreed its budget. In 2016 the Council approved an overall corporate strategy, the City Plan, on a cross-party basis and then again this year, as the City Plan has been refreshed. Similarly, the Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy was approved on a cross-party basis in 2020 and likewise the Council's spatial Masterplan document in 2019.

This evidence demonstrates that the Council size and governance arrangements are working well and will enable the Council to provide strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership in the coming years.

### Local Authority Profile

**Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics.** This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

Worcester City Council is an urban authority, surrounded by rural areas. There are smaller sized towns and village settlements sited in neighbouring authority areas, Worcester being the largest settlement in the county. Urban expansion to the city of Worcester, to meet local housing needs, falls outside of the Worcester City authority area. The principal geographical feature within the authority area itself is the River Severn, which runs through the city, including the city centre. Other boundaries are created by the city's main arterial roads, and

by the natural topography, particularly on the eastern side of the river. Just beyond the city's boundaries are junctions 6 and 7 of the M5. The city has a university, situated within the authority area, whose population are predominantly on the west side of the river.

The modern city has its origins in the English Civil War, and development in the wards in and around the city centre show evidence of the city's gradual economic development and expansion, with a number of wards have a predominance of Victorian housing. Further towards the edge of the city in the direction of the motorway, are settlements constructed throughout the last century, as well as the acute hospital which serves the wider Worcestershire area.

Worcester is the largest settlement in Worcestershire, supporting an estimated population of 101,200. Census data (NB- refreshed data due to be published this year) demonstrates that the majority of the population is white (93.4%), with Asian British the next largest ethnic group (4.4%). In terms of languages spoken in Worcester English is the most common main language (95.0%) followed by Polish (1.3%). The working age population of Worcester is estimated to be 59.3% in Worcester.

Worcester ranks 266 out of 533 for Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) with 1 being the most deprived. (<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-indices-of-deprivation/>) There are eight highly deprived lower super output areas (LSOAs) in the constituency, meaning 13% of the LSOAs in the constituency are highly deprived. This compares to a national average of 10%. The main causes of deprivation in the constituency are barriers to housing and services as well as the living environment.

The Worcester areas which are considered to be in the top 10 per cent of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country include parts of Sycamore Road, (Rainbow Hill Ward) Dines Green (Dines Green Ward), Blackpole (Warndon Ward), Tolladine Road (Gorse Hill, Rainbow Hill and Nunnery Wards) and Windermere Drive (Warndon Ward).

### Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

### Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
<b>Governance Model</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>As explained above, the Council operates a Committee system of local government administration and this was adopted in 2017 following an extensive exercise of review and analysis. The Council's evidence base for its decision to move away from executive arrangements and to the Committee system, are provided with this submission.</p> <p>The Council has been commended by the LGA Peer Review process for the effectiveness of this system in providing strategic leadership.</p> <p>The Council has 5 policy committees and 4 regulatory committees which work to deliver within the approved budget and policy framework set by Council. Overarching plans referred to above include the City Plan and the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.</p> <p>Full Council meets 6 times a year. Each policy committee meets 5 times a year apart from the Policy and Resources Committee which meets 7 times. Regulatory committees meet according to workload, with Planning Committee meeting monthly, Audit and Governance Committee and Standards Committee typically meeting 3 times a year and Licensing and Environmental Health Committee 4 times a year.</p> <p>Number of councillors and current appointments to committees are provided with this submission.</p> <p>The policy committees are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy and Resources Committee – 13 Members</li> <li>• Communities Committee – 11 Members</li> <li>• Environment Committee - 11 Members</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Wellbeing Committee – 11 Members</li> <li>• Place and Economic Development Committee – 11 Members</li> </ul> <p>There are two subcommittees of the Policy and Resources Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Generation Subcommittee</li> <li>• Personnel and General Purposes Subcommittee</li> </ul> <p>There is a health and safety and trade union consultation committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint health and safety consultative committee</li> </ul> <p>All of the policy committees consider and review strategic and operational policies which fall within their particular remit as defined in the Council's Constitution.</p>
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>Under the Committee system, there are no individual portfolios. Each Committee has a clear set of responsibilities for functions, set out in the Constitution. The Chair and Vice Chair of each Committee manage the agenda-setting process but the whole membership of the Committee is responsible for the functions that are conferred on that Committee.</p>
<p><b>Delegated Responsibilities</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>Under the Committee system of governance, all 35 councillors are involved in taking major decisions. Each councillor serves on at least one policy committee and one regulatory committee.</p> <p>Since the new system of governance was introduced in 2017, councillors have demonstrated that they are able to keep their commitments to the schedule of committee meetings. All positions as Chair or Vice Chair have been filled in the annual round of appointments and likewise all key positions on outside bodies (reviewed every 12 months) have been appointed to.</p>

		<p>The Council has a published scheme of delegation to officers in its Constitution. This was recently reviewed and approved by Council in November 2021. The scheme of delegation to officers makes it clear that councillors set the policy and budgetary framework on all Council functions and officers are responsible for operational implementation.</p>
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### Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	<p>The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i></li> </ul>
Analysis	<p>The Council's Committee system is established on the principles that scrutiny is a shared responsibility of all the Committees and therefore all the councillors. Each Committee has a remit in the constitution for scrutinising matters within the scope of the functions delegated to them.</p> <p>Each of the policy committees also has a role in scrutinising the performance and/or financial management of the Council's functions within the relevant committee's area of responsibility.</p> <p>Any councillor can ask questions at full Council, which meets 6 times per year and is entitled to a response at that same meeting. Any councillor can ask to speak at a Committee of</p>

		<p>which they are not a member and can ask for an item to be placed on the agenda.</p> <p>These arrangements for scrutiny were adopted in 2017 and were informed by expert advice including from the Centre for Effective Scrutiny. This scrutiny model is common to local authorities operating committee systems of governance and the model differs from a local authority operating executive arrangements.</p>
<b>Statutory Function</b>		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p>The Council has one Planning Committee and it meets once a month. Taking account of site visits, the workload amounts to one day per month for a councillor member of Committee, with more time for the Chair and Vice Chair (est. additional 0.5 days per month).</p> <p>The Council's constitution sets out which planning decisions are delegated and which are reserved to councillors. The proportion of planning applications determined by councillors is approximately 7% on average. This is because the majority of the Council's planning applications are for domestic (minor) schemes and these are not referred to councillors unless they are specifically called in by a ward member. This proportion might be projected to increase over the forecast period as a programme of more major regeneration schemes coming forward in the city. However, even taking this into account, the percentage is unlikely to exceed 10% bearing in mind the profile of the city and forecast development plans.</p> <p>There are no plans to change the arrangements for determining planning matters as set out above.</p>
<b>Licensing</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	Licensing and Environmental Health Committee meets 4 times a year. Licensing panels are convened as required to meet need, with typically 12 required per year. At each meeting on average 2-3 matters are considered. The councillor membership is drawn from the Committee. A scheme of delegation to officers set out which functions and decisions can be determined by officers; the Council's operational arrangements for licensing are discharged through a local authority shared service.
<b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	The Council's other Regulatory Committees are Audit and Governance Committee and Standards Committee. They meet as required, typically 3-4 times per year, and have a fixed agenda. These Committees are supported by the Council's statutory officers which have specified delegated and statutory powers which complement the work programme of the Committees and these Committees have co-opted and invited third parties (eg auditors, independent persons, parish council representatives).
<b>External Partnerships</b>		Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.
	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Council appoints councillors to a Joint Museums Committee which it operates with the County Council in order to manage its shared resources for museums. The Council also appoints councillors a Joint Advisory Panel with neighbouring South Worcestershire Councils in order to steer the South Worcestershire Development Plan. The Council appoints councillors to its Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board which is the management board for those local authority shared services.</p> <p>The Council appoints two councillors to the Worcestershire LEP and to the Worcester Town Investment Board. Annually the Council appoints councillors and other third parties to represent it on a number of local outside bodies.</p>

	<p>The Council currently makes approximately 120 appointments to just under 60 different bodies.</p> <p>These roles are shared across the councillor membership as a whole.</p>
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## Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>As a district council, the Council does not have area governance structures. There are two parish councils within the district which councillors do work with, although they are autonomous bodies.</p> <p>Councillors decide for themselves how they wish to engage with their local communities. Many are very active through social media and through email communication with their constituents, as well as telephone contact, newsletters and</p>



		<p>personal visits. A number of councillors do hold surgeries at community venues.</p> <p>Individual councillors have by their own initiative established community representation roles. For example, one councillor acts as the Council's Armed Forces Champion and another is the Children and Young People's Champion. Other councillors have assumed leadership and representation roles to minority ethnic communities and other groups which they consider underrepresented in Council decision-making.</p> <p>Councillors have used the public speaking item at Council meetings to invite members of their local communities to address the Council as a whole.</p>
<b>Casework</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Councillors take a variety of individual approaches to their casework. A common theme however is that councillors are aware when a matter should be referred to a Council officer, or the corporate complaints procedure, for resolution.</p> <p>This helps ensure that casework related directly to the Council's functions remains manageable. It is a matter of personal choice for councillors how much they choose to get involved in wider community or individual causes.</p> <p>The move to online meetings during the past 2 years has emboldened local government councillors and officers to consider how this technology should now become a mainstream part of local democratic representation. Formal meetings are now video recorded and live streamed via the Council's website.</p> <p>While formal committee meetings cannot be held remotely under the present law, the Council's officers and councillors have continued to hold informal briefings by remote means where this is desired by the participants. This has included public consultations; for example, online seminars formed part of the Council's recent public consultation on its Towns Fund investment plans.</p> <p>Using remote means for informal briefings and training events for councillors can assist with their diary</p>

		<p>commitments, saving travelling time and identifying slots around their work and personal commitments.</p> <p>Technical support is available for councillors should they require it. The administration of formal and informal Council meetings is undertaken by Council officers.</p>
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### Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

A workload survey was conducted with councillors in 2015 which informed the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel. Average time spent each week was 10 hours and 50 minutes. Subsequent to that, the Council has moved to the Committee system of governance which could reasonably be assumed to have spread the workload out more evenly across councillors. Workloads will vary more according to how much ward-level activity councillors are choosing to be involved in, than their Committee-related workloads.

Councils represented by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Panel itself have recognised the role of councillors and the time spent carrying out the role has increased since 2015. As a result of this recognition Worcester together with the other Councils represented by the Panel will be conducting a new survey within 2022 with the outcome being used to recommend any changes to the level of basic allowance.

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has looked at councillor remuneration several times since the Committee system was adopted and has made recommendations to increase the allowances to Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committee to reflect increased workloads, relative to other councillors. These recommendations have been approved by Council.

However, Council has not always adopted the IRP's recommendations on the level of general increase in the basic allowance payable to councillors due to concern about the pressure on public finances.

### Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

The proposals favoured by the Council are to remain with the same number of councillors at the present time ie 35, or up to 36 if required for a number divisible in thirds. Alternatively if the Boundary Commission were so minded, the Council would also support an increase in this number slightly, up to a maximum of 39 councillors.

The Council notes that according to its nearest neighbour range, the councillor elector ratio is 1,943 to 2,294 with a median of 2,152 (and council size of 34-44 with a median of 39). On current data, the average number of electors per councillor in Worcester City is 2,167.

The Council's submissions above provide evidence as to how the current governance arrangements and councillor number are offering the local authority to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership.

A reduction in councillor numbers would not be supported by the Council because the Committee calendar of meetings places a significant demand on councillor time and these duties are shared out across all councillors.

An increase in councillor numbers ranging from 1 to 4 councillors (ie moving to a total of 36-39 councillors) could be accommodated without materially affecting the current governance arrangements and would enable the workload to be distributed further across the councillor membership.

An increase in councillor numbers to a significantly higher factor would not be supported by the Council. Councillors have previously voted against independent recommendations on increases to members allowances where they considered those increases placed too much of a burden on the public purse. For this reason, coupled with the evidence that current governance arrangements are effective, Worcester City councillors would be unwilling to support a substantial increase in the number of councillors appointed to the authority.