

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update Council on progress of the periodic electoral review of North Lincolnshire being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
- 1.2 To consider the recommendations of the Electoral Review Working Group on the 'council size' submission to be made by Council to the LGBCE.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Further to the report to Council in January on this review, the Electoral Review Working Group has met on two further occasions to prepare and draft a submission to the LGBCE on the recommended 'council size' under the first phase of the review process. An outline of the review process, with timetable, is attached at an Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Electoral Review Working Group's recommended submission is attached at Appendix 2 for Council's consideration. The submission follows the form recommended by the LGBCE in its guidance and concludes that the appropriate 'council size' continues to be 43 councillors for North Lincolnshire.
- 2.3 The Council is required to determine its submission by 25 February 2021 in order to comply with the timetable for the review set by the LGBCE.
- 2.4 Having submitted its 'council size' submission to the LGBCE, the LGBCE is intending to take a 'minded' decision on the 16 March 2021 and will confirm this to the Council in due course.
- 2.5 Further reports will be presented to Council as the review progresses in accordance with the timetable detailed in Appendix 1.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 The Council is under a duty to respond to the electoral review and through full Council determine a submission to the LGBCE on 'council size' under the first phase of the review process. The Electoral Review Working Group was established by Council to settle a recommended submission for Council to consider.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 The Electoral Review Working Group, as authorised by Council, has settled its recommended submission at Appendix 2, and it is now for Council to consider and confirm its submission on 'council size' to the LGBCE by 25 February 2021.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

5.1 There are no direct resource implications associated with consideration of this report.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

6.1 There are no other relevant implications.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

8.1 No conflicts of interest have been identified or declared.

8.2 The LGBCE is responsible for leading on the public consultation aspects of the electoral review process.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the recommendations of the Electoral Review Working Group on the 'council size' submission at Appendix 2 be received, approved and adopted and be submitted formally to the LGBCE as the Council's submission.

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Date: 15 February 2021

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
LGBCE Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance April 2014
Report to full Council, 25 January 2021

LGBCE Review timetable for North Lincolnshire

Stage	Action	Duration
Preliminary Period	Informal dialogue with local authority. Focus on gathering preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral data. Commissioner-level involvement in briefing group leaders on the issue of council size. Meetings also held with officers, group leaders, full council and, where applicable, parish and town councils. At the end of this process, the council under review and its political groups should submit their council size proposals for the Commission to consider.	October 2020 to 25 February 2021
Council size decision	Commission analyses submissions from local authority and/or political groups on council size and takes a 'minded to' decision on council size.	16 March 2021
Formal start of review		
Consultation on future warding/division arrangements	The Commission publishes its initial conclusions on council size. General invitation to submit warding/division proposals based on Commission's conclusions on council size.	18 May 2021 to 26 July 2021
Development of draft recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its draft recommendations.	21 September 2021
Consultation on draft recommendations	Publication of draft recommendations and public consultation on them.	5 October 2021 to 13 December 2021
Further Consultation (if required)	Further consultation only takes place where the Commission is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations and where it lacks sufficient evidence of local views in relation to those changes.	Up to 5 weeks
Development of final recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its final recommendations and publishes them.	1 March 2022
Order made and laid before Parliament	Order subject to the negative resolution procedure.	Summer 2022
Order confirmed and elected upon	Order confirmed and will form the basis for the next elections.	May 2023

Council Size Submission

North Lincolnshire Council

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How to Make a Submission

1. It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should 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.
2. 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.

About You

3. 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, or an individual.

This submission was developed by a cross party elected member working group and was agreed by Full Council on 25 February 2021.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

4. 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.*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Local Authority Profile

5. Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description may cover all, or some 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?
 - Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) guidance makes it clear that they will always seek to propose a council size which is appropriate for the individual characteristics of the local authority in question, whether that will involve an increase, decrease or no change to the existing arrangements. The guidance also states that the LGBCE will consider the size of the council in context by cross referencing the council's proposal with the size of its nearest neighbours as published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA). The 15 nearest neighbours, identified by CIPFA, are shown in the following table –

Council	Electorate	Number of Councillors	Ratio
Darlington	79,668	50	1:1593
Halton	96,350	54*	1:1784
Telford and Wrekin	133,082	54	1:2464
Warrington	161,796	58	1:2789
North East Lincolnshire	117,393	42	1:2795
St Helens	140,381	48**	1:2925
Calderdale	151,508	51	1:2970
Barnsley	187,822	63	1:2981
North Lincolnshire	130,196	43	1:3027
Wigan	242,023	75	1:3226
Rotherham	196,998	59***	1:3338
Dudley	246,281	72	1:3421
Cheshire West and Chester	271,339	70	1:3876
Doncaster	227,300	55	1:4132
Wakefield	264,227	63	1:4194

* LGBCE has recommended a council size of 54, to be implemented in May 2021 (was previously 56 councillors).

** LGBCE has recommended a council size of 48.

*** LGBCE has recommend a council size of 59, with an increase in number of wards, to be implemented in May 2021 (was previously 63 councillors and 21 wards).

The information shows that, using the 15 nearest neighbours, the average ratio of councillor to member of the electorate is 1 councillor: 3034 registered voters. North Lincolnshire's current ratio with 43 members is 1 councillor: 3014 registered voters.

North Lincolnshire is characterised by a variety of landscapes ranging from the clay pits of the Humber Estuary, the rolling chalk escarpment of the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Ancholme Valley, the Lincoln Edge, the Trent Valley, and the Isle of Axholme. There are also over 128 miles of estuary and rivers in North Lincolnshire.

The settlement pattern of North Lincolnshire has been highly influenced by the topography of the area: the River Trent and its flood plain; the network of low hills on the Isle of Axholme; the River Ancholme and its valley; the Lincolnshire Wolds; and the Humber Estuary. Such characteristics have important implications for the way in which settlements function and the relationships that become established between different settlements. This will ultimately determine how sustainable each settlement is, not only in terms of its role within North Lincolnshire, but also in its capacity to accommodate additional development.

The North Lincolnshire Settlement Survey (2019 Revision) identifies that there are 86 separate settlements in North Lincolnshire spread over an area measuring 859 square kilometres. It is a predominantly rural area made up of a number of historic market towns: Barton upon Humber; Brigg; Crowle; Epworth; Kirton in Lindsey; and Winterton. These towns are surrounded by countryside with many villages of various sizes and hamlets. Scunthorpe is the largest urban area and is the main focus for education, jobs, retail, services and industry.

North Lincolnshire is home to a variety of ecologically important wildlife habitats ranging from the internationally important areas of the Humber Estuary and Crowle Moors, through to nationally, regionally, and locally important wildlife and geological sites.

North Lincolnshire is actively seeking the extension of the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) into the area to further protect our most valued landscapes. The southern Isle of Axholme has the most extensive surviving examples of a medieval landscape in England, notably the medieval open strip fields and Turbaries, both of which are of considerable national importance.

North Lincolnshire is predominantly rural in character with over 85% of the total land area being in agricultural use. Most of this land is classified as agricultural Grades 2 and 3 (very good and good to moderate quality). However, there are areas of the highest quality Grade 1 (excellent) land, which are found mainly in the valley of the River Trent as well as in parts of the Isle of Axholme and some areas of the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Almost half of the population and the majority of jobs, services and facilities are concentrated in the principal urban area of Scunthorpe and Bottesford. The remainder of North Lincolnshire's population is widely dispersed amongst the area's 85 other settlements - a combination of market towns, villages, rural hamlets and smaller settlements.

These places are diverse in terms of size and service provision and deliver a range of facilities that support the daily needs of residents, with some having a greater range than others. Many of the smaller settlements have limited or no facilities and so residents must rely upon neighbouring settlements or travel to the Market Towns. The decline in rural facilities has been taking place for some time with changes in lifestyles and availability of services via the internet having a significant impact.

House prices in the area are generally low compared to the regional and national averages, but there are 'hotspots' in the local housing market with affordability issues, particularly in the rural areas.

21.3% of North Lincolnshire's population is aged 65 and over, this is higher than the national average. By 2039 there is projected to be a substantial growth of 37.2% (13,653 people) in the population over retirement age (65+).

By 2039, 28.3% of North Lincolnshire's population is predicted to be aged 65 and over. The number of people aged 85 and above in North Lincolnshire is predicted to rise at an even faster rate – up by 77.5% between 2019 and 2039. This age group represent some of North Lincolnshire's most frail and vulnerable residents and are the heaviest users of health and social care and will make up 4.5% of the area's total population by 2039.

People in North Lincolnshire are living longer than ever before, with the life expectancy of North Lincolnshire residents improving year on year in line with national trends.

However, there are widening inequalities in the area and life expectancy for people living in the most deprived areas (mainly concentrated in the Scunthorpe urban area) is still below those living in the least deprived. Similarly, they are more likely to experience the greater burden of poor health in older age than those living in the least disadvantaged areas.

Trends show that the number of households in North Lincolnshire will increase by approximately 11% from 73,095 to 81,015 in 2038. At the same time the average size of households is expected to decrease from 2.34 people per household to 2.18 in 2041.

The recent development of the University Campus North Lincolnshire has boosted the higher education offer locally with 1,500 student places, with plans for purpose-built student accommodation to be constructed in Scunthorpe in the future.

Evidence from the Census 2011 shows that the majority of those moving house into North Lincolnshire 70% have moved from within the North Lincolnshire area, with 30% moving into the area from elsewhere. Of those people moving into North Lincolnshire in 2011, the majority (1,014) were from outside the UK. Most of those North Lincolnshire residents moving away from the area were going to North East Lincolnshire (440) and West Lindsey (351).

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 years. 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 impact on the council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

North Lincolnshire Council is a Unitary Authority with the powers of a Non-Metropolitan County and a District Council. It came in to being on 1 April 1996 following a Local Government reorganisation. Following the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000, the council adopted a Strong Leader Cabinet model.

The governance arrangements are set out in the Council's Constitution, which has within the last 9 years been subject to two detailed reviews by specialist public sector solicitors and continues to be reviewed to ensure best practice and legislative compliance. The operating procedures are reviewed annually, including the executive and non-executive arrangements and schemes of delegated decision making.

The last electoral review conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England was in 2001, with the final recommendations being published in 2002. The outcome of that review resulted in an increase in the number of councillors from 42 to 43, and the number of wards from 16 to 17.

Elections are held every four years. The council does not play an overly active role in attracting new councillors but does offer information and a guide on becoming a North Lincolnshire councillor. The elections held in 2019 saw all 17 wards contested. There have been no instances where the council has been unable to discharge its duties due to a lack of councillors.

The borough is incredibly varied, with big differences between the north, south, east, west and the centre.

Each area features wards with often unique combinations of localised issues that makes for an important and often complex role for councillors to represent and consult their communities. In most wards there is a town centre or high street that generates a strong community feel to the area.

The council is fully engaged with the Local Government Association and participates in sector led improvement and Peer Reviews.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge took place 23 – 26 January 2018. The executive summary identifies the following:

- “North Lincolnshire Council is a well performing organisation with highly visible and engaging leadership at both political and management level.
- It has a track record of delivering good quality local services.
- There is a strong shared ambition between Members and senior officers to make North Lincolnshire Best Council, Best Place....”
- “The peer team saw evidence of the vision and the transformation programme being translated to the frontline.
- There are numerous examples of good and innovative practice that is making a real difference to people’s lives.
- The baseline in certain areas is already high with high performing Adult Services and, recently, Ofsted judged Children’s Services as *outstanding*
- It was also heartening to see this extension of quality, innovation and change being adopted in the council’s approach to its safer, greener cleaner services too.”

As part of the process the same team returned to North Lincolnshire on 27-28 June 2019. The purpose of the follow up visit was to help the council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress made against the areas of improvement and development identified in January 2018.

The key headline messages include:

- The council has kept and improved needs-led services performing at a high level during a period of intense change
- Leadership has been distributed across the organisation to great effect and has really nailed collaboration, both internally and externally
- Managers and staff have a strong sense of purpose and are empowered and trusted and this is enabling further redesign of services to deliver the best outcomes for your communities

The council has an excellent record of financial management, evidenced through the external audit opinion on each set of annual accounts and a positive value for money conclusion. There are no issues of governance or capacity that have been raised through recent regulatory or external bodies.

Council Size

6. The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation 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

7. 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.

Topic	
Governance Model	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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>
	<p>North Lincolnshire Council is made up of 17 wards (10 three member wards, 6 two member wards and 1 one member ward), comprising a total of 43 councillors. Following the elections on 2 May 2019, the political balance of the council is currently 24 Conservatives, 14 Labour and one Independent. There are currently four vacant seats.</p> <p>The council operates a Strong Leader Cabinet model which, for the purpose of the Local Government Act 2000 is the Executive/Scrutiny form of governance. There are no plans to change this model which has worked effectively since its introduction in 2001. There is a confident and assured distinction between Member and officer roles underpinned by close and effective working based on mutual trust and respect.</p>

The Mayor is elected annually at the Annual General Meeting of Full Council and is the “first citizen” of North Lincolnshire. In addition to chairing Full Council the Mayor is responsible for representing the council at any civic and community functions and also undertakes fundraising activities for his/her designated charity.

Much of the council’s decision making is carried out by its Executive, with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels holding it to account. The council also has a number of other committees that support governance.

Part C1.03 of the Council’s Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the Executive (pages 72, 78-91 of the [Constitution](#)) and Part A1.03 (page 5 of the [Constitution](#)) sets out the responsibilities of council which includes receiving recommendations from the Cabinet on specific matters such as setting Council Tax levels. The Constitution has, within the last 9 years been subject to two detailed external reviews by specialist public sector solicitors and continues to be reviewed to ensure best practice and legislative compliance. All reviews are reported to Full Council, save minor amendments which are carried out by the Monitoring Officer under his delegations and are reported under the Officer Decision recording procedures. The last review concerned changes to the council’s Contract Procedure Rules and Finance Procedure Rules, which were reported to Full Council on 25 January 2021.

At its first meeting following the May 2019 elections (20 May 2019), the council allocated 86 seats on committees, based on the current political balance of the council. Seats are appointed in accordance with the principles of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, to ensure the majority group has the majority on all committees, to prevent domination by a single group, aggregating all seats and fair shares, and ensuring as far as practicable fairness on each committee. For each Non-Executive Member, this equates to 2.52 seats on committees and panels.

The council elects a Leader for a four year term who then appoints Members to form a Cabinet. Under the Constitution, the Executive is permitted to have between 2 and 10 members (not including the Leader). The current Executive (Municipal Year 2020-21) consists of the Leader and eight Executive Members (Portfolio Holders). The Executive discharges all of the prescribed executive functions which are not the responsibility of the council as set out in the relevant Functions and Responsibilities statutory instrument.

There is a minimum of five formal meetings of the Executive during the Municipal Year. The Cabinet is collectively responsible for all of its decisions and actions taken with each Cabinet Member given an area of special responsibility. Each Cabinet Member works closely with their respective Director and Head of Service and develop an in-depth knowledge of their special responsibility area. This knowledge and ongoing oversight is shared with the other Cabinet Members and supports the decision making process for developments and decisions required by Cabinet in their areas of special responsibility.

In addition, the Cabinet Members have regular 'away days' during the year, both on their own and with the Senior Leadership Team, to consider strategic issues.

As a result of there being nine councillors on the Executive, this leaves only has 34 non-executive Members available to fulfil the Overview and Scrutiny role.

For Executive and non-executive members there are also significant workloads relating to representation on outside bodies and ward work which is further evidenced in this document.

Councillors also play a full role in their respective party groups, with many expected to take on extra responsibilities and also representing the Group on outside bodies, this again increases time commitments for councillors.

A minority of councillors have a full-time job with an employer; for most being a councillor is only possibly because they work for themselves or run a business and can therefore work with a degree of flexibility, they have moved to part-time work, they are retired or are not working outside the home due to caring responsibilities.

The council's current size and operating model is as follows -

	No of members	No of meetings	Potential attendance	Actual attendance	No of substitutes	% attendance
Council	43*	5**	210	192	0	91%
Cabinet	9	3	27	24	0	89%
Audit Committee	7	5	35	21	13	97%
Appeals Committee	3	1	3	3	0	100%
Appointment & Employment Comm	5	0	0	0	0	0
Licensing Committee	15	4	60	51	9	100%
Licensing (Misc) Sub-Committee	5	9	45	31	11	93%
Licensing (Act) Sub-Committee	3	3	9	9	0	100%
Planning Committee	10	13	130	88	42	100%
Standards Committee	7	3	21	17	3	95%
Standards Committee (Hearings Panel)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Standards Committee (Assessment Panel)	3	2	6	6	0	100%
Health and Wellbeing Board	3	3	9	5	2	78%
Children & Education Scrutiny Panel	7	5	35	28	6	97%
Governance Scrutiny Panel	3	8	24	22	2	100%
Health Scrutiny Panel	3	5	15	15	0	100%
Places Scrutiny Panel	3	5	15	9	6	100%

	<p>Council 27/1/2020 – 41 members (J Collinson and I Glover deceased) *Council 26/2/2020 – 40 members (H Mumby-Croft resigned) Council 2 November 2020 – 39 members (D Longcake deceased) **Includes Extra-ordinary meeting 28/6/19 (attendance - 33) Places Scrutiny Panel – J Collinson deceased Audit Committee – I Glover deceased (Jan 2020)</p> <p>The strategic leadership of the council rests with the Chief Executive and her appointed Chief Officers –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director – Commercial ➤ Director: Adults and Community Wellbeing (DASS) ➤ Director: Business Development ➤ Director: Children and Community Resilience (DCS) ➤ Director: Governance and Partnerships (S151 Officer) ➤ Director: Learning, Skills and Culture ➤ Joint Director Public Health for North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire (DPH) <p>The delegations to the aforementioned Officers are set out in the Scheme of Officer delegations within the Constitution and combine both executive and non-executive functions.</p> <p>The council is currently reviewing its Overview and Scrutiny arrangements following the publication of the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (the Select Committee) report of December 2017 on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the subsequent publication of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities'. However, the council currently operates four Overview and Scrutiny Committees (called Panels in North Lincolnshire). Three Committees have a membership of three councillors, whilst the fourth Committee has a membership of seven councillors plus four independent co-opted members. The Committees are free to meet as frequently as the Committee deems necessary. There is no schedule of meetings for Scrutiny Committees agreed by Full Council. This flexibility allows each Scrutiny Committee to be proactive and flexible with how it conducts its business. More detail is provided on scrutiny matters in the relevant section of this submission. It should be noted that the Cabinet Members are not permitted to take positions on the Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>The council considers nine Members to be the appropriate number for the Cabinet to effectively cover the breadth of service areas and deliver the leadership role required.</p>
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		The Cabinet structure, having been in place for a number of years has shown nine Members to work well permitting diverse opinions whilst small enough to not dilute opinions and reach consensus. There has been no incidence of the Cabinet having insufficient Members to hold a meeting.								
Portfolios	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i> 								
	Analysis	<p>The eight Portfolios, in addition to the Leader's Cabinet Member responsibilities (Place Shaping and Connectivity), are -</p> <p>Deputy Leader – Adults and Health Portfolio Holder Children and Families Finance and Governance Environment and Strategic Planning Commercial Resident Engagement and Rural Partnerships Safer, Stronger Communities – Ashby, Bottesford and Scunthorpe (Urban) Safer, Stronger Communities – Rural</p> <p>The Leader of the Council has set out an extensive scheme of delegation to Cabinet Members within their own areas of responsibility (pages 72 and 78-91 of the Constitution). There is also a scheme of delegation for senior officers. Matters which are the responsibility of the Executive are delegated to officers by the Leader and non-executive functions are delegated either by the Full Council or a Council Committee. The current officer scheme of delegation can be viewed here.</p> <p>Each Member of the Executive has responsibility for specific services and has the power to take decisions about the services they are responsible for, provided they keep within established policy and the budget for that service. A formal record is published of any decisions taken by Cabinet Members, together with information or reports they have taken into account in reaching that decision. The majority of decisions are taken in accordance with the aforementioned scheme of delegation. However, the Cabinet and Cabinet Members have taken the following number of decisions –</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Municipal Year</th> <th>Decisions</th> <th>Decisions which were key decisions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>109</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>88</td> <td>18</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Municipal Year	Decisions	Decisions which were key decisions	2018-19	109	11	2019-20	88
Municipal Year	Decisions	Decisions which were key decisions								
2018-19	109	11								
2019-20	88	18								

A key decision means an executive decision which is likely –

- (i) to result in the council incurring expenditure or the making of savings (including the receipt or loss of income) over £350,000 in any one financial year; or
- (ii) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority

The Leader and Cabinet Members give strategic direction to the council. However, being a Cabinet Member involves much more than formal decision making meetings. It also involves attendance at weekly briefings which may last up to three hours and attending regular liaison meetings with Directors and/or Heads of Service and senior staff on at least a weekly basis. Cabinet members also liaise regularly with the council's three local MPs on casework and service issues.

The Leader and Members of the Executive also sit on a number of external bodies, including the Local Government Association, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other strategic leadership bodies that require more senior councillor appointments with a resulting higher level of responsibility and increased pressure on workload.

Cabinet Members also sit on numerous committee meetings as well as being a member of Full Council. Being a Cabinet Member is akin to being a full-time employee. The role of portfolio holders on a unitary council when done well is effectively a full-time job.

To assist the council's Executive, the Leader of the Council has made a number of lead member appointments. Lead members are senior members of the council who hold specific responsibilities for different policy areas. The council has the following Lead Members with responsibility for -

- Flooding
- Environment
- Ambassador for Inward Investment and Stell
- Highways Quality
- Stronger Communities
- Adults and Health
- Farming and Rural Communities
- Small Businesses
- Young People and Leisure
- Transport and Roads

Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>All councillors sit on Full Council, which is the ‘sovereign body’ of the council and is chaired by the Mayor. The Full Council is responsible for setting the budget, considering recommendations from the Cabinet and making some decisions such as changes to the Constitution, determining electoral issues and dealing with matters which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet. Full Council also approves the Policy Framework.</p> <p>The responsibilities delegated to officers and committees are set out in the Constitution. The terms of reference for Committees are to be found at Part B Article 6 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees (pages 19-20 of the Constitution); Part B Article 9 – The Standards Committee (page 24 of the Constitution) and Part C – Responsibility for Functions (C1.02) (pages 52-71 of the Constitution) whereas the responsibilities delegated to officers, comprising both executive and non-executive functions can be found here.</p> <p>The powers delegated to Officers shall be exercised in accordance with the details of the General Provisions and essentially subject to any legal requirements and/or guidance or codes of practice; the Council's Constitution which includes Contract and Financial Procedure Rules; any necessary financial provision having been made and approved and compliance with approved plans, schemes and/or strategies.</p>

Accountability

8. 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.

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>

Analysis	<p>In accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Leader and Cabinet are held to account by the following four Overview and Scrutiny Panels:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children and Education Scrutiny Panel ➤ Governance Scrutiny Panel ➤ Health Scrutiny Panel ➤ Places Scrutiny Panel <p>Each scrutiny panel contains three elected members, except for the Children and Education Scrutiny Panel whose membership consists of seven elected members and 4 statutory co-opted members – two Church Representatives – voting plus two Parent Governor Representatives – voting, in relation to Education issues only). Full Council agreed that Overview and Scrutiny Panels should operate at this size.</p> <p>Twelve seats across the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have been allocated to the Conservative Group. Effectively these seats can only be filled from fifteen of the 24 Conservative Group members, given that the Cabinet comprises nine members of the ruling group and no Cabinet Member can sit on an Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Four seats have been allocated to the Labour Group, which have to be filled from the 14 members of that Group. The council has decided, in line with the political balance rules, not to allocate any seats to the Independent Member. Two Members serve on more than one Overview and Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Given scrutiny’s role in amplifying the voices and concerns of the public, it is essential that the Panels contain members from both majority political parties.</p> <p>The council recognises the importance of an effective overview and scrutiny function that adds measurable value. As such two dedicated officers are provided to support the function and there is good engagement by senior officers in each service area across the council for enquiry and review work.</p> <p>Cabinet Members are held to account by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for matters within their portfolios which relate to the respective Scrutiny Panel’s terms of reference. This means that some Cabinet Members are held to account by more than one Overview and Scrutiny Panel. It is entirely at the discretion of the Scrutiny Panel as to when, and how often it wished to invite the relevant Cabinet Members to attend a meeting.</p> <p>The council’s Overview and Scrutiny Panels play a key role in developing and reviewing policy through a facility to call-in Cabinet decisions for review or by undertaking pre-decision scrutiny.</p>
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They also have powers to scrutinise the activities and decisions of some partner organisations, including the NHS and the Community Safety Partnership. Each Panel's membership reflects the overall political balance of the council. In 2018-19 there were three call-ins and during 2019-20 there were two Executive decisions called in for consideration.

Overview and Scrutiny is also one of the most important ways in which councillors can champion their constituents. Members of the council can ask the Panel's to discuss issues of local importance by asking for an item to be added to the agenda or through the facility to raise a Councillor Call for Action on a community safety issue. The Panel's also debate petitions presented to Cabinet Members where the petitioners are not satisfied with the response they have had.

Previously the council had three Overview and Scrutiny Panels which consisted of five elected members. However, having so few Overview and Scrutiny Panels meant that the terms of reference for each Panel were too large to allow the councillors to scrutinise council services effectively. Therefore, in 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Panels structure was revised to create a fourth Panel.

Traditionally all non-executive councillors have the opportunity to take part in Scrutiny, supported by officers in the council. Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman actively encourage the attendance and participation by non-executive councillors through the council's Procedure Rule 1.37(b) (attendance and contribution at council meetings).

The average length of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting is around 90 minutes. Full Council does not agree a schedule of meetings for each Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This decision was taken to allow each Overview and Scrutiny Panel the autonomy to meet as often or as infrequently as it deemed appropriate.

In May 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published new statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities having taken into account the findings and recommendations of the House of Commons CLG Committee report on the effectiveness of local authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees published in December 2017. Consequently, the Governance Scrutiny Panel will be commencing a review into the council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements to ensure they are consistent with the recommendations across the six areas covered in the guidance.

In recent years health scrutiny has taken up an increasing amount of Members' time given the integration of health and social care. This can often give rise to very emotive and complex issues.

		<p>It is clear that there will be more proposals coming forward to significantly change health care provision, which will require engagement with health scrutiny and lead to an increase in workloads for some Members.</p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny structure has helped to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to scrutinise the full range of council business and ensures that policy and service development in North Lincolnshire has strong member input. It also allows members the opportunity, as community leaders, to make sure the local community's needs are reflected in the decisions made by the council and its partners.</p>															
	Statutory Function	<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>															
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i> 															
	Analysis	<p>The council has a single Planning Committee, currently comprising 10 councillors. There are no plans to introduce area planning committees. Members of the Cabinet are allowed to serve on the Planning Committee and at present two Executive Members sit on the Committee. The Committee meets monthly to consider those applications not determined by the Chief Planning Officer under delegated powers. The number of planning applications received and included in the returns to Central Government for the last three years are:-</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">2019/2020</th> <th style="text-align: center;">2018/2019</th> <th style="text-align: center;">2017/2018</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total no. of decisions issued</td> <td style="text-align: center;">952</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1007</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1009</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No. of Committee decisions</td> <td style="text-align: center;">121</td> <td style="text-align: center;">137</td> <td style="text-align: center;">118</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Percentage (committee)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12.71%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13.6%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">11.69%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Planning Committee does have a steady workload and during the 2019/20 council Year, Committee Members considered on average ten applications per meeting. This was down from fourteen applications per meeting during 2018-19. The highest number of applications considered at a single meeting was 22; with the lowest number of applications considered being 4.</p>		2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018	Total no. of decisions issued	952	1007	1009	No. of Committee decisions	121	137	118	Percentage (committee)	12.71%	13.6%
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Most straightforward planning decisions are delegated to officers, with referrals only made to the committee for the following reasons –

- An elected member calls the item in for consideration;
- There is significant public interest in the application
- It is a major application
- The relevant Town or Parish Council has objected to the application

Therefore, the committee only considers those matters that are difficult and time consuming. Bearing in mind the complexity of applications and the fact that they are often controversial, decision making may involve lengthy meetings, site visits and may span more than 1 meeting.

The attendance levels for the Planning Committee show an average of 100% attendance over the last 3 years.

All Members of the Committee (plus any councillor who will serve as a substitute on the Committee) are required to undergo planning training. This training covers the role and responsibilities of the Committee and the planning service, the legislative and policy framework, how planning decisions are taken and the Member Planning Code of Good Practice, which forms part of the Constitution and is reviewed periodically. The Head of Planning also provides briefings on national planning policy, local plan updates, design training, enforcement, review of development sites and workshops on evolving masterplans. The Head of Planning delivers 4 training sessions for all Members a year on a variety of planning matters. On average these last for 2 hours with around 15-20 Members attending but if a session relates to the Local Plan then attendance can be considerably higher.

In the last 12 months the average Planning Committee sat for 1.5 hours per meeting. The average length of Planning Committee meetings has decreased. However, this may be because the length of time that members of the public may address the committee has reduced from five minutes to three minutes. In addition, the number of speakers on a major application has been reduced from ten to six.

In addition to meeting time, however, Members attend site visits on the morning of the Committee and viewing plans prior to each meeting. Members must attend a site visit if it is a major application unless they have prior knowledge of the site. Members may also propose sites to be visited from the agenda.

Although the time commitment at Planning Committees has decreased Members report an increase in their work as ward councillors to deal with planning matters.

		<p>Importantly, it is anticipated that this increase in planning related ward work will continue to increase with the de-regulation of planning permissions where more small-scale works will go ahead without the requirement for an officer or Committee decision. This increase in work at the ward level has been recognised in this submission.</p> <p>In addition to the ten members of the committee that attend, on average five other members of the council attend each meeting in their capacity as a ward councillor, to speak on applications that are important to their constituents under Procedure Rule 1.37(b).</p> <p>The Planning Committee process has been streamlined and is now manageable for Members. There is limited capacity to make further changes that will reduce the workload significantly. A council size of 43 ensures that knowledge of one of the council's most active regulatory functions is shared across a greater proportion of the total council membership.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Full Licensing Committee currently has 15 Members. On an annual basis, it appoints Members to the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committee and Licensing (Activities) Sub-Committee. The committee is politically balanced, with 9 members from the Conservative Group and six members from the Labour Group. The committee meets to consider petitions, changes to licensing policy, changes to fees and charges and for licensing and registration functions principally in relation to taxis, gaming, alcohol, entertainment, food and sex establishments.</p> <p>The council programmes meetings of the Licensing Committee approximately every two months. During 2018-19, three committees were held. There were also three meetings held in 2019-20. Meetings last approximately 45 minutes. Attendance at the committee over the previous three years is 100%.</p> <p>The Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committee meets monthly and comprises 5 Members appointed from within the Full Licensing Committee. This quasi-judicial sub-committee considers the grant, renewal or review of hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and driver licences. In 2018-19 the sub-committee met eleven times and considered an average of three applications per meeting. During 2019-20 the sub-committee met nine times and considered 25 applications. On average meetings last approximately 90 minutes, with two hours preparation time. Average attendance at the Sub-Committee is 93% over the previous three years.</p>

		<p>The Licensing (Activities) Sub-Committee also acts in a quasi-judicial capacity to hear a range of licensing matters such as applications for premises licenses for the sale of alcohol, reviewing applications for premises licenses, night cafes and betting shops. Sub-Committees, comprising of three members drawn from the membership of the full Committee deal with hearings. These Sub-Committees are arranged on an ad-hoc basis, and membership is rotated to take into account experience, political balance and interests. The sub-committee met eleven times during 2018-19, yet only four meetings were held during 2019-20.</p> <p>Meetings last approximately two hours, with a further two hours spent in preparation for the hearing. Attendance at the sub-committee over the previous three years is 100%.</p> <p>The time commitment per member will fluctuate depending on how many Panels they sit on. The Chairman and Vice Chairman each sit on the full committee as well as the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committee.</p> <p>The following applications for licences, renewals or reviews were considered by the Licensing Authority –</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="568 651 1727 799"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Officer delegated decisions</th> <th>Authorised officer decision</th> <th>Sub-Committee decision</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>2323</td> <td>8</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>2338</td> <td>6</td> <td>29</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Officer delegated decisions	Authorised officer decision	Sub-Committee decision	2018-19	2323	8	35	2019-20	2338	6	29
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<p>Other Regulatory Bodies</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i> 												
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The council's Regulatory Committees are responsible for those council functions which the Executive cannot by law deal with.</p> <p>These include applications for Planning and Licensing consents and approvals, electoral matters, staffing matters as well as Standards Code of Conduct for Councillors.</p> <p>Information about the Committees that carry out these responsibilities can be accessed from the links below. Further detailed information about the matters they each deal with can be found in Part C – Responsibility for Functions (C1.02) of the Council's Constitution (pages 52-71).</p> <p>Members currently sit on the following committees -</p>												

- Appeals Committee
- Appointment and Employment Committee
- Audit Committee
- Licensing Committee
 - Licensing (Activities) Sub-Committee
 - Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committee
- Planning Committee
- Standards Committee

Other Committees include –

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Local Access Forum
- Schools Forum
- Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
- Transport for the North
- Health and Care Integrated Commissioning Committee
- Greater Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Oversight Committee
- Humber Leadership Board

There are 86 committee places in total across all committees which have been allocated as follows:

- Conservative Group (57 seats across 24 Members)
- Labour (29 seats across 14 Members).
- Independent 1 with 0 seats).

* There is a requirement to allocate four additional seats to the Conservative Group on the Children and Education Scrutiny Panel to preserve that Group's entitlement to a majority position in view of the four statutory co-optees with voting rights who have to be appointed to the Panel. These four seats do not count towards the overall total of seats for the purposes of allocations to political groups.

As mentioned, there are 16 seats across the 4 Overview and Scrutiny Panels allocated to the Conservative and Labour political groups. Of the 70 places on the remaining committees, 20 are currently filled by Members of the Cabinet. Therefore 50 of these places are filled from amongst 30 Members of the council.

		<p>Across all committees therefore, 50 places are spread across 30 non-executive members, meaning on average each non-executive member will sit on just under 2 (1.66) committees. Two Members sit on 5 committees, two members sit on 4 committees while eight sit on 1 committee, with 2 councillors serving on no committees.</p> <p>Pages 52-71 and 155-157 of the Constitution set out the membership of core committees and overview and scrutiny panels.</p> <p>The current average number of committees per non-executive councillor is 1.66. This clearly demonstrates that the current average committee workload per Member is not onerous. This is further evidenced by two committees (Appeals Committee and Appointment and Employment Committee) that contain 17 seats only meet as and when required, thus providing further capacity.</p>
External Partnerships		<p>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.</p>
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
	Analysis	<p>There are a number of organisations which are independent from the council but have an impact on its service areas. In order that the council can maintain effective partnerships with a number of these, representatives of the council, usually Elected Members, sit on the various committees and forums established in partnership with these national, regional and local organisations. The council has a long history of joint working arrangements and leading partnerships with other organisations both in and outside North Lincolnshire. Achieving the very best for its residents cannot be done by the council working alone. The council has adopted a Partnership Protocol that the Audit Committee has oversight.</p> <p>The following partnerships are defined as ‘significant’ and therefore fall within the scope of the protocol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety Partnership • North Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board • North Lincolnshire Children’s Multi-Agency Resilience & Safeguarding board • Corporate Parenting Board • The Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership • The Youth Offending Management Board

- The Education Standards Board
- The SEND Standards Board
- Schools Forum
- Integrated Commissioning and Quality Executive
- Integrated Adults Partnership
- Integrated Children’s Trust
- The Strategic Flood Board
- The Towns Fund Board

In addition, the council appoints representation on other ‘external’ bodies where the nature of the relationship is one of “influence”, co-operating, enabling or facilitating improved relationships and shared outcomes. Some examples of these ‘outside bodies’ appointments include:

- Humber Police and Crime Panel
- Humber Bridge Board
- Humberside Fire Authority
- A number of drainage boards and Water Management Boards.

Typically, these Outside Bodies are hosted by external organisations and have their own governance arrangements.

In relation to the time spent on external partnership related matters, the responses to the councillor questionnaire were very consistent. 32% of the councillors who responded to the councillor questionnaire stated that they spent on average 1 to 5 hours per month preparing and attending external meetings, with a further 32% spending 6-10 hours a month and an additional 32% of respondents spending over 20 hours per month preparing and attending external partnership meetings.

In addition to significant external partnerships, elected members can also be appointed to sit on and liaise with outside bodies. These, in the main, tend to be charitable and / or community organisations who support the council’s work – usually through the priorities of the council’s police framework. For 2019-20, there were 52 outside bodies in total.

There were 34 “appointments” in total across the 58 outside bodies. Results from the councillor questionnaire showed that on average, they spent 6-10 hours per month preparing and attending outside bodies. A full list of the outside bodies that elected members are appointed to can be found at Appendix 1.

Community Involvement

9. 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?

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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>
	Analysis	<p>Councillors undertake a number of roles within the communities providing leadership, this ranges from attending town and parish council meetings, tenant and resident associations, local residents meetings and forums, liaising with local businesses and third sector organisations, youth groups and local schools to meeting with individual residents.</p> <p>Parish Councils and tenant and resident associations in particular have high expectations of their Borough councillors. A large number of councillors represent multiple parishes, as many as ten, which result in additional work for ward councillors, for example attending Parish Council meetings and the size of these wards result in large distances to be travelled.</p> <p>79% of the councillor respondents stated that the time they spent being a councillor was more than what they expected upon being elected. 92% of the councillors confirmed that the time they spent on council business had increased since they were elected as a councillor.</p>

Councillors undertake surgeries and other face-to-face activities with local residents as well as delivering regular newsletters and ad hoc street letters about localised issues.

Some councillors are very active on social media and engage with residents through regular emails, this in particular can raise expectations about how quickly councillors will respond to issues and also lead to an expectation councillors are available 24/7.

The pandemic had had a major impact of councillors ability to meet their constituents. 42% of councillors stated that they were spending less time attending ward surgeries with a further 42% of members spending less time meeting constituents face to face.

Communicating with residents via e mail was the most popular medium for councillors to engage with their constituents. 53% of councillors stated that they were spending significantly more time responding to e mails, with 32% of respondents stating that responding to emails accounted for 30-40% of their councillor time.

Council Facing Activities

The number of hours spent per week by members on council work varies significantly depending on a range of factors. i.e. whether a Member sits on the Executive or whether they have specific ward-based issues that are particularly time-consuming. The most common number of hours spent by members on council based work was over 16-20 hours (36%) with 31% of councillors spending over 20 hours per month on council based activity.

85% of councillors stated that they spend over twenty hours a month engaging with constituents and a further 20 hours dealing with constituent enquiries and casework.

The remaining time is spent on learning and development activity and representing the council on outside bodies.

North Lincolnshire Councillors are actively involved within their wards and most consider themselves to play a pro-active part in the communities they represent. The approach taken varies from councillor to councillor but all are involved in some or all of the following as part of their engagement with constituents:

- Holding surgeries – dealing with queries, providing advice and engaging with constituents face-to-face:
- Constituency matters – emails, written, telephone responses
- Community / Resident meetings
- Working with and / or offering support to community groups and local organisations:

- Attending Town and Parish Council meetings
- Contact with parish/town councils.
- Articles for parish/village magazines and newsletters, blogs and/or websites and social media.

The council does not have any area committees in the District and there is no Ward Member delegated budget.

35% of councillors indicated they spend over 20 hours per month on each of the following three activities:

- Reading papers in preparation for a parish/town council meeting;
- Attending a parish/town council meeting; and
- Dealing with issues raised by parishes or constituents in the parish.

Every councillor who responded to the questionnaire stated that they consider the amount of time they spent dealing with constituents enquiries/casework from and on behalf of their constituents to be manageable.

There has been steady interest in developing Neighbourhood Plans with one successful referendum being held. Appleby Parish was the first area in North Lincolnshire to have its Neighbourhood Plan adopted. The council continues to support 13 parishes who have designated an area for a Neighbourhood Plan, as well as a further parish that has submitted its Plan.

North Lincolnshire Borough contains 55 parish areas, 52 of which have parish councils and three areas having parish meetings. As a consequence of this make-up, many of our elected members are involved in supporting governance at the parish level. As a local authority, we also support a Town & Parish Liaison Meeting which meets two times a year to allow a forum for 'parish' issues to be discussed and to ensure positive engagement between the Borough Council, its elected members and local council representatives.

Following the abolition of Humberside County Council and Scunthorpe Borough Council in 1996, the Scunthorpe Charter Trustees were established. The charter trustees are made up of councillors in the district representing wards within the boundaries of Scunthorpe. The sixteen councillors meet to carry out administrative duties that relate to Scunthorpe.

The council is committed to engaging with children, young people, and their families at an individual, service, and strategic level. The voice of young people is firmly at the centre of improving outcomes for young people in North Lincolnshire.

North Lincolnshire Youth Council (NLYC) is a constituted group of young people aged 11-19 (25 with SEND) who come together voluntarily to be the vehicle for Young Voice of North Lincolnshire.

Key members of NLYC are an elected Member of Youth Parliament and Young Mayor; the council's Director: Governance and Partnerships organise and facilitate biennial Youth Elections. NLYC is part of a wider regional and national young voice network and members of the British Youth Council.

Albeit a non-statutory requirement NLYC is supported by the Leader of the Council, Mayor of North Lincolnshire, Cabinet Members and elected members in liaising, listening and acting on the views of young people on matters and services that concern them.

Through different methods of participation - annual youth ballots, face to face meetings, national, regional and conferences, monthly meetings, and key partnerships such as Children's and Young People's Partnership ; young people can express their views to elected members.

To further support community engagement, the council facilitates the North Lincolnshire Community Champion Awards. The awards recognise people for their dedication to volunteering, overcoming barriers and excelling in sport or the arts, as well as community groups that deserve recognition for their work in the community or individuals that inspire others.

Neighbourhood Action Teams (NAT) operate at electoral ward level and are a key part of the Safer Neighbourhoods Action Programme and Neighbourhood Policing systems in North Lincolnshire. Formed from representatives of the local community and other parties, the Team acts as a gateway for information to and from the community and plays a vital role in identifying and responding to local community priorities.

Composition of NATs will vary from place to place; however, representatives from the following groups will be invited to participate:

- Elected Ward Councillors
- Town and Parish Councils
- Community Groups including:
- Neighbourhood Watch Groups
- Residents Associations
- Youth Groups
- Community Interest Groups

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local Schools ➤ Local Businesses ➤ Humberside Police ➤ The Safer Neighbourhoods Hub ➤ Neighbourhood Management bodies ➤ Other individuals or agencies deemed appropriate by the Neighbourhood Action Team <p>An elected member chairs each NAT. During 2019-20, 91 NAT meetings were held across the 17 wards, to which 26 elected members attended in total. Each meeting lasts on average 90 minutes. As the meetings are held all over North Lincolnshire, significant travel time is required by councillors. On average, councillors spend between 6-10 hours a month in preparation, attendance and follow up work for each NAT.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The council purchased a case management system that is available for use by both political offices. The system is used by Member Support Officers, in partnership with elected members. Members are free to manage their ward work differently depending on a range of factors e.g. sensitivity, demographics, local issues etc.</p> <p>It can be difficult to identify the average number of hours per week that councillors spend on ward work as this will vary according to the type of ward the councillor represents in terms of the issues that may be raised by constituents, how many councillors represent the ward in question, and the number of hours the councillor can make available due to other commitments.</p> <p>A 2018 national survey found that, on average, more than half a councillor's time is spent engaging with local people individually and in groups and councillors spent, on average, 22 hours per week on council business, the largest chunk of which was on council meetings (8 hours), followed by engaging with constituents, surgeries, enquiries (6.2 hours), working with community groups (4.1 hours), and other items (3.6 hours).</p> <p>Many councillors report that they are increasingly required to take an in-depth approach to dealing with some specific cases where they have felt their input has been appropriate or necessary. This has resulted in an additional time burden on top of their normal duties.</p>

71% of Members report spending over 20 hours of their time a month engaging with constituents. 68% of councillors also report spending over 20 hours per month dealing with constituents enquiries/casework from and on behalf of their local residents.

Every councillor stated that the level of ward work is manageable. However, its complexity is increasing. There was quite a contrast in the number of cases/issues that councillors were managing each calendar month. 35% of respondents to the questionnaire stated that they dealt with between 16-20 cases/issues per month, yet 32% of respondents stated that they dealt with over 50 cases/issues each month.

There are some national changes in the pipeline that may displace discussion from the Borough to the ward level impacting directly on councillors in their representational role. It is also likely that ward councillors will be required to deal with more residents' queries as a result of the challenging financial climate coupled with the pandemic which the Council continues to operate and an increase in unpopular decisions that may need to be taken.

The rise of social media has also had a significant impact on the representational role of councillors, with many constituents having high expectations in terms of speed of response. Modern forms of communication mean that Members are spending a lot more time engaging with residents in this way and collecting casework as a result. This makes it easier for councillors to receive casework and complaints, and for some councillors it can be extremely time-consuming. Updating blogs, posting on Facebook, responding to tweets and sending e mails are instant forms of communication with constituents. However, this interactive form of communication raises expectations of the sender, with an instant response expected.

Councillors are also reporting that they are being 'lobbied' on numerous issues within their ward, particularly by email. This often requires the Member to respond and 'support' a particular course of action or outcome, with the organiser expecting an almost immediate response.

Member Support

Members have access to officer expertise and time as required. There are dedicated teams for Member Services. who provide support to all Members. The Mayor receives dedicated support from the council's Civic Office. All Members are provided with individual IT equipment and a council email address. Members report that while IT has streamlined a range of their duties it has also altered residents' expectations in terms of access, expected response times and the number of routine queries they receive that are ultimately passed onto officers.

		<p>Members also have access to officers across the council and are well supported in all their roles i.e. Executive, overview & scrutiny, committees, working groups and as ward councillors.</p> <p>In May 2019, 5 new District Councillors were elected to North Lincolnshire Council. An induction training programme was provided to all councillors in the months following the election.</p> <p>A full learning and development programme is offered which ensures that Members can take proper and well informed decisions and have all the skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. 35% of Members who responded to the questionnaire stated that learning and development activities only accounted for 1-5 hours a month, yet a further 35% of councillors stated that they spend between 6-10 hours a month on learning and development activities.</p> <p>It is vital that this level of commitment to continuous development continues and in order to ensure this the number of councillors should be set at a level to ensure that they are not spread too thin. The Democratic Services Team provides a first point of contact for Member enquiries. Technical and professional support is available from specific officers.</p> <p>The council will shortly facilitate paperless working by providing instant electronic access to papers for all formal Full Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings via the Modern.Gov App.</p> <p>Members will be encouraged to adopt this way of working as it allows for instant access to papers for meetings and a facility to store and transport papers for meetings on a mobile device. Members are provided with wit a comprehensive suite of IT hardware to allow them to work more electronically</p> <p>A dedicated customer contact resource was established in 2017 as part of the council's transformational restructure to create a single council-wide view of customer complaints and feedback. This has enabled a step-change in our ability to co-ordinate complaints and comments, share intelligence and act on lessons learned.</p> <p>A key output from this development was a new Customer Complaints and Comments Policy. The policy is informed by practice experience obtained over the last year at service and council-wide coordinator level, restorative principles and guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</p> <p>The Customer Complaint and Comments Policy has reduced the number of complaints councillors receive.</p>
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Other Issues

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

The number of directly elected representatives has an impact on the council's budgets for councillor allowances and elections. The financial impact, of both an increase or decrease in councillor numbers, has been considered and assessed in the broader context of the resulting impact on governance arrangements, workload of councillors, community engagement and demands on officer time.

An increase in the number of members would have resource implications in respect of member support, infrastructure and accommodation.'

Changing electoral ratio

The current average ratio of councillors to electorate for North Lincolnshire Council is 1:3014 electors. By 2027, it is estimated this will be 1:3182 electors per councillor. This increase is considered to be manageable with the existing number of 43 councillors and would not introduce an unacceptable burden on councillor workload. The proportion of the eligible adult population registered on the Electoral Register impacts on the variation of the councillor electoral ratio across different local authorities. North Lincolnshire has a high rate of 97% of eligible adult population currently registered on the Electoral Register.

In comparison with councils in the 2020 CIPFA comparison group, the councillor count of 43 for North Lincolnshire, places it second bottom for the number of councillors, with the range being 42 – 75 councillors.

Considerations if reduced council size:

- A reduction in councillor numbers would result in a financial saving of councillor allowances and expenses. However, it was acknowledged there would be a likely increase in expenses claimed by the fewer remaining councillors due to attending more meetings;
- Any reduction in number would result in an unacceptable increased workload for councillors across both governance arrangements and constituency engagement and casework. With continued population growth the level of constituency casework is expected to remain the same or increase placing a significantly higher demand on a fewer number of councillors;
- All governance arrangements would be required to be reviewed with a higher number of committee appointments for councillors.
- Fewer councillors with higher volume of casework could also result in increased demand on officer time with more assistance required; and
- Fewer councillors would be required to cover a larger geographical area making them less accessible in a largely rural District.

Considerations if increased council size:

- Councillor numbers would place additional demands upon the council's limited budgetary resources for allowances and expenses;

- Increasing councillor numbers would place additional demands on the officer support available particularly on resources in Democratic Services and many other teams within the authority such as housing, planning, environmental services;
- Increased number would reduce the electoral ratio and potentially lower casework demand on councillors.
- Increased number of councillors would result in more councillors available to fill the governance posts. An increase is not deemed to be necessary to deliver the existing governance arrangements.
- There are sufficient numbers to effectively deliver all arrangements, notwithstanding the importance to continue to ensure that effective and efficient arrangements are in place.

Summary

11. 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 number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate any 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 council has considered carefully the question of the council's future size and concluded that the current number of 43 councillors would be appropriate. Since 2001, North Lincolnshire Council has operated with 43 councillors elected to 17 wards across North Lincolnshire. In the last 20 years the council has evidenced it is a high performing council with a strong reputation for quality service provision and financial management. There has been a consistently high standard of service from North Lincolnshire Councillors in delivering effective strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership. There are no significant changes to the council's regulatory committees.

Appendix 1

North Lincolnshire Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

- Age UK Lindsey Board of Trustees.
- Age UK North Lincolnshire
- Ancholme Internal Drainage Board
- Ashby Management Committee
- Barton Clay Pits Advisory Group
- Barton on Humber Civic Society
- Brigg Old People's Welfare Committee
- Brumby Management Committee
- Cemex Cement Local Liaison Committee
- Central Community Centre Management Committee
- Crowle and Ealand Playing Field Association
- Crowle/Ealand Regeneration Project Ltd
- East Midlands War Veterans Advisory and Pension Committee
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council Pensions Committee
- Environment Agency - Severn Trent Region - Regional
- Flood and Coastal Committee
- Environment Agency - Anglian (Northern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
- Environment Agency - Humber Strategy Joint Committee Humber
- Flood Risk Management Strategy Elected Members Forum
- Frodingham Management Committee
- Glanford - Gifhorn Twinning Association
- Grange Farm Hobbies Centre Management Committee
- Greater Lincolnshire LEP
- Greeson Hall (Crosby One) Community Association
- Hull & Goole Port Health Authority
- Humber Bridge Board
- Humberside Combined Fire Authority
- Humberside International Airport Board
- Humberside International Airport Consultative Committee
- Humberside Police and Crime Panel
- Isle of Axholme and North Notts Water Management Board
- Killingholme Refineries Environmental Liaison Committee
- Lincoln Gardens Management Committee
- Lincolnshire Agricultural and Horticultural Forum
- Lincoln & Lindsey Blind Society
- Local Government Association
- Lodge Moors Management Committee
- North East Lindsey Internal Drainage Board
- North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- North Killingholme Fittie Land Charity
- North Lincolnshire Adoption Panel
- North Lincolnshire Fostering Panel

- Pycocks Foundation (charity no. 529752)
- Park Management Committee
- Reserve Forces and Cadet Association (RFCA) for Yorkshire and Humber
- Riddings Management Committee
- Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership
- Scunthorpe and District MIND
- Scunthorpe and Gainsborough Water Management Board
- Scunthorpe and North Lincs Victim Support
- Singleton Birch Environmental Association
- Sir John Nelthorpe School - Foundation Trustees
- South Ferriby Playing Field Management Committee
- Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
- Sunshine Hall Management Committee
- Travis' Education Foundation
- Westcliff Community Association