

Bassetlaw District Council

Council Size Submission: Template

BASSETLAW

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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.

[This document has been prepared by Bassetlaw District Council through a cross-party Elected Member working group and will be presented at the Full Council meeting on 7th December 2023 for approval.](#)

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.*

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 District was created under the Local Government Act 1972 on 1 April 1974. It was a merger of the boroughs of East Retford and Worksop along with East Retford Rural and Worksop Rural Districts. The last LGBCE review in 2000 concluded that the number of Councillors would reduce from 50 to 48 and that there would be a reduction from 27 to 25 wards resulting in modifications to boundaries.

It is evident that Bassetlaw District Council has changed considerably since the last Electoral Review in 2000. Notably, residents' expectations have risen significantly in a world where digital communication has made it easier to access services, resolve issues and for the electorate to engage with their elected representatives directly, although this has arguably resulted in the role of an Elected Member changing from a '9 to 5' type of role to becoming more of a 24/7 support function. This has been acutely apparent during the Covid-19 and cost-of-living crises, as well as during flooding incidents where Bassetlaw Councillors have become a key part of the frontline response.

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?

A) BASSETLAW'S GEOGRAPHY IN A SNAPSHOT

Bassetlaw is the most northerly District Council in Nottinghamshire and is the second largest, measuring 63,688 hectares.

The Council's geographical location – with three county boundaries and at the meeting point between the East Midlands and South Yorkshire regions – creates a range of challenges and opportunities. Clumber Park and the Dukeries form a distinct natural boundary between the south of the District and Mansfield. The A1 is often seen as a distinct boundary between the former mining communities in the west of the District and the more rural and market towns in the east. The River Trent forms a strong natural boundary for the east of the District.

A key strength of Bassetlaw is its connectivity to major road and rail routes, particularly the A1 motorway and the East Coast Mainline / Sheffield to Lincoln railway lines. Roads such as the A57 and A60 also give the District ready access to the M1 motorway. The Sheffield-Lincoln railway line – connecting Worksop, Retford and Shireoaks with Sheffield, Gainsborough and Lincoln on a regular basis – is likely to see significant improvement, with more frequent and faster services to more destinations and new trains. The East Coast Mainline gives Retford, the District's second largest town, a fast direct rail link to London in one direction and to Edinburgh in the other. Worksop also has a direct rail link to Nottingham.

Although local and regional government boundaries place Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands, its geographical proximity to Yorkshire and the Humber impacts the District economically, socially and culturally. Economically, Bassetlaw sits between a number of larger dominant centres – Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster to the north-west, Nottingham to the south, Chesterfield to the west, and Lincoln to the east. The evidence suggests that different parts of Bassetlaw are influenced by all of these centres but none of them exert a dominant influence over the District as a whole.

B) BASSETLAW'S POPULATION IN A SNAPSHOT

 Population	<p>There are 117,804 people living in Bassetlaw</p> <p>See pages 4-9 for more information on population by age and gender, ethnicity, country of birth, language, migration, household composition and religion</p>	 Education & skills	<p>22% of people have no qualifications in Bassetlaw compared with 18% across England</p> <p>See pages 48-50 for more information on qualifications, pupil attainment and early years educational progress</p>
 Vulnerable groups	<p>16% of children aged 0-19 are in relative low-income families in Bassetlaw compared with 19% across England</p> <p>See pages 10-23 for more information on children in poverty, people out of work, people in deprived areas, disability, pensioners and other vulnerable groups</p>	 Economy	<p>34% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in Bassetlaw compared with 34% across England</p> <p>See pages 51-58 for more information on people's jobs, job opportunities, income, local businesses and fuel poverty</p>
 Housing	<p>1% of households lack central heating in Bassetlaw compared with 2% across England</p> <p>See pages 22-34 for more information on dwelling types, housing tenure, affordability, overcrowding, age of dwelling and communal establishments</p>	 Access & transport	<p>17% of households have no car in Bassetlaw compared with 24% across England</p> <p>See pages 59-61 for more information on transport, distances services and digital services</p>
 Crime and Safety	<p>The overall crime rate is higher than the average across England</p> <p>See pages 35-36 for more information on recorded crime and crime rates</p>	 Communities & environment	<p>The % of people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood' (73.5%) is lower than the average across England (79.3%)</p> <p>See pages 62-70 for more information on neighbourhood satisfaction, the types of neighbourhoods locally, local participation and the environment, air pollution</p>
 Health & wellbeing	<p>20% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Bassetlaw compared with 17% across England</p> <p>See pages 37-47 for more information on limited long-term illness, life expectancy and mortality, general health and healthy lifestyles</p>	Appendix A	<p>Page 71 for information on the geographies used in this report and 55 for acknowledgements</p>

Locations

There are 54,789 households in Bassetlaw. The District contains a mixture of town centres, urban residential areas, growing and changing settlements, and rural villages.

In 2021, 67% of the population was living in the three largest towns of Worksop, Retford and Harworth & Bircotes. 15% of the population lived in the 'Large Rural Settlements' which are Blyth, Carlton in Lindrick, Langold, Misterton and Tuxford. A further 18% lived in the District's numerous 'Small Rural Settlements' and in the rural area (source: ONS).

Bassetlaw is classed as a "Rural 50" District with 73 villages served by 44 Parish Councils, 9 Parish Meetings and 2 Charter Trustee bodies. Population density is low at two persons per hectare. There are poor public transport links to many of the outlying areas and this presents challenges for service delivery.

Population and migration

Census 2021 figures show that in Bassetlaw, the population size has increased by 4.4% from around 112,900 in 2011 to 117,800 in 2021. This is lower than the overall increase for England (6.6%) where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800. At 4.4%, Bassetlaw's population increase is lower than the increase for the East Midlands as a whole (7.7%).

During this time in Bassetlaw, there has been an increase of 24.6% in people aged 65 years and over; a decrease of 1.1% in people aged 15 to 64 years; and an increase of 2.4% in children aged under 15 years. This suggests that Bassetlaw's population growth has largely come from non-working, older populations.

The main (predominate) component of Bassetlaw population change is Internal Migration Net. In 2020, Internal Migration Net accounted for 917 people of the overall change followed by International Migration Net which accounted for 184 people.

The District is due to complete its Local Plan in the coming weeks after a positive review of main modifications by the allocated Inspectors. This will see more than 9,700 houses built in the period 2020-2038 – thousands of which are already built or underway – with associated infrastructure improvements and enhanced environmental policies. Effective implementation of the Local Plan will inevitably require engagement and oversight from Elected Members and officers. More details on this large policy shift can be found in the Appendix.

Deprivation

Bassetlaw's score under the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is 22.588 which means it is ranked number 11 out of all single tier and District local authorities in the East Midlands (there are a total of 35) and number 104 out of all 317 authorities in England. The Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 has ranked Bassetlaw as 106 out of 317 local authorities in England, making it within the 35% most deprived areas nationally.

However, there are areas of contrast where discrete areas of multiple and isolated types of deprivation sit alongside areas of relative affluence. For example, 7.1% of Bassetlaw's population live within the top 20% of *least* deprived areas of England, but 21.4% live in the 20% *most* deprived areas.

At a more detailed level, 5 out of the 70 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) across Bassetlaw are within the 20% *least* deprived LSOAs in England, whereas 13 of the LSOAs are within the 20% *most* deprived LSOAs in England. This has an impact on other economic, social and

environmental issues in the District.

Cost-of-living pressures, generally perceived to have started in late 2021, have badly impacted some Bassetlaw residents. For example, Bassetlaw Citizens Advice is now the fifth busiest Citizens Advice office in the country per capita (Source: National CA). The Council granted almost £300,000 towards helping local cost-of-living responses in 2021/22 and has granted another £160,000 in 2022/23. The cost-of-living crisis has generally increased Council and Councillor workload, and many Elected Members are involved in volunteering activities (e.g. food banks, food hubs). This was also true during the Covid-19 pandemic.

General health and well-being

The health of people in Bassetlaw is varied compared with the England average. About 16.2% (3,205) of children live in low-income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average. Life expectancy is 8.7 years lower for men and 6.9 years lower for women in the *most* deprived areas of Bassetlaw than in the *least* deprived areas of the District (source: Public Health England).

Child health

In Year 6, 21.0% of Bassetlaw children are classified as obese. The rate for alcohol-specific hospital admissions is higher than average. Levels of breastfeeding and smoking in pregnancy are worse than the England average (source: Public Health England).

Adult health

Positive:

- Bassetlaw's rate of new sexually transmitted infections is better than the England average.
- The rate of new cases of tuberculosis is better than the England average.
- Our rate of statutory homelessness is better than the England average.

Negative:

- Estimated levels of excess weight in adults (aged 18+) are worse than the England average.
- The rate for self-harm hospital admissions is higher than average.
- Bassetlaw's suicide rate is higher than average.
- The rate of killed and seriously injured on roads is worse than the England average. (source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities).

Vulnerable residents

7,550 of Bassetlaw's residents (approx. 6.44%) were advised to shield from Covid-19. This is significantly higher than the England average (3.99%) and the highest percentage across the East Midlands and South Yorkshire (source: NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICS).

Digital access

The percentage of the adult population in Bassetlaw that has never used the Internet or are lapsed users is 10.4% compared to 6.3% for the UK as a whole. Demand for face-to-face services is thus disproportionately higher (source: Office for National Statistics).

Conclusion

In summary, the people of Bassetlaw are typically older and in below-average health, making the Council's and Elected Members' work more complex than that associated with some of its peer authorities. In 2013 in a paper on "*The nature of local representation: councillor activity and the pressures of re-election*", Michael Thrasher and Colin Rallings, Associate Members of

Nuffield College in Oxford, noted that Councillors representing deprived areas typically spend more time on Council business.¹ Age UK ('Pride of Place') demonstrates the additional work often performed by Ward Councillors with largely ageing populations.²

B) BASSETLAW AS A PLACE IN 2023, 2030 AND 2040

The Government announced in October 2022 that the West Burton Power Station site and wider brownfield land (330 hectares) will be home to a prototype fusion energy plant known as STEP, which will drive the evolution of the UK nuclear fusion industry. For context, the budget for this project is likely to be twice the size of the 2012 Olympics (£8.8bn) and similar to Crossrail (£18.8bn).

The multi-billion-pound STEP programme will be transformational for the District, directly creating thousands of new jobs in its construction and operational phases as well as sustaining a large related supply chain. We anticipate significant interest from related projects seeking to set-up nearby as the industry evolves and are already experiencing an increase in enquiries to the Council's Economic Development team.

In December 2022, following the STEP announcement, the Council unanimously approved the development of a new vision for Bassetlaw to 2040. In determining the Council's future priorities, it was proposed that the Council set an overarching vision to be achieved by 2040, to be known as **Vision 2040** which aspires:

For Bassetlaw to become the greenest, most sustainable District in which to live and work, building on its legacy of energy production, manufacturing and logistics to power the net zero economy.

In Vision 2040, drawing on many of the same data sources as the snapshot above, the following summary is provided about the District for those who may be looking to invest in or move to the area:

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Bassetlaw in 2023

Our journey to transform the District has a strong starting point. We have a growing population, above average economic activity and planned housing growth for future employees.

Bassetlaw in 2023 shows a District full of potential. With 117,800 residents, our population continues to grow with a notable increase in the number of under 15-year olds, providing the workforce of the future. The vast majority of the working age population in Bassetlaw has at least one qualification (95.2%) with GCSE attainment in Maths and English by age 19 being high at 76%. Just under a third of residents are educated to degree level and above. We have a strong culture of apprenticeships dating back to the coal-fired power stations of the 1960s. As a result, 830 new apprenticeships were started in 2021/22.

Bassetlaw has 55,780 homes spread across 63,688 hectares of stunning countryside and benefits from over 10,000 acres of woodland. People are generally happy (7.29 out

¹ <https://www.electionscentre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-nature-of-local-representation.pdf>

² <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/pride-place-examples-how--3df.pdf>

of 10) and satisfied with life (7.28 out of 10). Overall satisfaction with the local area as a place to live is good at 71% and we aspire to raise this further.

Housing provision is growing with 766 new homes completed in the last year. A further 952 homes are under construction with plans for the Council's first 90 modular, low-carbon homes to be built in 2023-2027.

Bassetlaw is also a great place to do business with two business forums and a Business Improvement District (BID) in place. We have 5,015 enterprises in Bassetlaw and our three-year business survival rate is 59%. Our economic activity rate of 84.4% is significantly higher than the England average of 78.8%. The average annual salary is £27,090 with the private sector being the largest employer (81%). We aim to raise these indicators over the next 15 years by delivering this vision.

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The Commission is looking at the requirements of Bassetlaw District Council in 2030. While we recognise this, the Council's recently-approved Vision takes it beyond this timeframe to 2040. Given the centrality of this Vision to the Council's future operations, however, we believe Vision 2040 and its early implementation should be a key consideration in our submission.

C) OTHER CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN BASSETLAW

In June 2022, Gamston Airport was announced as a future UK centre of excellence in vehicle technology research and safety testing. Together with the STEP initiative, this represents an opportunity to turn Bassetlaw into a Research & Development centre which will, in turn, raise standards of living in the area and hopefully improve many of the indices noted above. We have two other large power station sites at Cottam and High Marnham which could potentially house similar initiatives to STEP in the near future, and the Centre for Excellence in Modern Construction (commonly known as the Laing O'Rourke site) in Worksop is one of three sites that make-up the East Midlands Investment Zone which was provisionally announced in March 2023 and reaffirmed in the Government's Autumn Statement in November 2023.

Since the summer of 2022, Bassetlaw has successfully received £18m for the redevelopment of Worksop town centre (LUF Round 2) and has been announced as a Levelling Up Partnership area (c.£20m of investment is available with projects being approved by the Government in Q4 2023). Worksop is also one of 55 towns given "£20 million endowment-style funds each over 10 years to invest in local people's priorities".³ Elsewhere, we have received £3.4m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and over £700,000 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, funds which will benefit the whole District. All of this investment (£62m in 12 months, which is the second highest grant-funding inward investment in the whole D2N2 area during this time period (source: Notts Chief Executives' Group)) – while welcomed – needs management, implementation and oversight, both from officers and Elected Members.

The frequency of major flooding events within the major towns in the District has increased, including notable events in 2007, 2019 and in October 2023 when flooding risk in Retford was

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-puts-local-people-in-control-of-more-than-1-billion-with-long-term-plan-for-left-behind-towns>

the headline story in England.⁴ The impact for Ward Councillors goes on months after the event, meaning sustained increases in workload in the aftermath.

Finally, we have a sizeable European community in Bassetlaw (source: Census 2021 which shows that 3% of Bassetlaw residents come from EU countries). Some Bassetlaw families continue to host Ukrainian guests. Local data also suggests that over 300 members of the Hong Kong community have arrived in Worksop in the past 18 months and we anticipate this number growing in the future.

D) THE ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

As stated in our Vision 2040 document, while many of the investment announcements referenced above and £60m+ of Levelling Up Funds are all great stories, together, they represent a rare opportunity to transform Bassetlaw into a hub of new technologies, to regenerate its town centres in the process, and to improve the opportunities and life chances for Bassetlaw residents of all ages and backgrounds. We believe this is an opportune moment for the District.

There are, therefore, significant opportunities for the Council to consider and maximise over the next 15 years to fundamentally address inequalities in the District as outlined earlier in this document. This will require strong local voices via active and engaged Councillors.

Indeed, the Council recognises that the role of its Elected Members has already started to evolve. The cumulative impact of so much change means Councillors are frequently dealing with more complex constituency matters, such as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). In East Bassetlaw alone, there are four NSIP proposals in the pipeline (90km of power line upgrades from the Humber to High Marnham, x2 large solar farms at 3,500 and 1,500 acres each, and STEP).

Given the ever-growing financial constraints of local government, the Council of 2030 will also require a more commercial outlook and greater partnership working. This will increase demands on Councillors' time. Some of this may be offset by less time spent travelling to and from traditional local authority meetings as technology is more widely adopted but day-to-day casework volumes are likely to continue in the medium term until the ageing of Bassetlaw's population plateaus and younger populations are employed in the higher-quality jobs offered by emerging industries.

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.**

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67186683>

Topic		
Governance Model	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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>
	Analysis	<p>When the last Electoral Review was completed, the Council operated a Committee system but moved to a Cabinet system in January 2000. The operation of the Cabinet and the Leader is set out in Part 2 Article 7, Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>The Council currently elects the Leader of the Cabinet to a term of office until the Annual Council meeting following their normal date of retirement from office as a Councillor. The Council's Committees and Panels are appointed on an annual basis, with the Leader of the Cabinet appointing to their Cabinet from time to time.</p> <p>The Cabinet carries out all local authority functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the authority. Some plans, policies and strategies are 'reserved' by law or by choice to Full Council to approve. These include the determination of the Annual Budget, Financial Plan, Local Plan and strategy documents (see Part 2 Article 4 of the Constitution).</p> <p>The Council has 48 Councillors elected every four years at a single set of elections (the Council changed from election by thirds in 2015), the last being in May 2023. Councillors have a duty to the whole community of Bassetlaw and are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. Full Council meets on average 6 times per municipal year (normally in May, June, September, December and February with an</p>

		<p>Extraordinary Council for the budget in January). Full Council is responsible for appointing the Leader and the Chairman of the Council, setting the overall policies of the Council and its budget, and approves the Policy Framework which comprises a series of major plans. The Council also receives recommendations from other Committees and petitions from the public.</p> <p>There are 7 formal Cabinet meetings per year and these alternate between the towns of Worksop and Retford. The Council and its Committees meet in the evenings starting at 6:30pm with the exception of the Health & Safety and the Joint Employee Committees which meet in the afternoon.</p> <p>All Councillors sit on at least one Committee / Cabinet / Panel, with most sitting on two or three. This can prove a challenge for Councillors with full-time jobs.</p> <p>The Audit and Governance Committee is a key component of Bassetlaw District Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.</p> <p>The purpose of the Audit and Governance Committee is to provide independent assurance to Members of the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and its internal controls. The Committee routinely performs an independent review of the Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks, and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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>Individual members of the Cabinet are known as Portfolio Holders and are allocated particular service responsibilities aligned to the Council's corporate priorities. They have wide-ranging decision-making powers in relation to these responsibilities. Portfolio Holders are able to make individual decisions within certain restrictions which are documented, published and circulated to members of the Overview & Scrutiny</p>

		<p>Committee and can be subject to “call-in”.</p> <p>In June 2023, to align with Vision 2040, the Leader reviewed the Council’s Cabinet roles. Given the number of regeneration projects noted above, he split the Regeneration post into two: one for Business & Skills and one for Identity & Place. He also changed the old Neighbourhoods portfolio to include the ever-growing green energy agenda, renaming this ‘Environment & Energy’. Finally, he created a new post to focus on ‘Corporate Strategy’ given the anticipated growth in opportunities for the Council itself to invest in STEP or related initiatives. The Leader has executive decision-making powers.</p> <p>The portfolio responsibilities are set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader, James Naish – Communications, Policy and Performance • Deputy Leader, Jo White – Business and Skills • Cabinet Member, June Evans – Corporate Strategy • Cabinet Member, Julie Leigh – Identity & Place • Cabinet Member, Darrell Pulk – Environment & Energy • Cabinet Member, Alan Rhodes – Corporate & Financial Services • Cabinet Member, Lynne Schuller – Health & Well-being • Cabinet Member, Jonathan Slater – Housing & Estates <p>From the May elections, six ‘Shadow’ Cabinet Members have been appointed by the Leader. These are predominantly newly-elected, younger members from the Majority Group. The purpose of this is to help develop and mentor potential Cabinet Members of the future, given some long-serving Councillors have said they are likely to stand down at the next election due to age.</p> <p>The Leaders of the other Groups on the Council sit on Cabinet as ‘Liaison Members’. They may speak but not vote at the meetings.</p>
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Bassetlaw District Council – Cabinet Members and Portfolio Areas



James Naish Leader	Julie Leigh	Jo White Deputy Leader	June Evans	Darrell Pulk	Lynne Schuller	Alan Rhodes	Jonathan Slater
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Comms, Policy & Performance	Identity & Place	Business & Skills	Corporate Strategy	Environment & Energy	Health & Well-being	Corporate & Financial Services	Housing & Estates
	STEP		Asset strategy	Air quality	Health and well-being strategy	Asset management	Social housing strategy
Comms	Building control	General business advice / support	Finance strategy	Bins inc. garden waste	Community safety	Benefits	Social housing compliance
Corporate brand	Car park strategy	Current Local Plan	Long term financial planning	Caretaking	Cost of living response	Budget setting	Tenant engagement
HR / people / culture	Community hubs	Decarbonisation advice / support for businesses	S80	Dog fouling and litter	Food safety	Business rates	Tenant services and support
Policy and performance	Conservation	Digital connectivity		Environmental health	Health and safety	Council tax	Repairs and maintenance
Youth Council	Future Local Plans and masterplans	Jobs, skills and apprenticeships		Flooding strategy	Leisure centres	Customer Services	New social housing
	Museum	Markets		Emergency planning and response	Migrant assimilation	Democratic services	Housing estates management
	Neighbourhood Plans	Network building		Flytipping	Place Partnership	IT and cyber security	Community centres
	Planning	Workspaces		Green agenda and action plans	Rural connectivity	Fees and charges policy	Private landlords
	Tourism offerings			Parks and open spaces	Third sector engagement	Legal and licensing	
	Town centre investment				Young people	Member support	

Portfolio Holders have monthly briefings with their responsible Corporate Director and associated Head of Service, as well as joint meetings collectively with members of the Corporate Management Team around 11 times per year. Portfolio Holders also become involved with events and other meetings associated with their portfolio area (i.e. opening of play parks, award ceremonies etc.).

Portfolio Holders are required to work in partnership with other agencies on issues and policies within their service area, as well as representing the District Council on specific external bodies (see Appendix Two).

Separate but related to the above, the Council has both a Cycling Champion and an Armed Forces Champion to promote these particular interest groups, positions occupied by Elected Members. The former was created in response to a recommendation from an Overview & Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The latter reflects the Council's commitment to its veteran community which has also been demonstrated by adopting an Armed Forces Community Covenant. According to the 2021 Census, 4,924 Bassetlaw residents have served in the Forces or the reserves. This is 5.1% of the total

		population which, together with Newark & Sherwood, is the highest percentage in Nottinghamshire. The Council was awarded the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award for its outstanding support towards the armed forces community in 2022.
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>The responsibilities are set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>There are eight main Council committees with a total of 76 seats which are allocated in proportion to the size of each of the political groups, plus a number of smaller sub-groups (for example, Appeals Sub Committee and the Chief Officers' Investigating Committee).</p> <p>In addition to attending Council Meetings and other constituency work, many Councillors are required to sit as representatives of the Council on other organisations and agencies. These organisations and agencies are known as 'Outside Bodies'. Such appointments ensure that the Council's interests and, therefore, the interests of Bassetlaw citizens are represented within key agencies. There are currently 36 Outside Bodies requiring representation to 48 seats. This is a significant commitment, partly driven by Bassetlaw's geographical location at the meeting point of two regions. There are no current vacancies.</p> <p>The Council recognises the value and contribution that Outside Bodies make to the wider community and believes the strength of the third sector in Bassetlaw has been central to its positive Covid-19 and cost-of-living responses. Members typically welcome the opportunity for the Council to be represented on outside organisations which operate within Bassetlaw. Nominations to and representations on Outside Bodies are reviewed annually by Council.</p> <p>The positions of Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder, although not deemed full-time positions, require sizeable commitment given the level of responsibility, with most Elected Members in these posts spending between 2 and 3 working days per week dealing with Council matters.</p>

		Executive Members serve on other decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional and national bodies. Appointments are considered on an annual basis but the Leader typically represents the Council on county and regional bodies.
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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	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>The Council has one scrutiny committee: Overview & Scrutiny. Its purpose is to discharge all the statutory functions of an Overview & Scrutiny committee and to act as the authority's statutory crime and disorder committee with those statutory functions (see Part 2 Article 6, Part 3.3.2 and Part 4.5 of the Constitution).</p> <p>Decision-makers are held to account through Overview & Scrutiny acting as a constructive 'critical friend' to Cabinet, amplifying the voices and concerns of the public, and driving improvement in public services. This includes, for example, exercising statutory powers to require attendance of Cabinet</p>

	<p>members and senior officers at Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A work programme is agreed and revised every year and actively monitored. An annual report is produced to document what has been undertaken and achieved. The Committee monitors decisions to be made and made, their implementation, and can exercise its right to call-in an unimplemented, non-urgent key decision. The Committee undertakes scrutiny reviews and makes recommendations for improvement; and the Committee undertakes performance management by monitoring the Council's achievement of priorities as set out in the authority's corporate plan and corporate priorities within its policy framework.</p> <p>Overview & Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 12 non-executive councillors. There are 1.5 FTE Policy Officers who, amongst other duties, provide scrutiny support under the Council's Head of Corporate Services (as the authority is a District Council in a two-tier area, there is no statutory Scrutiny Officer). The Committee establishes task and finish groups from this pool of 12 resources. There are eight meetings a year lasting on average around 2 hours.</p> <p>The Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023 increases the rights of tenants, requires greater engagement and strengthens the role of the Regulator of Social Housing and Housing Ombudsmen. In response, there is a strong possibility that the Council will strengthen its scrutiny function further and have an additional Committee to focus on the scrutiny of housing functions and delivery within the next 12 months. The Council has c.6,500 of its own properties and there are c.1,500 housing association properties in the District.</p>
Statutory Function	<p>This includes planning, licensing 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	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <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>
	<p>Analysis</p> <p>The Planning Committee meets every four weeks. It is necessary for Committee Members to set appropriate time</p>

		<p>aside to read the agenda pack in detail before each meeting – this can be extensive. Officers are available before the Committee date to address any queries Members may have. This streamlines the process and improves Member knowledge. There are also pre-Committee site visits for Members to attend and view the context of proposals in order for them to prepare appropriately for the meeting.</p> <p>Attendance levels for Planning Committee meetings are typically high. Substitutes are not permitted on the Council's regulatory committees which includes Planning.</p> <p>All Members of the Planning Committee are required to undergo mandatory annual planning training. This training covers the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and the planning service; the legislative local and national planning policy framework; how planning decisions are taken; and the Member Planning Code of Good Practice. Either the Head of Service, Planning Development Manager or Planning Policy Manager provide supplemental briefings on updates to national and local planning policy; Local Plan progression; design training; planning enforcement; viability; affordable housing; workshops on evolving masterplans; housing land supply; and any other topic-specific training requests from Members.</p> <p>The authority anticipates that, where permissible by law, the vast majority of planning applications will be dealt with through delegated arrangements given to officers under Part 4 of the Constitution, known as the 'Scheme of Delegation'. The Council determined 1,573 applications in 2022/23 of which 99% (1,556) were determined under officer delegated authority and the remaining 17 were determined by the Planning Committee. The figures for 2023/24 year to-date are 696 decisions issued and of these, 1% (9) have been made by Planning Committee.</p> <p>Where there are objections to proposals recommended for approval, officers will present the application to Planning Consultation Group (PCG) which is an internal fortnightly meeting. Officers seek the views of Elected Members about any localised issues that may require further discussion in the public domain at Planning Committee. PCG attendees are the Chair of Planning Committee, the Vice Chair, the Leader of the Opposition and a Member from Planning Committee on a rota basis.</p> <p>A recent constitution amendment now requires that when a decision has been taken against the officer recommendation and a planning appeal via public inquiry ensues, a Member of the Planning Committee will be required to appear as a witness at the inquiry.</p>
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		<p>There is currently a national debate about ‘speeding up’ the planning process and this requires more officer resource at a local level and internal specialist support which the Council needs to budget for. This should strengthen and expedite the Council’s decision-making but is not anticipated to impact the amount of Member involvement in decision-making.</p>
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<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 authority has a single Licensing Committee of 12 Councillors to discharge its functions under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005. There are six scheduled meetings of the Licensing Committee each year. Membership is chosen to ensure political balance and experience, recognising the need to create resilience while giving Elected Members an opportunity to gain experience. Meetings on average last 1h45m.</p> <p>There is provision under Part 3 of the Constitution for the establishment of Licensing Panels to determine specific matters (e.g. personal and premises licences, scrap metal licences). The right is reserved for the Licensing Committee to deal with these matters when considered appropriate.</p> <p>There are currently around 5 Licensing Panels a year. This is expected to increase considerably from 2024 as, following changes to the constitution in September 2023, a Taxi Sub Committee will sit every three weeks. This Sub Committee will be a panel of 3 that reflects the political make-up of the Council (currently 2 Labour and 1 Conservative/Independent).</p> <p>As a result of the above, there will be an increase in the time commitments required from Councillors. The Chair and Vice Chair of Licensing need to be available to review delegated decisions in relation to street trading requests for weekends.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<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>
	Analysis	<p>Planning and Licensing are the Council’s regulatory bodies.</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>
	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In</i>

	<p><i>doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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>Partnerships</p> <p>The following are the key external partnerships of the authority. An exhaustive list can be found in the appendices:</p> <p>East Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority</p> <p>This is a collaboration between the public and private sectors to ensure growth of a re-balanced local economy and to contribute to the renewal of the national economy.</p> <p>Our relationship with the Combined Authority will be partly defined by the incoming mayor after May 2024, although the Leader of Bassetlaw District Council is currently a substitute member for the new Mayor’s Cabinet which has started to meet in preparation for the May 2024 elections.</p> <p>The current proposals, with representation from the public and private sector, are defined in the recently-passed Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The Combined Authority will have its own Section 151 officer and own Head of Paid Services.</p> <p>We anticipate weekly engagement with the new Combined Authority as a result of the multi-billion-pound STEP fusion energy project taking place in Bassetlaw.</p> <p>Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority</p> <p>Like the East Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority, this is a collaboration between the public and private sectors to ensure growth of a re-balanced local economy and to contribute to the renewal of the national economy. The Combined Authority is local authority led and the Partnership Board is private sector led. Bassetlaw is the only Nottinghamshire authority, with most of the membership coming from South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. Minor members are not entitled to vote.</p> <p>East Midlands Councils</p> <p>East Midlands Councils represents the interests of local councils to Government and national organisations. They enable local councils to work together on key issues of local concern.</p> <p>The Leader represents the Council on the EMC, the voice for local government in the region and representing all 40 Councils in the East Midlands. The Deputy Leader is on the Regional Migration Board.</p>

EMC also coordinates a range of Performance and Scrutiny Networks which the Council participates in, and is helping to put in place a new performance management framework for the Council's Chief Executive and senior leadership team.

D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership

D2N2 covers the counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and involves the City Councils for Derby and Nottingham as well as all District Councils from these areas. The vision is for a more prosperous, better connected, and increasingly resilient and competitive economy for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and Derby and Derbyshire

Bassetlaw District Council has a seat at the table: Cllr White sits on the Economic Prosperity Committee and the Investment Board. We also have officer representation at numerous operational groups.

The LEP has a private sector led Board and receives support from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Chambers of Commerce.

The role of the LEP is likely to be replaced by the new Combined Authority. Exact details and timelines are not yet known.

D2N2 Leaders' Board

The Leader of the Council (or nominee) serves on this, which meets approximately twice per year.

Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee

This Committee, chaired between Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council, meets every few weeks and the Leader is Bassetlaw's representative. These meetings tend to alternate between online and in-person.

Barnsley Premier Leisure

BPL manages the Council's leisure facilities (x3 sports centres and a golf course) to maximise opportunities for health and well-being for Bassetlaw residents. The charity has a board and a senior management team. The management team reports to the Council via a formal monthly reporting procedure, meetings with BDC officers, providing data into the Council's performance management system, and by attending Overview & Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis. These activities are defined in the formal management contract.

The partnership is currently looking to set-up a local management board that will have membership from BDC (Members and officers) as well as the public, community safety and health bodies.

S80 Ltd

This is a Council-owned company which is part of the Council's wider commercial strategy. The overall aim is to deliver a financial return which contributes to Council efficiencies and additional income targets, as well as help the Council to deliver Vision 2040. The focus on this trading company is being refreshed after it was deprioritised during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bersahill Ltd

This is the Council's second trading company. It was set-up as a joint venture to act as a delivery vehicle for additional high-quality properties in the District. It is close to completing its first development (26 houses) which has been challenging due to the main contractor going into administration in September 2022, plus wider market conditions. Like the S80 Partnership, Bersahill has Councillor oversight.

Bassetlaw Place Based Partnership

The Council's Chief Executive chairs the Bassetlaw Place-Based Partnership (PBP) which works to deliver improvement in experiences, health and wellbeing for Bassetlaw citizens through simpler, integrated, responsive and well-understood services which ensure people get the right support at the right time.

The PBP believes we can achieve more when we work collaboratively, therefore all PBP programmes are developed and delivered in partnership. Partners include the District Council; Nottinghamshire County Council; Nottinghamshire, Doncaster and Bassetlaw NHS Foundation Trusts; Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Service; North Notts BID; Healthwatch and others.

Identified priorities include integration of services, culture and practices, including co-location; development of health citizenship to support self-care and emotional resilience by enabling people to have the skills, capacity and knowledge to manage their own health; transport; and loneliness and isolation.

Bassetlaw Public and Third Sector Partnership

The Bassetlaw Public and Third Sector Partnership is a small focus group of high-level officers from health, education, the voluntary sector, police, fire and local charitable organisations. The strength of the partnership is the close working relationship we have that enables positive and pro-active outcomes benefitting the local community on a wide range of issues for now and in the future.

Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Community Safety Partnership

The CSP's role is to create a functioning local partnership that does what it reasonably can to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in its area; the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances; and re-offending. The current strategy covers the period 2021–2026. A strategic assessment of the area is produced on an annual basis.

The Partnership is made up of the two District Councils, Nottinghamshire County Council, the Probation Service, the Police, Fire and Rescue, and Health.

This partnership continues to undertake its statutory duties and is well-established with positive relationships between partners. Most recently, the partnership has helped bring in Safer Streets funding to both Newark & Sherwood and Bassetlaw:

- The Council secured £550,000 funding from the Safer Streets 3 fund in 2021/22 for Worksop and £289,992 from Safer Streets 4. In the Safer Streets 4 programme, there was an underspend of £19,995 which the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner agreed could be reallocated to capital, thus enabling the provision of an additional CCTV column and refuge point at Worksop bus station.
- Safer Streets 5 is aimed at tackling neighbourhood crime (domestic burglary, robbery). The Council has been allocated £69,835 for the period October 2023–March 2024 and £73,519 for April 2024–March 2025. The Council is required to undertake the works and expenditure and is then reimbursed by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Through a Task and Finish Group, Bassetlaw District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of anti-social behaviour within town centres as part of its 2022-2023 Annual Work Programme.

Health and Well-being Board

The statutory functions are:

- To prepare Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs), which is a duty of local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs).
- A duty to encourage integrated working between health and social care commissioners, including providing advice, assistance or other support to encourage arrangements under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 (i.e. lead commissioning, pooled budgets and/or integrated provision) in

	<p>connection with the provision of health and social care services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A power to encourage close working between commissioners of health-related services and the board itself. • A power to encourage close working between commissioners of health-related services (such as housing and many other local government services) and commissioners of health and social care services. • Any other functions that may be delegated by the Council under section 196(2) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 <p>North Notts Business Improvement District (BID)</p> <p>The North Notts BID was established to identify, invest in and deliver a wide range of key projects and services that they (the North Notts BID Board) have chosen to improve and boost the local trading environment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The partnership is a legal entity given that there are financial implications and that BDC sits on the board of directors (with nil financial liability). 2. BDC does not have the power to influence the organisation's financial or operating policies in isolation, but as part of a wider board arrangement. 3. The authority has a minimal financial interest in the organisation in that payment is made in advance and recouped throughout the year for administrative purposes only. <p>The BID implements the objectives of the approved business plan and income of circa £700,000 per annum is collected by BDC on behalf of the BID through a business levy charge.</p> <p>North Notts BID has a Board made up of representatives of levy payers. The Head of Regeneration sits on the Strategic Board.</p> <p>There was a contractual operational agreement with the BID for the first 5-year term and another will be prepared for the second 5-year term that details the value added to existing District Council services. It also details the recharges that the Council can recoup for support services undertaken to administer the BID's levy collection. Quarterly operational meetings occur between the BID and BDC.</p> <p>The BID was delivered through a ballot of levy payers in 2017 and has recently moved through a successful re-ballot in 2022. The new 5-year term commenced in September 2022.</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"> ➤ <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>For many of Bassetlaw's Elected Members, serving their community is the main reason that they became a Councillor. Councillors employ a variety of means to make themselves available to electors; the Council does not prescribe how Councillors should represent their community.</p> <p>The Council's website provides a list of all Councillors making it clear to electors who their Councillor is and how to contact them. Photos of Councillors, ward and key contact details are provided in the Council's online newsletter and through the tenants' "In-Touch" magazine. A Fact Book is provided to all Parish Councils and community groups that contains this information. The Council makes councillor business cards and posters advertising ward surgeries, and contact details are available on request.</p> <p>Most Councillors are active in their local communities, including with relevant parish councils, tenants and resident groups. They are often stopped in the street or local shop. A number write items for community newsletters and many</p>

have been part of the 35 Neighbourhood Planning Steering Groups (or chaired these groups), one of the highest numbers in the country. Note that these plans need to be reviewed every five years. The majority of Councillors are contacted by residents via email or on the telephone. If Councillors are unable to resolve the query directly, then they are able to contact a link officer at the Council or key people in other agencies.

Ward Councillors will typically take the lead on issues of concern to their local communities. For example, direct representations were made by the Leader and Deputy Leader to the administrators, trade unions and Government in respect of the recent closure of Wilko, with Ward Councillors speaking to the media about the “on the ground” impact. Community involvement, led by the relevant Ward Member, was a key factor in the West Burton site being selected as the future home of the STEP project. Similar “bottom-up” resident-led planning groups have been established for Cottam and High Marnham, two other large brownfield development sites within the District.

Over the past 18 months, the Council has been successful in leading bids on behalf of the local community. Portfolio Holders play a key role in overseeing this process. Ward Members are also actively engaged to ensure community interests are reflected. Due to the long-term nature of project delivery, typically between 18 and 36 months, this will continue to impact heavily on Councillor time in the short and medium term given similar funds will be made available by future Governments for Councils to administer. Examples include:

- £18M Levelling Up Fund Round 2 – Priory Centre and Town Centre, awarded 2022
- £20M Levelling Up Partnership – Various projects, awarded 2023
- £20M Levelling Up Long Term Plan for Towns – Various projects, awarded 2023
- £3.4M UK Shared Prosperity Fund – various Projects, awarded 2022
- £715k Rural Prosperity Fund – various projects, awarded 2022
- £1.2M Sustainable Warmth Competition - retrofit of private domestic sector, awarded 2022
- £1.2M Home Upgrade Grant - retrofit of private domestic off gas premises, awarded 2023

Outside Worksop and Retford (represented by Charter Trustees), the District is parished with 44 Parish Councils and

9 Parish Meetings. A number of the District Councillors are also Parish Councillors.

The District supports three Parish Area Forums. These are groupings of about 10 Parishes in each to provide networking and greater lobbying opportunities through a stronger collective voice. The first (North East Forum), established in 1997, was a joint initiative with Nottinghamshire County Council. NCC determined that it had other means of engaging with Parishes and withdrew after two years. The District retained its commitment and has expanded the Forums where there was support.

Councillors from all the political groups have provided support to the Bassetlaw Youth Council which has historically been involved in scrutiny initiatives and made recommendations to Full Council.

Cabinet and Council meetings are held in the evening and alternate between Worksop and Retford. There are two aspects to this. The first is to encourage public participation. The public can ask questions at Council and Cabinet and make observations at Planning Committee. The second is to encourage a wide range of people to become Councillors by reducing commitments during working hours.

2023 ELECTED MEMBER SURVEY

To inform this Electoral Review, the Council undertook a Elected Member survey which 81% of Councillors responded to. Councillors were asked about how much time per month was spent on various aspects of Council and constituency business. A detailed overview of the results is shown at Appendix Five. A full report on the survey is also available on request.

PEN PORTRAITS

A typical Bassetlaw Cabinet Member spends 12.3 days (91.1 hours) per month on Council business. This consists of several main activities – notably attendance at Committees, other Council meetings, preparing for meetings, engaging with constituents, and working on wider, non-constituent issues (e.g. STEP). Compared to backbench members, they spend more time at Committees / other Council meetings and working on wider, non-constituent issues, spending 9.3 hours each month on the latter. Cabinet Members also spend a greater amount of time travelling for Council business and preparing for meetings – the latter being an aspect of Councillor workload that one Elected Member explicitly mentioned as being underappreciated by the public.

A typical backbench Bassetlaw Councillor spends 8.9 days (65.8 hours) per month on Council business, although rural

Councillors generally reported a higher figure due to extra travel, Parish Council meeting time and the number of wider, non-constituent issues impacting their areas. The time of backbench Councillors is mainly focused on preparing for meetings, engaging and dealing with constituents, and Committee work, although the ever-increasing salience of both casework and wider issues / projects is visible through the survey's qualitative evidence.

Some of the key themes that emerged from the survey are noted below:

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY / SOCIAL MEDIA

While some qualitative responses from the Elected Member survey suggest that less time is being spent on in-person constituent activities such as roving surgeries (enabled by advances in technology / instant communication and changing post-Covid engagement norms), there is also evidence of a growing expectation for Councillors to be readily available / contactable via other means such as social media – something particularly prominent in urban wards.

This trend is complicated, however, by the impacts of an ageing population which increases casework in two ways – dealing with age-related issues such as social isolation and poor public transport; and needing to balance both technology-enabled casework and traditional means of Councillor-constituent communication / engagement (especially due to digital illiteracy (10.4% Bassetlaw adult population has never used the Internet or are lapsed users, as noted earlier in this submission)). This sentiment is echoed in multiple survey responses, with one Councillor noting that *“As all public bodies move quite quickly to a digital service, many older and vulnerable or less capable people who feel left behind turn to their Councillors for advice, help and support”*.

The survey responses also reflect the increased weight of expectation placed on Councillors to act like a 24/7 support function, with at least 8 Elected Members explicitly mentioning this and others alluding to it.

INCREASES IN CASELOAD

Caseload increases and complexity – related to a range of factors including flooding, planning, the cost-of-living crisis and Bassetlaw's ageing population – were emphasised by multiple Elected Members as part of the survey responses:

- *“Casework spikes based on events – e.g. flooding, Cost of Living Crisis”.*
- *“More complex problems among constituents, especially [the] ageing population”.*

- *“Residents want someone to talk to – social isolation, poor public transport, loss of driving licence due to ageing/ill health”.*
- *“I serve an area of social housing and of financial disadvantage. Not everyone is able to adequately explain their problem online or sometimes in person to the appropriate officer. I live in the area and people generally come to me as a last resort, but sometimes as a first resort. I always make myself available and never refuse to help anyone in need”.*
- *“Several case work issues are ongoing over many months, e.g. a planning application has been ongoing for 10 months now and takes 1-2hrs per month. There’s an ongoing flooding issue, now 2 years old”.*
- *“Most cases involve multiple issues that need to be unpicked, e.g. one case from my first surgery is still being worked through because of the complexity...”.*

EXTRA URBAN WORKLOAD THROUGH GROWTH

As a result of growth in Bassetlaw communities, a few Councillors from urban / mixed wards emphasised the extra workload linked to new residents arriving into their communities. Responses suggested that these constituents, particularly those from overseas, don’t always understand the services delivered by the Council or how to access them, leading to Councillors spending more time supporting them. Councillors are increasingly seen by partner organisations and support groups as the first port-of-call for accessing Council-related services.

GREATER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT / INTEREST

Enabled by both widespread adoption of – and advances in – digital technology / social media, plus the rise in the number of strategic energy and housing projects in Bassetlaw, Elected Members reported greater and growing levels of community interest and involvement in their work and local matters. This was the case in both urban and rural areas. Respondents believed that this was due to a number of factors including residents’ improved knowledge of who their councillors are (*“More people are aware of who we are and trust us”*); the number of major projects in Bassetlaw that residents can engage with; and greater expectation on Councillors to comprehensively cover and champion everything that might impact the lives of their constituents.

BALANCING COUNCILLOR DUTIES WITH A FULL-TIME JOB

A particularly notable theme in the survey responses is the recognition that being a Councillor at the same time as

		having a full-time job is increasingly challenging. 74% of Elected Members said their workload was greater than they expected when first elected to represent their community, with many saying the workload was 'a lot more than expected'. This trend was particularly notable among Rural Elected Members who selected 'a little' / 'a lot more' work than expected in slightly greater numbers than their urban counterparts, pointing to the growth in complex challenges facing some of Bassetlaw's smaller communities .
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>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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>Elected Members use a variety of tools to communicate with residents including phone, email, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). Councillors are encouraged to direct constituents to self-reporting tools on the Council's website as much as possible, and a new IT Strategy will be presented to Cabinet and Full Council for approval before the end of the current administrative year. If Councillors are unable to resolve a matter, then they contact relevant officers directly. A number of Councillors hold surgeries on fixed dates and others meet residents on ad hoc basis.</p> <p>Work is currently taking place with Councillors to develop a portal for casework management.</p> <p>Cabinet members have the added caseload associated with their Portfolio Holder responsibilities. This includes regular briefings, policy formation and meetings with external and partner organisations. Additionally, they need to respond to electorate queries channelled to them by Ward Councillors. This adds significantly to their workload.</p> <p>Looking at the Council of 2030, there is no indication that the pressure on Cabinet members would reduce; indeed, as discussed above, the opposite is likely due to the District becoming a centre for large green energy projects. The Leader recently reviewed Portfolio Holder positions to increase capacity within the Cabinet to address the strategic items highlighted earlier in this submission.</p> <p>The results from the Elected Member survey (Appendix Five) showed, as stated above, that there is a growing expectation for Councillors to be readily available / contactable via other means such as social media – something particularly prominent in urban wards. This trend is complicated,</p>

		<p>however, by the impacts of an ageing population which increases casework in two ways – dealing with age-related issues such as social isolation and poor public transport; and needing to balance both technology-enabled casework and traditional means of Councillor-constituent communication / engagement.</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.

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

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.

Council size analysis

At the time of the last Review of the electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw District Council, the electorate was 81,874 (Dec 1999). By December 2023, it was 89,742.

This current submission has been developed by a cross-party group of Councillors and has been agreed at a meeting of Full Council on 7th December 2023.

The submission has been informed by:

- Briefings provided by the LGBCE to all Councillors and key officers.
- Current and projected electorate figures, informed by the housing trajectory information from the development of the Bassetlaw Draft Local Plan.
- The work of the cross-party Local Government Review Working Group which met on several occasions from September to December 2023.

The Council size proposal put forward demonstrates that since the last review and the decrease in Councillors from 50 to 48, the workload for Elected Members has typically increased. In arriving at this conclusion, the Council has considered future potential changes in governance arrangements; local policy developments; and the representational role of Elected Members, with evidence gathered about current time commitments in discharging the functions of the Elected Member role. Consideration has also been given to population trends and any potential increase in electoral numbers through housing and other forms of growth and development.

The Council is mindful that compared to its 'Nearest Neighbour 2022 CIPFA Group', this places the Council's electorate ratio towards the lower end.

Recommendation and justification

To provide a fair recommendation on the size of the Council, the Working Group has taken each of the key areas covered so far and summarised them in a series of tables below.

- The third column indicates whether the overall Councillor workload is expected to go up, stay the same, or go down for the relevant 'issue'.
- The fourth column determines, on this basis, whether Councillor numbers could go up, stay the same or go down.
- We have tried to be as pragmatic as possible when populating the fourth column and have not, therefore, considered the cumulative impact of the third column when deciding whether the relevant 'issue' indicates an increase or decrease of Councillor numbers.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

ISSUE	IMPACT ON CLLR ROLE	CLLR WORKLOAD IMPACT	CLLR NUMBERS IMPACT
Vision 2040	Leadership, agenda development	Increase due to the level of ambition	Status quo
Responding to financial pressures facing local authorities	Leadership, option development, community engagement	Increase to manage the challenges	Decrease to save money
£multi-billion nuclear future / emerging associated industries / East Midlands investment zone	Leadership, overview, community engagement	Increase	Increase
£62m external funding programmes (e.g. Levelling Up Funds)	Option development, oversight, scrutiny, community input	Increase	Increase
Devolution	Leadership, representational, scrutiny	Increase at the senior Cllr level	Status quo
Number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects	Representational, community engagement	Increase	Increase, largely in rural areas
Commercialisation of the Council	Leadership, agenda development, governance and scrutiny	Increase	Status quo
Broader green / decarbonisation agenda	Leadership, community engagement, oversight	Increase	Status quo

LOCAL GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

ISSUE	IMPACT ON CLLR ROLE	CLLR WORKLOAD IMPACT	CLLR NUMBERS IMPACT
Three counties and regional boundary	Additional partnership representational	Status quo	Status quo
High levels of social deprivation	Leadership, community engagement, casework	Status quo	Status quo

Ageing population, including veterans	Representation, casework, social housing need	Increase due to higher resident needs	Status quo
Rurality and poor public transport	Representational, Parish Councils, casework	Status quo	Status quo
Three-tier system of local government plus the new East Midlands Mayor	Representation, engagement, casework	Increase	Status quo
Lower than average digital access	Casework	Status quo	Status quo

ROLE IN COUNCIL

ISSUE	IMPACT ON CLLR ROLE	CLLR WORKLOAD IMPACT	CLLR NUMBERS IMPACT
New Local Plan (due to be adopted in the coming months)	Representation, engagement, casework	Direct increase for those Cllrs with large strategic sites in their wards, broader increase for monitoring of Local Plan implementation	Status quo
New social housing legislation	Engagement, oversight, scrutiny	Increase	Status quo
New licensing legislation	Increased scrutiny	Increase	Status quo

ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

ISSUE	IMPACT ON CLLR ROLE	CLLR WORKLOAD IMPACT	CLLR NUMBERS IMPACT
Rising public expectations of BDC	Representation, casework	Increase	Status quo
Cost-of-living response	Representation, casework	Decrease assuming the crisis is stabilising	Status quo
Flooding events	Representational, community engagement, casework	Increase	Status quo
Charter Trustees	Engagement, leadership	Increase for Worksop and Retford councillors due to rising expectations	Status quo
Assimilation of minority groups	Representation, engagement, casework	Increase	Status quo
Neighbourhood Plans (new and reviews)	Representation, engagement	Increase	Status quo

ROLE IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS

ISSUE	IMPACT ON CLLR ROLE	CLLR WORKLOAD IMPACT	CLLR NUMBERS IMPACT
Mayoral Combined Authority	Leadership, engagement, oversight	Status quo for most Cllrs, increase for a few	Status quo

LGA Special Interest Groups (e.g. Drainage)	Leadership, representation	Status quo for most Cllrs, increase for a few	Status quo
Integrated Care System	Leadership, representation, oversight	Increase	Status quo

NEW TECHNOLOGY

ISSUE	IMPACT ON CLLR ROLE	CLLR WORKLOAD IMPACT	CLLR NUMBERS IMPACT
Online services	Casework	Decrease	Reduce
Social media	Engagement, casework	Increase	Status quo

Whilst reducing the number of Councillors has been considered, given a backdrop of continuing austerity and the cost-of-living pressures plus an ageing population and an unparalleled number of large green energy and Levelling Up Fund projects on the horizon, the Council firmly believes that a council size of 48 Councillors is justified to enable each Elected Member to deliver/fulfil their responsibilities and duties as elected ward representatives and secure electoral equality.

The need for this retained number of Councillors is demonstrated by a combination of our unique geographical position; the disparate, rural nature of the District; socio-economic factors which currently see Bassetlaw ranked as a socially-deprived area; and strategic reasons associated with a unique range of known and potential opportunities. An increase in workload arises from the following:

- The **number of external funding programmes** (£62m announced in the past 12 months) requires both Councillor time in terms of strategic leadership but also for scrutinising the delivery of these programmes. The change is significant – the second highest grant-funding inward investment in the whole D2N2 area – and community leadership and engagement will be essential. This is a key role for all Councillors in Bassetlaw and takes up time.
- **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects** will impact on the District in the coming years – including new powergrid lines, large-scale solar farm developments and the regeneration of x3 large former power station sites. This is already and will continue to generate large amounts of local discussion and dialogue, and residents look to their local District Councillors on such matters. The **consequential impact of these projects on the local supply chain** is expected to be significant, as is the **introduction of the East Midlands Investment Zone** which includes the Laing O'Rourke site in Worksop.
- Bassetlaw has the fifth busiest (per capita) Citizens Advice office in the country. We have the **highest percentage of residents who are clinically extremely vulnerable** in the whole of the East Midlands and South Yorkshire. **Our elderly population is rising at a higher rate than the East Midlands as a whole** and we have a **comparatively high percentage of veterans** at 5.1%. This results in high casework demands for Councillors and increases the complexity of the issues being dealt with.
- With three quarters of our boundary being outside Nottinghamshire, there is

additional partnership activity required with South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire organisations to ensure Bassetlaw residents' needs are appropriately represented.

- There is strong **potential for additional scrutiny work** in the next 1-5 years, arising from the Council's ambitious strategic vision; the volume of major developments and external funding streams; the constrained financial position of local government; commercialisation of the Council to improve financial resilience; and changes to housing and licensing regulation.
- This submission has referenced expected **changes in social housing legislation**. This not only necessitates additional scrutiny arrangements focused on housing delivery as referenced above but also precipitates **greater demand on Councillor time on tenant engagement and service demands given greater rights**. There are over 8,000 social and housing association houses in Bassetlaw located predominantly in Worksop, Retford, Harworth, Carlton in Lindrick and Langold. This increase in demand will particularly be felt by members of these urban wards. **The Draft Local Plan is also due to be adopted shortly**, with the associated house and infrastructure investment requiring oversight.
- Bassetlaw has the very unusual situation of having **two sets of Charter Trustees in place in Worksop and Retford**. There are only 19 sets of Charter Trustees nationally. Charter Trustees are responsible for continuing the historical link to towns' charters. They are precepting bodies and undertake a range of activities. All District Councillors from the wards in the towns automatically become Charter Trustees. This increases average Councillor workload (vs. District Councillors in similar geographies without Charter Trustee responsibilities).
- Further work, as reflected in the Elected Member survey, in urban wards is generated by the need to ensure **the integration of new communities**. As noted earlier, over 300 members of the Hong Kong community have arrived in Worksop in recent months and this likely to grow in the near future.
- **Flooding events are likely to increase in frequency and gravity, not decrease**. The Council as a whole needs capacity to respond to emergencies quickly, with Councillors having a role to play.
- A reduction in Councillors would likely lead to larger rural wards. This risks increasing the workload for these Councillors with more Parish Councils to attend (44 Parish Councils in total), an increased number of planning issues and constituency matters, and more area to cover. This has been reflected in rural Elected Member survey responses. These wards are typically where large energy projects are focused. In our opinion, **larger rural wards risk undermining the links with community identity**, such as in Sturton Ward where Neighbourhood Planning has been done on two occasions (2016 and 2021) at the ward level.
- **The three-tier system (Parish, District, County) often leads to District councillors receiving referrals for or from Parish and County colleagues**, with a fourth tier now being created with an East Midlands Mayor which will initially cause additional confusion.

- Finally, **we believe the workload of Councillors is manageable for people with full-time jobs at the moment, albeit with challenges.** Any decrease in Councillor numbers would reduce the likelihood of full-time employees being able to act as Elected Members, thereby reducing the representativeness of the Council itself at a time when the professional skills of full-time employees are to be welcomed when the District is going through a time of unprecedented change. The Elected Member survey responses (Appendix Five) indicate that being a Councillor at the same time as having a full-time job is becoming increasingly challenging, with some believing it almost unviable.

The existing arrangements discussed above currently deliver strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership effectively, whilst changes within our governance model are constantly considered to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, like those being implemented to our scrutiny function.

Council size options

The Council has been mindful of the CIPFA comparisons and considered a reduction in size, with 44 and 46 Councillors being the most likely options, but concluded that the effects of such reductions would not allow the Council to meet its objectives and demands:

- Firstly, this is because of the **already high workloads and responsibilities** (outlined above) of Councillors which would need to increase further. Some of this increased workload would come from Councillors sitting on more Committees. This may force Councillors to reduce the amount of time they spend being active leaders in the communities that they represent, which is perceived to be critical in the current socio-economic climate.
- Additionally, an overall increase in the workload of Elected Members would mean the Council would **struggle to attract Members with other commitments, and thus not adequately reflect the people it serves.** An alternate option with a smaller Council size would be to reduce the size and number of committees, Outside Body commitments and potentially the Cabinet. As outlined, this would weaken the ability of the Council to provide strategic leadership, accountability and perform its regulatory functions. The number of decisions to be made and issues to be addressed will not reduce in line with the size of the Council; conversely, we expect the number and size of Council decisions to increase as a result of the District's projected economic growth.

For the reasons outlined above, the Council believes that it is necessary to have 48 Councillors in order to meet the challenges of the future and effectively provide strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership, maximising the returns for Bassetlaw people and providing adequate coverage across its 63,688-hectare area.

Impact of this recommendation

The mix of single, two and three Councillor wards reflects the geographical diversity of the District. This number of Councillors would enable all outside body positions to be adequately fulfilled and, if the current size of the Cabinet is retained at 8, it would ensure that the Cabinet could be held to account as approximately 5/6ths of the Council would be available to undertake the scrutiny function. At 48, the Executive would represent 17% of the Council.

In addition to this, if the Council consists of 48 Councillors, then any political group would

need at least 25 for a majority. With a Cabinet of 8, it would always be less than a third of the controlling Group. Again, this ensures further checks and balances as it ensures that the Cabinet is unable to overpower the controlling group of the same political alignment.

The proposal to retain 48 Councillors provides the best fit for how a rural district like Bassetlaw operates now and for the future, taking a balanced approach against the Commission's criteria. The evidence outlined in this submission shows that the Council is operating effectively with the current Council size. A reduction would result in a concerning increase in the workload of Elected Members across all three aspects of their role – Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership – and potentially reduce the effectiveness of the Council as a whole at a time of unparalleled, positive, exciting but complex change across Bassetlaw.

Appendix One

Individual Appointments Made To Outside Organisations 2023/24

- **Bassetlaw Action Centre**
- **Bassetlaw Food Bank**
- **Bassetlaw Twinning Association Executive Committee X3**
- **Bersahill Ltd.**
- **Chesterfield Canal Trust Partnership**
- **Focus On Young People in Bassetlaw**
- **Goodwin Hall Management Committee X3**
- **Isle Of Axholme And North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board X2**
- **Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board X3**
- **Nottinghamshire Police And Crime Panel**
- **Nottinghamshire Rural Community Action**
- **PATROLJC (Parking And Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Committee)**
- **Robin Hood Airport Consultative Committee**
- **Rural Services Network**
- **Stuart Goodwin Charities**
- **Sir Stuart Goodwin Charity (Former Borough) X4 (Including The Retford Mayor)**
- **Sir Stuart And Lady Goodwin Charity (Former Rural) X5 (Including Chairman Of The District Council)**
- **Worksop Charities X2**

APPENDIX TWO

Role Based Appointments Made To Outside Organisations 2023/24

- **Bassetlaw Citizens' Advice Bureau**
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
- **Bassetlaw Public and Third Sector Partnership Board** – Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing (Sub - Shadow Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing)
- **Bassetlaw Community And Voluntary Service**
Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing (Sub - Shadow Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing)
- **Bassetlaw, Newark And Sherwood Community Safety Partnership**
Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing (Sub - Shadow Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing)
- **District Councils' Network Assembly**
Cabinet Member for Communications, Policy and Strategy (Sub - Cabinet Member for Skills and Business)
- **Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals Trust**
Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing (Sub - Shadow Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing)
- **East Midlands Museums Service**
Cabinet Member for Identity and Place and Museum Curator
- **East Midlands Councils**
Cabinet Member for Communications, Policy and Strategy (Sub - Cabinet Member for Skills and Business)
- **NHS Bassetlaw Patient and Public Engagement Group**
Shadow Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
- **Nottinghamshire County Council**
Health and Well-Being Board - Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing (Sub - Shadow Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing)
Joint Economic Committee – Cabinet Member for Skills and Business (Sub – Shadow Cabinet Member for Skills and Business)
- **Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust**
(Chairman of the District Council) (Honorary Vice-President)
- **Retford Air Cadets (1403 Squadron) – Civilian Committee**
Chairman of the District Council
- **Rotary Club of Worksop and Dukeries**
Chairman of the District Council (Honorary Member)

- **Royal Town Planning Institute**

Chair of Planning Committee
(Sub - Vice-Chair of Planning Committee)

- **S80**

Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy and S Scotthorne

- **Sheffield City Region**

Sheffield City Region Combined Authority – Cabinet Member for Communications, Policy and Strategy (Sub - Cabinet Member for Skills and Business)

Appendix Three – Meeting durations

Council - Average length of meeting: 1:16. Note that this includes Extraordinary Council meetings which are typically short.

Cabinet - Average length of meeting: 1.33.

Audit & Governance Committee - Average length of meeting: 1.6.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Average length of meeting: 1.88.

Planning Committee - Average length of meeting: 1.6.

Licensing Committee - Average length of meeting: 1.45.

Appendix Four: ELECTORATE FORECAST

Housing Development: Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038: Publication Version – August 2023

The Council's estimate of population growth has been aided by the development of the Local Plan. It has just gone through the inspection stage so the housing development trajectory has been externally endorsed.

In order to establish the minimum number of homes needed, the local housing need assessment was undertaken using the Standard Method as required in Planning Practice Guidance.

The Standard Methodology calculates a minimum housing need for Bassetlaw of 288 dwellings per annum for the period 2020 - 2038. This is the starting point for delivery of housing, and should be reviewed at least every 5 years. The base date for the calculation of housing need, 1 April 2020, is consistent with national planning practice guidance. The evidence demonstrates that pursuing a housing target based purely on the standard methodology minimum figure means that the Plan would not provide a sufficient number of dwellings to support the economic growth objectives in the District.

Such a low level of housing development would have significant consequences including:

- Demand for new housing outstripping supply for particular groups, potentially leading to younger people being unable to stay in the area;
- Economic growth being constrained because of a shortage of skilled local labour;
- Increased levels of in-commuting to support economic growth, which would not be sustainable and would put greater strain on the transport network.

The housing requirement of 540 dwellings per annum in the Plan (9,720 dwellings by 2038) has therefore been set at a level to support the level of jobs growth (9,699 jobs). In order to meet Bassetlaw's housing requirement, there will be a degree of frontloading – this reflects the extent to which the Council has granted planning permission for new housing development in recent years and the level of completions experienced in the District since the start of the plan period. Sites which currently benefit from planning permission will continue to come forward in the early years of the plan (from adoption) supported by a supply of small sites. It is expected that those sites currently with an outline permission will then come on stream along with the site allocations in this Plan to ensure the housing requirement is met over the plan period.

Housing Supply

The housing requirement will be the basis for calculating the five-year supply of deliverable housing land following the adoption of the Local Plan. In accordance with national policy and guidance, an appropriate buffer (a minimum of 10%) will be added to the 5-year housing land supply within this Plan to ensure it is sufficiently flexible and robust when calculating the five year housing land supply. The buffer helps increase flexibility and choice in the market for housing. The Government's Housing Delivery Test looks at completions over a three-year rolling average. If this falls below the Local Housing Need produced by the standard methodology then certain actions will need to be taken depending on the scale of the shortfall.

The expected annual housing delivery rates are expressed as a trajectory for the plan period. This has been used to help calculate future electorate numbers generated by new properties.

HOUSING SITES

The Local Plan includes a number of major sites. One is of particular relevance in regards to the Electoral Review and may require consideration through a Community Governance Review.

Peaks Hill Farm, Worksop

Situated on the northern edge of Worksop, Peaks Hill Farm (in Figure 1) adjoins an existing residential area to the south and Existing Employment Site, Carlton Forest, to the north-east. Land at Peaks Hill Farm, Worksop, as identified on the Policies Map will be developed for approximately 655 dwellings. The site adjoins the Worksop built up area but is situated within Carlton in Lindrick parish. As an urban extension to Worksop it can reasonably be expected that residents from this development will use the town for the majority of their service and infrastructure needs. A similar situation occurred with the Old Thievesdale Lane / Blyth Road development (shown in orange). Residents moving into this development assumed that it was a natural extension of the town and had a Worksop postal address. On finding they were in Carlton in Lindrick parish and Ward they lobbied the District Council for a change. This resulted in a Community Governance Review.

Peaks Hill Farm will provide a new distributor road linking Blyth Road (B6045) to Carlton Road (A60). This road will be dual purpose supporting a green corridor

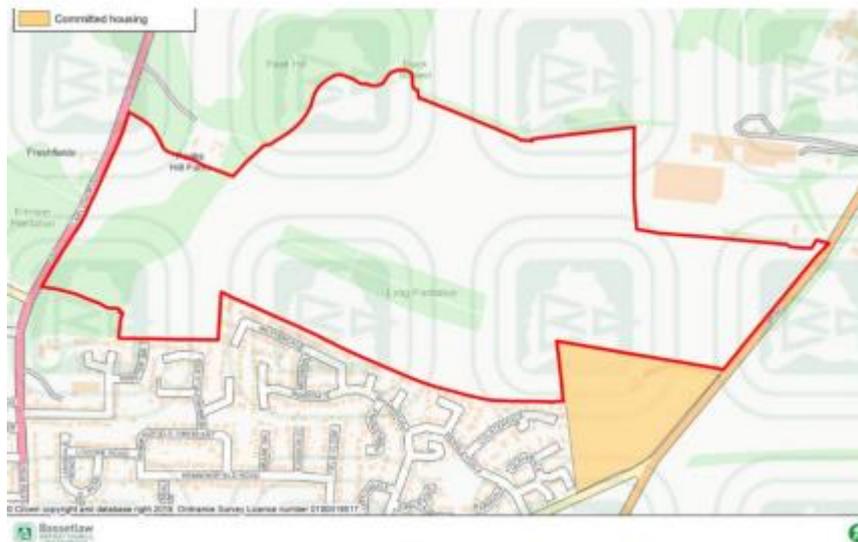


Figure 1: Peaks Hill Farm

Carlton in Lindrick/Worksop North Green Gap

A policy within the Plan will ensure the continued separation of Worksop from Carlton in Lindrick. To reflect its location adjoining a green gap, appropriate design techniques such as soft landscaping, tree planting, low level accommodation and lower density development should be considered, particularly along the northern periphery to reinforce landscape quality.

Appendix Five: MEMBER SURVEY

A total of 39 Councillors responded to the survey, a response rate of 81%. A summary of the key findings is as follows. A full report on the survey findings is available.

A typical Bassetlaw Cabinet member spends 12.3 days (91.1 hours) per month on Council business. This consists of several main activities – notably attendance at Committees, other Council meetings, preparing for meetings, engaging with constituents, and wider, non-constituent issues. Compared to backbench members, they spend more time at Committees/other Council meetings, but also in working on wider, non-constituent issues – spending 9.3 hours monthly on the latter.

As a virtue of their Cabinet role, they also spend a greater amount of time on travel relating to Council business and in preparing for meetings – the latter of which being an aspect of Councillor workload that one member explicitly mentioned as being underappreciated by the public.

A typical backbench Bassetlaw Councillor spends 8.9 days (65.8 hours) per month on Council business, although rural Councillors generally have a higher figure due to extra travel, Parish Council meeting time, and interest surrounding wider, non-constituent issues. The time of backbench Councillors is mainly focused on preparing for meetings, engaging and dealing with constituents, and Committee work; although the ever-increasing salience of both casework and involvement in wider issues/projects is visible through the survey's qualitative evidence.

Impact of TECHNOLOGY/SOCIAL MEDIA

While some qualitative responses from the Councillor Survey recount slightly less time spent on in-person constituent activities, such as roving surgeries (enabled by advances in technology/instant communication and changing post-Covid engagement norms), there is also a simultaneous burgeoning expectation for councillors to be readily available/contactable via social media – something particularly prominent in urban wards. This trend is further complicated by the impacts of an ageing population, which increases casework twofold – dealing with age-related issues such as social isolation and poor public transport, and needing to balance both technology-enabled casework and traditional means of councillor-constituent communication/engagement (especially due to digital illiteracy (10.4% Bassetlaw adult population has never used the internet or are lapsed users, 6.3% for UK as a whole – Source: ONS)). This sentiment is echoed in multiple survey responses, with one Councillor in particular echoing that “As all public bodies move quite quickly to a digital service, many older and vulnerable or less capable people who feel left behind turn to their Councillors for advice, help and support.”

The survey responses also quite clearly reflect the increased weight of expectation placed upon Councillors for them to act like a 24/7 support function, with a least 8 explicitly mentioning this expectation and many more alluding to it. Mentions of the role of social media especially included detailed that “We have to answer a lot of comments on social media about misinformation, such as the closure of the leisure centre during the floods or the consultation on the market,” and that “People feel like they can and should be able to access you quickly all the time.” A few Councillors also have noted that this expectation causes greater anger and, at times, threats if they cannot help: “...there is a greater expectation – and if I cannot help – greater anger. There is far more suspicion of politicians and accusations of corruption.” Such abuse and accusation can be further funneled and loudened in the echo chamber of social media, risking a rise in abuse from certain constituents if Councillor numbers were to be decreased – something which could likely discourage many from considering representing their community at a local government level.

Increases in CASELOAD

Caseload increases related to the Cost of Living crisis and the ageing population were heavily emphasised by multiple Members within the Councillor Survey

- “Casework spikes based on events – e.g. flooding, Cost of Living Crisis”
- “Several case work issues are ongoing over many months, e.g. a planning application has been ongoing for 10 months now and takes 1-2hrs per month. There’s an ongoing flooding issue, now 2 years old... These are over and above the 1 case per fortnight I get which can be opened and closed after one or two actions.”

- “Most cases involve multiple issues that need to be unpicked, e.g. one case from my first surgery is still being worked through because of the complexity...”
- “More complex problems among constituents, especially [the] ageing population.”
- “Residents want someone to talk to – social isolation, poor public transport, loss of driving licence due to ageing/ill health.”
- “I serve an area of social housing and of financial disadvantage. Not everyone is able to adequately explain their problem online or sometimes in person to the appropriate officer. I live in the area and people generally come to me as a last resort, but sometimes as a first resort. I always make myself available and never refuse to help anyone in need.”
- “Cost of Living cases are everywhere.”
- “Supporting people in my ward, housing repairs, and flooding equates to me being on my phone most evenings.”
- “More enquiries regarding the Cost of Living crisis and how to access benefits.”

EXTRA URBAN STRAIN THROUGH GROWTH/NEW MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY

As a result of burgeoning growth in multiple communities, especially urban areas, a few councillors from urban/mixed wards wished to emphasise the extra strain placed onto them by new members arriving into their communities. Responses claimed that these constituents, particularly those hailing from overseas, often don't always understand the services delivered by the Council or how to access them – leading to them often occupying much of Councillors' engagement time with residents. This issue is particularly magnified as Councillors are increasingly seen by partner organisations and support groups as the first port-of-call to which to refer people with Council-related service issues – as echoed by the responses.

GREATER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/INTEREST

Enabled by both widespread adoption of – and advances in – digital technology/social media, and the recent rise in long-term energy- and housing-related projects in Bassetlaw, Councillors have been faced with greater community involvement and interest – catalysed by the stimulation of community voices and awareness arising from social media and the internet. Indeed, several qualitative responses pointed to greater overall engagement with local issues and Councillors than in the past (across the rural-urban divide). Respondents believed that this was due to residents' greater knowledge of who their councillors are (“More people are aware of who we are and trust us.”), there being more major projects in Bassetlaw that residents wish to be involved with, plus greater expectation on Councillors to comprehensively cover and champion everything that might impact the lives of their constituents. One Councillor singled out the significant number of small funding pots being allocated to Bassetlaw as having swelled the workload of Councillors, particularly around the amount of meetings needed to manage them and their delivery.

Moreover, the survey indicates that the increased workload stimulated by greater community engagement generally has a greater impact on Councillors situated in rural wards. By the District's nature, there are many larger, rural wards in order to maintain electoral equality – one rural Councillor emphasised that this requires more capacity than in smaller, urban areas (“I can confirm this as a former County Councillor representing an urban seat with 5,000 electors.”). This trend is only further complicated by a greater emphasis on green energy – specifically mentioned by a multiple Councillors; one claimed that they were currently working on STEP, power line upgrade proposals, a 1,500-acre solar farm proposal, a quarry development, and a 200-acre solar farm on top of the usual, challenging rural caseload. Indeed, the survey's qualitative data also bears out this trend (see Figure 1 below), with rural members trending more strongly towards spending greater time on 'wider, non-constituent issues' (such as STEP, energy projects, and housing developments) than their urban counterparts – placing a long-term strain on especially rural Councillors that will endure through 2030.

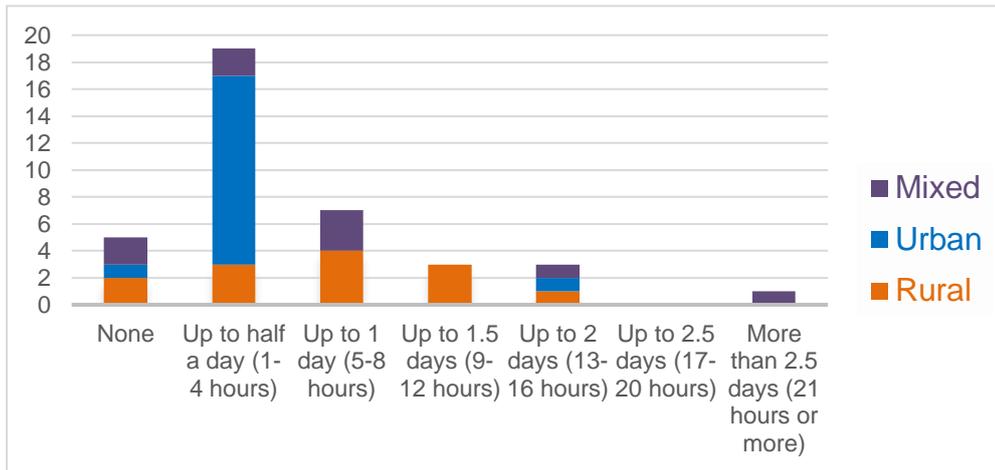


Table 1 - Time spent by respondents on 'Wider, non-constituent issues' (sorted by nature of ward (rural/urban/mixed))

However, greater community engagement doesn't simply manifest itself through interest in steering major projects, but also through an expectation that Councillors be permanently 'available' in their community to engage with. Several members identified a newfound perception that they're expected to be the "first line of support" in events that impact the whole community (e.g. pandemic, flooding events, recent Wilko administration, housing repairs). Such a trend is further complicated by happening during a time of continuously reduced Council resources, in turn leading to a 'snowball effect' of more resident complaints that need handling. 10 Councillors singled out their response to flooding – recent flooding during Storm Babet (October 2023) affected Bassetlaw significantly – as a particular role that has grown and will endure: "Significant amount of time spend on flooding response, which is becoming more frequent."

Further long-term pressures on Bassetlaw Councillors come through issues around planning and new housing developments that place much "large-scale emotion" on residents' lives – a trend that will be amplified into the future due to scheduled developments, both large and small, across the District.

INCREASINGLY CHALLENGING TO BALANCE COUNCILLOR DUTIES WITH FULL-TIME JOB. risk of Council not adequately reflecting/representing its working-age constituents

A particularly concerning pattern amongst the survey responses is the recognition that being a Councillor whilst having a full-time job is becoming increasingly challenging, some believing it almost unviable. When considering the quantitative data around Councillor time spent on Council business currently, versus their expectations when first elected (Figure 2 below), it can be seen that 74% of responses experienced more work than they expected when they were first elected to represent their community – the majority of these experienced 'a lot more than expected'. Rural members tend to have been faced with 'a little'/'a lot more' work than expected in slightly greater instances than their urban counterparts, possibly indicating that the position of being a rural Councillor could be made even less realistic or tenable for many prospective candidates should Councillor numbers be reduced. It also must be observed, however, that the *overall* trend is of Councillors having more work than first expected across the rural-urban divide (with just 2 responses saying they had less – both cite leaving certain Committees or declining in-person commitments, rather than caseload demands). The survey results thus exhibit the replication of a damaging trend (being seen across the country) for the aspirations of working people wishing to be Councillors.

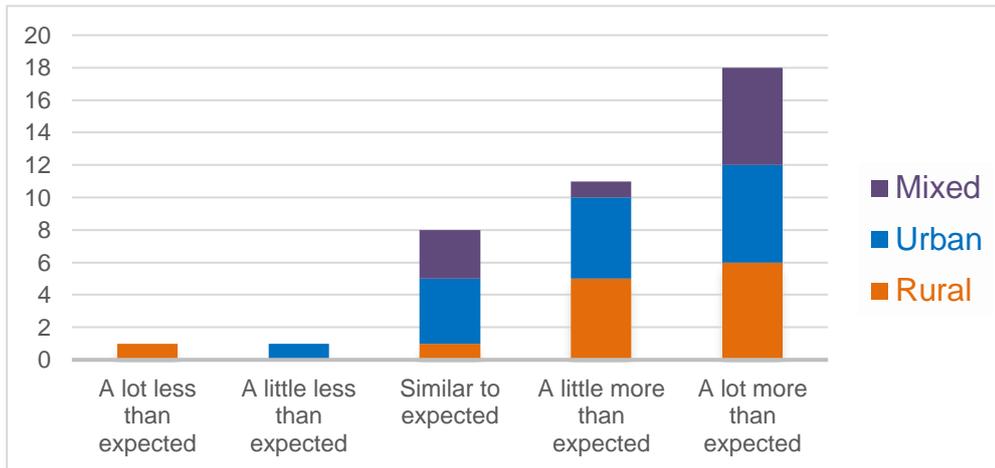


Figure 2 - Time spent on Council business as a whole, at the point of survey, compared to their EXPECTATIONS when first elected (sorted by nature of ward (rural/urban/mixed))

Even when only considering those that have served over one term, most members (16 of 24) believe that they spent a little more (3) or a lot more (13) on Council-related work than they did when first elected – despite having had more time to be acquainted with the complaint/casework process compared to newer members, again emphasising the greater extent of overall workload faced by Councillors as a whole. The particular severity of this trend in Bassetlaw is emphasised by one particular respondent: “[I] had previously served as an elected member on Nottinghamshire County Council and the hands-on approach at Bassetlaw requires more time than I anticipated.”

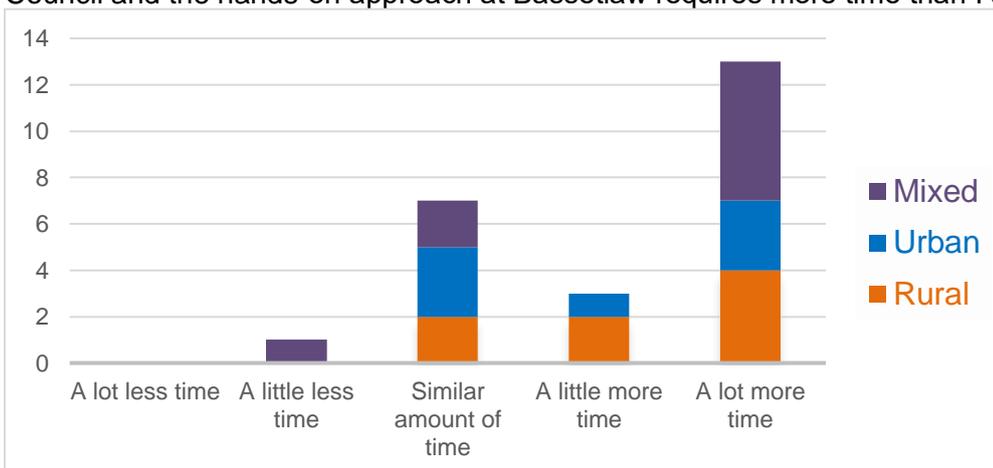


Figure 3 - Time spent on Council business today vs. when first elected – for those over 1 term (sorted by nature of ward (rural/urban/mixed))

The difficulties of balancing a full-time job with Councillor duties is further outlined clearly in the qualitative responses – with one member explicitly claiming “this puts many good people off the idea of becoming a Councillor.” Another believed – due to the continual stretching of Councillors, with comments workload, and sometimes abuse – that “without a pragmatic review...[this] could lead to a reduction of people available to provide this important role for the community.” A couple of further valuable insights are listed below:

“Whilst we can all add value, it’s really difficult for anyone who has a full time job and I think this puts many good people off the idea of becoming a councillor.” (rural respondent)

“When I worked, balancing the needs of work and Councillor role got increasingly difficult.” (urban respondent)

This observation intertwines with multiple other aforementioned trends (increased caseload, greater community involvement, strain of population influxes) to only make the role of Councillor generally more demanding and consequentially carries a great danger – particularly when a reduction of Councillor numbers is considered – of discouraging “good people” from becoming Councillors, and hence the Council from adequately reflecting and

representing the identities and concerns of the people that it serves.