

CASTLE POINT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Size Submission

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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 submission is being made by officers on behalf of the Council, further to two workshops held with councillors, and with the support of the three political groups at Castle Point: Canvey Island Independent Party; Conservative Party; and People's Independent Party.

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.*

Not applicable.

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance**

arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context. The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

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

The Council last changed its internal governance arrangements with effect from January 2008 when the Council moved from a committee structure to executive arrangements, Leader and Cabinet. This change streamlined the decision-making process, making decision making more flexible and nimble, and the introduction of overview and scrutiny arrangements, enhanced the ability for non-executive members to be involved in shaping Council policies and services. In 2012, these arrangements were revised to reflect latest legislation at the time.

The majority of council services continue to be provided in-house, with the exception of street cleaning and grounds maintenance which is provided by a private contractor on a long-term contract, which is currently being re-tendered. Despite this, the services provided by the contractor are reported on and scrutinised in the same way as Council-run services. The Council still retains its own housing stock, albeit small (circa 1,500 properties), which it attempted to transfer through Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) on two occasions but on each attempt, tenants voted against the proposals. Likewise, Leisure services were reviewed with a view to establishing an external leisure trust, but this did not progress and services continue to be retained in-house.

The aforementioned change to governance arrangements, moving to a Leader and Cabinet structure, were as a result of a recommendation made by the Audit Commission following Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2007. The most recent Corporate Peer Review in 2018 by the Local Government Association (LGA) made recommendations around the Council's scrutiny function to improve its effectiveness. The LGA and Planning Advisory Service (PAS) also undertook a Planning Improvement Peer Challenge which has led to a number of changes to the Development Control Committee, now known as the Development Management Committee.

Over the last four years, the Council has been working closely with neighbouring local authorities – Basildon Borough Council; Brentwood Borough Council; Rochford District Council; Southend-on-Sea Borough Council; Thurrock Council; and Essex County Council - through a body known as the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) to establish a cross-boundary strategic approach to growth and development across the sub-region, although each council retains sovereignty. All councils have now formalised these arrangements through establishment of a Joint Committee. The government policy on Levelling Up (and links to local government reform) could have an influence on the Council

as an institution in the medium-term. We continue to work through the Levelling Up White Paper and any subsequent briefings to better understand the implications.

The Council is a member of the South Essex Parking Partnership which has responsibility for the control and management of parking on the Borough's roads. The Partnership includes Basildon Borough Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Maldon District Council, Rochford District Council, Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council (the Lead Authority). The initial agreement commenced in 2011 and is due to be renewed for a further eleven years.

The council size proposal is to reduce the number of members from 41 to 39 councillors. This proposal will allow the Council to continue to operate effectively with a proportionate level of councillor involvement in decision-making, regulation, policy development and scrutiny, reflecting the context of the Council as set out above. A modest reduction in the number of councillors will ensure that all members are able to play an active role in Council business and continue to represent their communities. We also believe that this number of councillors will help to address some of the discrepancies that currently exist in relation to number of electors represented by each councillor. These proposed arrangements would result in one councillor per approximately 1,870 electors. By reducing the number of wards from 14 to 13, this allows for an exact split of three councillors per ward, supporting the continuation of election by thirds.

However, despite this submission proposing 39 councillors which we believe the evidence demonstrates is an appropriate number of councillors, there is an arithmetical conundrum that will emerge at Phase 2 of this review. That is, whilst the overall the number of councillors is divisible by three, the split of councillors required to represent the split of electors between the geographically defined community of Canvey Island (16) and the rest of the Borough (23) is not divisible by three and so would require further adjustment to allow for election by thirds. This point is explored in more detail later in the conclusion of this submission and we welcome the consideration and opinion of the Commission about whether this is a resolvable issue.

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?

Castle Point is a small borough covering just 17.3 square miles, with a population of 90,524¹, located at the heart of the South Essex sub-region on the northern bank of the Thames Estuary between the larger settlements of Basildon to the west and Southend to the east. It is these larger settlements, along with London, on which Castle Point relies for a great deal of its employment, services and leisure opportunities.

The population of Castle Point is expected to grow in the period to 2028. Sub-national household projections from 2018² indicate that this growth could be of the order of 1,300 people. However, housing growth in line with Government requirements could increase this further. The Addendum to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2020³ looked at the impact of housing growth on population growth. The modelling work showed that the population of people over the age of 16 would increase by 7,187 people between 2018 and 2033. Over a five-year period this would give rise to a population growth of the order of 2,400 people.

Castle Point is well connected within the wider Essex area and London by the strategic highway and railway network. The A13, A127 and A130 pass through Castle Point linking the Borough with opportunities in South Essex, mid-Essex and London. The railway service is well rated for customer satisfaction and provides fast, direct connections to Basildon, London and Southend, and connecting services to employment growth locations in Thurrock.

Spatial footprints for housing, health and economy naturally align Castle Point with other neighbouring local authorities: we sit within the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Area; are closely aligned with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Rochford District Council through work in partnership with the NHS; and the South Essex councils of Basildon Borough Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Rochford District Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council, together with Essex County Council are working to make South Essex a greater place through sharing resources, lobbying government and collaborating with business and residents.

The Thames Estuary is a significant feature in the landscape of Castle Point. It has played and will continue to play an influential role in the natural environment and scope of development within the Borough. A key geographical feature of Castle Point is a clearly defined community on Canvey Island - separated from the rest of Borough by Hadleigh Ray and East Haven Creek - with a strong sense of identity and community separate from the other settlements in the rest of the Borough (see section 'Other issues').

Just over 55% of Castle Point's land is designated as Green Belt. As a result, most of the Borough's population live within one of four towns: Benfleet (22%), Canvey Island (43%), Hadleigh (14%), and Thundersley (21%).

Castle Point as an area has a long history but is essentially modern in character, there are a few older buildings remaining, although major re-development took place mainly between the

¹ Population Estimates mid-2020, ONS

² [2018 based Sub-national Population Projections, ONS](#)

³ [Addendum to the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Castle Point 2020, Turley](#)

two world wars. There remains in the Borough large areas of public open space, marshland and woodland.

There is limited diversity across the population in Castle Point. Approximately 97% of the population regards themselves as white with the remaining 3% of residents from black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds⁴, although in recent years a Haredi Jewish community has relocated to Canvey Island. Data from the 2021 Census will provide more insight into changes in the Borough over the last ten years.

The population of the Borough is ageing. A quarter (25.5%) of the population in Castle Point are aged 65 and above. It should, however, be noted that the evidence from the Addendum to the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment⁵ shows that Castle Point is also popular amongst families and growth is being seen in that part of the population, too.

Overall, the Borough ranks 182nd out of 317 local authorities in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) where a lower rank indicates more deprivation⁶. However, there are four Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs – areas of between 1,000 to 3,000 people), all on Canvey Island, that fall into the 20% most deprived in England and one LSOA that is in the 10% most deprived in England.

Other issues that the Borough faces include:

- Lack of quality employment opportunities
- Low levels of skills and qualifications
- Town centres in need of regeneration
- Poor health – obesity, physical activity, diabetes
- Ageing population
- Education and other services for young people
- Perceptions of community safety
- Lack of affordable housing
- Over-reliance on cars, lack of active travel options
- Climate change

More details on each of these challenges can be found on pp.17-20 of the [Corporate Plan 2021-24](#)

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

⁴ Census 2011, ONS

⁵ [Addendum to the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Castle Point 2020, Turley](#)

⁶ Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
<p>Governance Model</p>	<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>This submission assumes the Council will continue to operate an Executive model of governance, Leader and Cabinet.</p> <p>Whilst the size of the Cabinet is a decision for the Leader of the Council, for the sake of this submission, this will be a maximum of 10 members (including the Leader). There are approximately 12 formal meetings of Cabinet each year and weekly informal meetings.</p> <p>Strategic and operational policy development is undertaken by Cabinet but with the support of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees (PSCs). The Executive Members work with the PSC Members to develop the strategic and operational policy. Demands on members include: time to attend meetings for discussion and debate; analysis of proposals; research of alternative approaches; site visits; engagement with the electorate they represent on proposals; and wider consultation, including with businesses where appropriate.</p> <p>The current PSCs are: Environment PSC; Wellbeing PSC; Place & Communities PSC; plus Scrutiny Committee. This proposal suggests that this function could be fulfilled from a pool of 20 non-executive members</p>

		These committees align with the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2021-24.
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>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<p>There will be a maximum of 10 portfolios, aligned to the priorities in our Corporate Plan 2021-24.</p> <p>The current nine portfolios are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council • Deputy Leader of the Council and Special Projects • Resources • Growth – Economic, Environment and Sustainability • People – Community • People – Health and Wellbeing • Place – Housing • Place – Infrastructure • Waste and Environmental Health <p>The role of the portfolio holder is setting overall strategic policy direction for their portfolio and accountability for the performance of the services under their portfolio. Cabinet Members also have a strategic liaison role on key partnerships (more details are provided in the External Partnerships section below)</p> <p>All Cabinet roles, including the Leader, are not required to be full-time positions for a local authority of the size of Castle Point BC, although requires a substantial time commitment to properly carry out their roles.</p> <p>Decision making by the executive is taken as a collective and portfolio holders do not have individual delegated powers. This collective decision-making approach has worked effectively for the Council since the establishment of the Leader and Cabinet model and therefore is proposed to remain, however, there is scope to reduce the number of Cabinet roles to align even more closely with council priorities.</p>
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>Strategic policy setting and decision-making sits with Cabinet as a collective, with most decisions relating to operational matters delegated to officers, as set out in the Scheme of Delegations in the Constitution. There are some key strategic decisions which by law must be taken by Council.</p> <p>For major decisions taken by Cabinet, this will involve a maximum of 10 councillors (3 cabinet members minimum to be quorate). For major decisions taken by Council, this will involve our proposal for 39 councillors (10 councillors minimum to be quorate).</p>
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Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	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.
Key lines of explanation	<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>Decision makers will be held to account through the scrutiny function that the Council has in place.</p> <p>The four existing PSCs are aligned to the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2021-24. This proposal is that these committees will be re-commissioned, and certainly not more than four PSCs, but that regardless of the number of PSCs, these will be resourced from a proposed pool of 20 non-executive members.</p>

	<p>It is anticipated that whilst most scrutiny work will be undertaken through the PSC, on occasion, Task and Finish Groups may be used. Task and finish groups will be established as required from the same proposed pool of 20 non-executive members and 10 executive members. Their functions will be to progress pieces of work as defined in any terms of reference for the task and finish group when established. Time commitment and meeting frequency will depend on the scale and urgency of the task in hand.</p> <p>Our experience with the current arrangement of all non-executive members having a seat on at least one PSC is that it is difficult to ensure that they all have a full work programme.</p> <p>Therefore, this proposal is to establish a pool of non-executive members who can step forward/be selected to participate in any PSC work best suited to their skills, experience and interest. Members will be supported with continuing training to develop good practice skills and training to be a scrutiny member.</p> <p>This arrangement will add value as it will involve the right members in scrutiny dependent on the topic/issue in question rather than a static assignment to a committee.</p> <p>Under the current arrangements it is difficult to provide adequate staff support for scrutiny. A number of officers are involved with both support for Strategic leadership and scrutiny. This would be assisted by a reduction in the number of members dedicated to scrutiny.</p> <p>The 2018 Corporate Peer Review made recommendations about improving the effectiveness of the scrutiny function and, although progress has been made since the review, there remains a strong appetite to develop a full programme of policy development and scrutiny across the different committees which will require the full engagement of those members selected from the proposed pool</p>
<p>Statutory Function</p>	<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>
<p>Planning</p>	<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>

		<p>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>Practice suggests that only a small percentage (up to 5%⁷) of planning applications would be determined by members, and these would be restricted to those applications of strategic importance to the Borough.</p> <p>Further to the Planning Improvement Peer Challenge, there has been a reduction in the number of planning applications that are determined by members.</p> <p>There will be a single council-wide committee comprised of 10 councillors.</p> <p>It is good practice that there will be one liaison member from the Executive who serves on the Development Management Committee.</p> <p>The committee meets once a month, with each meeting lasting an average of two hours, depending on the business in question. On top of this, members are expected to prepare for the meetings by reading all materials in advance, attend site visits as advised and attend mandatory continuous training.</p>
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<p>➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>In the average year, the Council would expect to have between 6 and 12 licensing panels (i.e. between once every two months and once a month). The panels last for at least half a day each and each panel member must undertake mandatory training before they can sit on the panel. Panels are ad hoc to accommodate the nature of licensing applications.</p> <p>There is currently a pool of 15 members from which a panel of three is selected to deal with the licensing matter in question. This pool allows for the council to give regard to rules around not determining applications within their individual wards. It is proposed that this pool of 15 members would reduce to a pool of 12 members.</p> <p>There is a Licensing Committee which deals, as necessary, with policy matters in addition to these panels.</p>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-planning-application-statistics> Table P134, year ended September 2021

Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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>Audit Committee Good practice is to keep this separate from scrutiny and therefore an Audit Committee comprised of five members plus two substitutes will remain as there cannot be greater delegation to officers of the functions of Audit Committee.</p> <p>Review Committee Deals with matters pertaining to conduct generally. The committee is made up of eight members selected from all councillors as and when required. This committee will remain as although there are delegations in this area to the Council’s Monitoring Officer, serious cases of misconduct require member involvement.</p> <p>Staff Appointments Committee Deals with senior staff appointments and, if required, disciplinary matters relating to statutory officers. Comprised of five members plus substitutes. This committee will remain as although the appointment of staff is a matter for the Head of Paid Service, this committee covers appointment of statutory officers and officers appointed with a salary over £100k.</p>
External Partnerships		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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
Analysis		<p>Councillors continue to serve on a range of partnership at local, sub-regional and regional levels. The Council’s Corporate Plan is explicit in its direction that the Council should seek to influence a broad range of partnerships and this applies to both officers and members.</p> <p>The table below sets out the key partnerships that councillors serve on, making it clear which are decision-making partnerships and which are covered by portfolio holders. The same table also shows an estimate of total annual time commitment, although this is likely to be an underestimate as it has been more difficult to ascertain time spent on partnerships</p>

in addition to commitment to formal meetings (although this is referenced in some cases).

The Council is typically represented by portfolio holders on decision-making partnerships and each municipal year councillors are also appointed to serve on a range of outside bodies.

Key Partnerships

Partnership name	Decision-making partnership?	Covered by Cabinet Member?	Number of meetings per year	Duration of meetings (including prep time)	Total annual time commitment
Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASLEA)	Y	Y	4 formal 4informal	0.5 days	4 days
Castle Point and Rochford Community Development Partnership	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
Castle Point and Rochford Community Safety Partnership	Y	Y	12	0.5 days	6 days
Castle Point and Rochford Health and Wellbeing Board	Y	Y	12	0.5 days	6 days
Castle Point Business Forum	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
Castle Point Regeneration Partnership	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services	Y	Y	2 formal 12 informal	0.5 days 1 hour	3 days
Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board	Y	N	4	0.5days	2days
Essex Skills Forum	Y	Y	12	0.5 days	6 days
Local Government Association	Y	Y	12	0.5 days	6 days
Opportunity South Essex	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
Police and Crime Panel	Y	Y	12	0.5 days	6 days
South East Local Enterprise	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days

	Partnership (SELEP)					
	South Essex Children's Partnership Board	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
	South Essex Parking Partnership	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
	Southend Hospital Trust	Y	N	4	0.5 days	2 days
	Waste Partnership Board	Y	Y	4	0.5 days	2 days
<i>Representation on outside bodies</i>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Training Corps (Canvey Squadron) • Air Training Corps (Thundersley Squadron) • Age Concern • Age UK • Arts Ministry • British Red Cross Society (Essex Branch) • Carers Choice (Castle Point Branch) Management Committee • Castle Point Sports Club for the Disabled • Civil Military Partnership Board Veteran's UK • Jubilee Training and Welfare Centre Trust • London Southend Airport Consultative Committee • Relate South Essex • Royal National Lifeboat Association (Canvey Island Branch) • Trust Links • Wyvern Community Transport 						

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	➤ In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Considerable number of members are active members of community groups and organisations, lots of engagement happens with electors through these groups. Therefore, their representational role is carried out in this way more than through traditional councillor surgeries. However, such surgeries are in place and are based around localities rather than specific councillors.</p> <p>The Council does not have area committees.</p> <p>Councillors do use social media – there are various groups set up for different parts of the Borough through which councillors can engage with residents. For some councillors, who are active on social media, this has increased the amount of time that they spend engaging with residents.</p> <p>On occasion, ward councillors do use newsletters to engage with constituents, but these tend to be through their political groups rather than as individual councillors.</p> <p>Engagement with non-electors, young people, minority groups is through the aforementioned community groups and organisations.</p> <p>The time spent on undertaking their community leadership role was something discussed at length at the two workshops held with councillors to develop this submission. Overall, Castle Point councillors continue to spend large parts of their week engaging with residents, with an average of 10 hours per week carrying out work in their wards with constituents and community groups. This figure looks in line with a survey</p>

		<p>by the LGA published in March 2019 which suggests a similar time commitment.</p> <p>The Council has only one parished area Canvey Island Town Council. 8 of the 11 town councillors are also borough councillors and this majority position is not expected to change. There is active involvement on the town council and borough councillors hold senior positions on the town council, including, at present, Town Mayor.</p> <p>The Council is a district-level council in the county of Essex and also within the SELEP boundaries. There are number of councillors who are dual-hatted with Essex County Council and even triple-hatted with Essex County Council and the Canvey Island Town Council. The Council is always looking to evolve and develop partnerships with other organisations in local government, health and the community and voluntary sectors. Castle Point Borough Council is a member of ASELA and has signed up to a joint committee although has retained individual sovereignty over decision making. It is through ASELA that the Council will be involved in decision making on a wider, sub-regional footprint.</p> <p>It was in the area of Community Leadership that councillors felt strongest concern about options that proposed reducing the number of councillors lower than the 39 in this submission. Councillors continue to spend a large part of the week engaging with residents and many spoke of family members undertaking roles to support them in this regard, taking telephone calls etc. when councillors were out and about in the Borough or on other Council business.</p> <p>The majority of councillors are retired or semi-retired and so can find time to undertake such engagement. However, it was also felt that if the Council were to attract new councillors who are still working, then reducing the number of councillors beyond 39 could result in making the community leadership role required of councillors an unrealistic commitment.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Approach to casework is mixed depending on the councillor in question and the issue they are looking into. In certain circumstances the matter will be passed to council officers, in</p>

		<p>other instances councillors will be actively involved in resolving issues. The number of contacts received by councillors from residents was variable and dependent on ward issues and even events taking place on particular days. This is therefore difficult to quantify but likely to be in a range of between 4-7 hours per week spent on casework.</p> <p>Members are encouraged to contact senior managers to resolve issues of the appropriate services, there is also dedicated officer support available for members through the Council's Civic Governance department.</p> <p>All councillors are provided with iPads and dedicated personal email addresses which can be used to correspond with residents. Some are active on social media and interact with residents in this way.</p> <p>The Council has in place a complaints procedure which residents can follow if they have an issue with any of the services provided, and any complaints received via councillors are dealt with through this same procedure and policy.</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.

This submission gives regard to establishing a council size which takes account of the unique geography of Castle Point. There is a clearly defined community on Canvey Island with a strong sense of identity and community separate from the other settlements of Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley which themselves have strong community identity in their parts of the Borough. Consideration to council size must allow for continuation of balanced representation of the electorate by councillors across these tightly defined communities.

All Councils, including Castle Point, are facing significant financial challenges and resources are under pressure to maintain the support to the council membership. This is an additional factor to be considered in determining the size of council to ensure a balanced representation for these communities.

At present while the Council has not taken a decision to move from elections by thirds to all out elections every four years there is every likelihood that with current pressures on Council budgets this will be brought forward as one of a range of measures to reduce an increasing budget gap in future years. It is likely that such a decision will have to be made so that Elections beyond 2024 will be four yearly.

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.

All things considered, this submission proposes a Council Size of 39 (reduction of 2 Members) which would allow the Council to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership. A 39 Member Council would result in approximately 1,870 electors per councillor and is a number of councillors divisible by three to allow for a continuation of election by thirds with 13 wards across the Borough.

However, despite this submission proposing 39 councillors which we believe the evidence demonstrates is an appropriate number of councillors, there is an arithmetical conundrum that will emerge at Phase 2 of this review. That is, whilst the overall the number of councillors is divisible by three, the split of councillors required to represent the split of electors between the geographically defined community of Canvey Island (16) and the rest of the Borough (23) is not divisible by three and so would require further adjustment to allow for election by thirds. We welcome the consideration and opinion of the Commission about whether this is a resolvable issue. Further details on the arithmetic is shown in the table at the end of this submission.

The majority of the councillors who participated in at least one of the two workshops held about this electoral review indicated support for 39 councillors on the basis of the evidence presented to them. An option for 36 councillors did enjoy some degree of support, although this was from a minority of councillors at the workshops. For this reason, we have indicated a 1st Preferred Option (39 councillors) and a 2nd Preferred Option (36 councillors) in the table below, which shows the range of options considered with advantages and disadvantages of each.

<p>Option 1 Retain number of councillors at 41</p> <p>Approx. 1,776 electors per councillor by 2028</p>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need for changes (or minor changes only) to electoral arrangements and less change to communicate to the public • More than sufficient number of councillors to cover Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal political representation • Too many councillors than required to cover necessary roles, especially Accountability • Not divisible by three so retain 1 x two-member Ward
<p>Option 2 Increase number of councillors at 42</p> <p>Approx. 1,733 electors per councillor by 2028</p>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively simple to make changes to electoral arrangements and less change to communicate to the public • More than sufficient number of councillors to cover Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership • Divisible by three so works with election by thirds

	<p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many councillors than required to cover necessary roles, especially Accountability • At 18 councillors on Canvey Island and 24 across the rest of the Borough, whilst both divisible by three, this does not allow for a split of members representing Canvey Island and of members representing the rest of the Borough, which represents the proportionate split of forecast electors between Canvey Island (42%) and the rest of the Borough (58%), without rounding up/down over 1/3 of a councillor (see additional table below)
<p>Option 3 Reduce number of councillors to 39</p> <p>Approx. 1,867 electors per councillor by 2028</p> <p>1st PREFERRED OPTION</p>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively simple to make changes to electoral arrangements and less change to communicate to the public • Sufficient number of councillors to cover Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership • Divisible by three so works with election by thirds <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 16 councillors on Canvey Island and 23 across the rest of the Borough, this does not allow for a split of members representing Canvey Island and of members representing the rest of the Borough, which represents the proportionate split of forecast electors between Canvey Island (42%) and the rest of the Borough (58%), without rounding up/down over 1/3 of a councillor (see additional table below) • Potential issues at Phase 2 of the review as whilst overall the number of councillors is divisible by three, the split of councillors is not divisible by three and so would require further adjustment to allow for election by thirds
<p>Option 4 Reduce number of councillors to 36</p> <p>Approx. 2,022 electors per councillor by 2028</p> <p>2nd PREFERRED OPTION</p>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient number of councillors to cover Strategic Leadership and Accountability • Divisible by three so works with election by thirds • Allows for 15 members representing Canvey Island and 21 members representing the rest of the Borough, which closely represents the proportionate split of forecast electors between Canvey Island (42%) and the rest of the Borough (58%) (see additional table below) <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 20% increase in number of electors per councillor could impact on councillors' ability to carry out Community Leadership • More significant change that will require careful communication with public about why number of councillors is reducing and changes to ward boundaries

<p>Option 5</p> <p>Reduce number of councillors to 33</p> <p>Approx. 2,206 electors per councillor by 2028</p>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient number of councillors to cover Strategic Leadership and some elements of Accountability • Divisible by three so works with election by thirds • Allows for 14 members representing Canvey Island and 19 members representing the rest of the Borough, which closely represents the proportionate split of forecast electors between Canvey Island (42%) and the rest of the Borough (58%) (see additional table below) <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient number of councillors to cover all elements of the Accountability role • A 30% increase in number of electors per councillor will impact on councillors' ability to carry out Community Leadership • Very significant change that will require careful communication with public about why number of councillors is reducing and changes to ward boundaries • Potential issues at Phase 2 of the review as whilst overall the number of councillors is divisible by three, the split of councillors is not divisible by three and so would require further adjustment to allow for election by thirds
<p>Option 6</p> <p>Reduce number of councillors to 30</p> <p>Approx. 2,427 electors per councillor by 2028</p>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient number of councillors to cover Strategic Leadership and some elements of Accountability • Divisible by three so works with election by thirds <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient number of councillors to cover all elements of the Accountability role • A 40% increase in number of electors per councillor will impact on councillors' ability to carry out Community Leadership • Very significant change that will require careful communication with public about why number of councillors is reducing and changes to ward boundaries • Does not allow for a split of members representing Canvey Island and of members representing the rest of the Borough, which represents the proportionate split of forecast electors between Canvey Island (42%) and the rest of the Borough (68%), without rounding up/down over 1/3 of a councillor. • Potential issues at Phase 2 of the review as whilst overall the number of councillors is divisible by three, the split of councillors is not divisible by three and so would require further adjustment to allow for election by thirds

The following table shows the split of councillors needed to represent the split of electorate between Canvey Island and the rest of the Borough, with the amount of rounding up or down required to return a whole number of councillors.

	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Total Councillors	42	39	36	33	30
Canvey Island (42% of electorate)	18 (rounded up from 17.64) +0.36	16 (rounded down from 16.38) -0.38	15 (rounded down from 15.12) -0.12	14 (rounded up from 13.86) +0.14	13 (rounded up from 12.60) +0.40
Rest of Borough (58% of electorate)	24 (rounded down from 24.36) -0.36	23 (rounded up from 22.62) +0.38	21 (rounded up from 20.88) +0.12	19 (rounded down from 19.14) -0.14	17 (rounded down from 17.40) -0.40