

Independents and OLRG Alliance

Council Size Submission: Template

Tandridge District Council

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How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

About You

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

Officers have put together this submission apart from the inserts which are made on behalf of the administration, that is the Independents and OLRG Alliance.

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 commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to review the Council's governance arrangements in 2020. This resulted in changes to the way Full Council operated, a redrafting of committee report templates and member recognition of the Nolan Principles, as well as the updating of the terms of reference for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which was renamed the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.

The Council is currently undergoing a transformation programme to create a smaller, more strategic, agile and responsive organisation. As a result of this transformation programme, the Council is likely to move to become a commissioning council. The Council recognises the need to ensure councillors have the necessary skills to provide oversight to the programme and new ways of working.

Surrey County Council are seeking a Level 2 County Deal for Surrey. The aim is for Surrey to deliver devolved powers/functions from government. There is no proposal for changes to the structure of local government in Surrey, however it could be the case that responsibilities for certain functions are re-aligned. The process is underway, and the outcome cannot yet be determined.

Political Groups to provide an answer to: What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

We propose keeping the current number of 42 councillors. We strongly believe that to reduce that number in the current circumstances and likely future position of Tandridge District Council would be highly detrimental to the functioning of the council and have an unacceptable impact on residents – especially so in a District that is predominantly rural with small settlements, poor infrastructure and where volunteers are frequently relied upon to provide support services.

In 2020/21, the council was close to issuing a section 114 notice and, although it avoided that and appeared to be recovering somewhat, the current financial situation has set it back. Amid growing financial pressures, to try to stabilise the council and make it sustainable going forward, we are carrying out a “transformation” programme called Future Tandridge which will slim down the council and change the way it functions. At this very difficult time, it is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the council and its councillors is maintained and that residents are supported as best we can. It is crucial to maintain oversight of the new ways of working and to bolster governance.

Problems with governance and lack of scrutiny led to the departure of a number of senior officers during 2019/2020, and resulted in the LGA being called in and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny reviewing governance arrangements. These interventions emphasised the need for better strategic leadership, better governance and oversight, and better accountability which had been lacking. In our view, there is still a way to go. Reducing the number of councillors able to exercise scrutiny through the committee system risks setting back the improvements and is particularly risky at this time of change, when strong leadership and scrutiny are essential to oversee that change and the new ways of working.

With regard to community leadership, we believe a reduction in councillor numbers would also be untenable. Lack of officer resource currently means that enquiries to officers by councillors cannot always be dealt with promptly, resulting in high workloads for councillors who have to work hard to fill the gaps in service provision. We believe this situation is likely to continue as the future Tandridge programme progresses with even more expected of councillors and less officer resource to call upon.

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?

District statistics:

- *Tandridge is home to approximately 87,900 residents.*
- *Tandridge saw an increase in population of 5.9% between 2011 and 2021.*
- *70% of our population lives in Oxted (including Hurst Green and Limpsfield) and the wider Caterham area (including Caterham Valley, Caterham on the Hill, Whyteleafe and Warlingham).*
- *There are approximately 37,800 residential properties.*
- *Tandridge has a higher than average number of residents aged 65 and over (20.9%, compared to 18.4% nationally). This trend is set to continue over the next 20 years, with this age group forecast to grow by over 30%.*
- *Our working age residents are highly skilled with more than 48% qualified at NVQ Level 4+, although most of those skills are used in jobs outside of the district given the predominance of low-skilled employment opportunities in the district.*
- *Levels of deprivation are low, with only 6.3% of the population being income-deprived in 2019. The council is very aware this may increase due to the rising cost of living.*
- *80% of residents own their own property. Average house price is £475,000*
- *Levels of commuting out of the district are high (71.6%), with a flow of around 3,500 commuters to Reigate and Banstead Borough. There is also an important relationship with Greater London, with around 12,500 residents commuting to work in the City and London Boroughs. The pandemic has resulted in a greater number of residents adopting hybrid working.*
- *Car ownership is higher than the English average. Approximately half of households have two or more cars, while around 10% have no car.*
- *Tenth in England for recycling performance.*

Communities

Tandridge District is the most easterly Local Authority in Surrey. It borders seven other authorities: Reigate and Banstead, Crawley, Mid Sussex, Sevenoaks, Wealden and the London Boroughs of Croydon and Bromley. It also neighbours the county borders of West Sussex, East Sussex, Kent and the Greater London areas. The district covers 110 square miles.

The wider Caterham area is in the north of the District, Oxted, Hurst Green and Limpsfield are in the east. The rest of the population reside in a network of smaller towns and villages, much of their setting derived from the countryside surrounding them. The southern half of the district is more rural.

On the whole, our residents enjoy a high quality of life with access to green open spaces. They value the countryside and proximity to London.

The district has 21 Parish Councils and one Parish Meeting.

Geography

The district has the highest percentage of Green Belt of any authority in England (94%) including two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): Surrey Hills in the north and High Weald in the south-east. Just under a third is open space or woodland, while over half is in agricultural use. It also has numerous landscapes valued for their biodiversity. These include eight Sites of Special Scientific Interest, seven Local Nature Reserves, and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

Transport links

Tandridge hosts significant transportation infrastructure, including by road:

- *London's Orbital M25 running east to west.*
- *The M23 running north to south along the western boundary.*
- *The A25 runs parallel but slightly south of the M25.*
- *The A22 runs north to south through the centre of the district.*

Trains from the 11 stations in the district go to London as well as to the rest of Surrey, Kent and Sussex. Caterham, Warlingham and Whyteleafe are also in the London transport zone for the rail and bus network.

Gatwick Airport is located just south-west of the district border. A number of more recreational and private aviation facilities are located within, or just beyond the boundary including Redhill Aerodrome and Biggin Hill Airport. Kenley Airfield is just north of the district boundary and is used primarily for gliders.

A map is attached at appendix A to this document.

District Councillors

The Council is currently made up of 42 Councillors representing 20 wards. Elections are held by thirds. The current political balance of the Council is:

- *Independents and Oxted and Limpsfield Residents Group Alliance – 18 Councillors.*
- *Liberal Democrats – 11 Councillors.*
- *Conservatives – 10 Councillors.*
- *Independent Group – 3 Councillors.*

Future changes

Alongside the transformation programme (as explained on page 3), other areas of work which councillors have or will need oversight of include:

- *Local plan*
- *Levelling up bid*
- *Gatwick airport second runway*
- *UK Prosperity Fund – Open Space Strategy*
- *Economic recovery post pandemic*
- *Support for residents with the rising cost of living*
- *Climate change*
- *Housing allocation and affordable housing*
- *Working with partners on flood prevention*
- *The Council's housing stock and tenants*
- *Leisure services and open space provision*

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.**

Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

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

Topic	
	<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>
Governance Model	<p>Analysis</p> <p><i>Tandridge District Council has operated the committee system governance model since its inception in 1974. There are four main policy committees which are responsible for making decisions on a range of services that the Council provides. The committees are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Services Committee <i>The Community Services Committee is responsible for formulating and reviewing the Council's policies in respect of the leisure, cultural, environmental health and amenity needs of the District. It is up made up 12 members. It delegates the determination of applications for taxi licences to the Regulatory Sub Committee.</i> 2. Housing Committee <i>The Housing Committee is responsible for the housing needs of the District. This includes the management of the housing stock and private sector housing conditions, as well as ensuring contributions are made to the provision of affordable housing to meet local housing needs. It is made up of 11 members.</i> 3. Planning Policy Committee <i>The Planning Policy Committee is responsible for influencing and controlling development and the use of land. It is made up of 11 members.</i>

4. Strategy & Resources Committee

The Strategy &Resources Committee is responsible for the general administration and overall policy and financial framework of the Council. It is made up of 12 members. It delegates responsibility for Chief Officer employment matters and investments to two sub committees.

In addition to the four policy committees, the Council has also constituted the followings committees:

5. Audit & Scrutiny Committee

The Audit &Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the review and scrutiny of the decisions and performance of the Council, audit arrangements and provides an opportunity for other organisations to present and explain key aspects of their services. It is made up of 11 members.

6. Licensing Committee

The Licensing Committee is responsible for exercising the Council's regulatory and policy functions in relation to alcohol, entertainment, gambling and racing licence applications. It is made up of 11 members. It delegates the determination of licence and registration applications on these matters to the Licensing Sub Committee.

7. Planning Committee

The Planning Committee is responsible for determining planning applications and enforcement action in response to breaches of development control. It is made up of 11 members.

8. Standards Committee

The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, including assisting Councillors to observe the Members' Code of Conduct. It is made up of 7 members.

The committees are appointed at Annual Council each year. This includes determination of the size of each committee following consideration of workload and political balance.

The four policy committees are responsible for formulating strategic and operational policies within their remit. The committees are the principal place where decisions are made in the council. However, certain powers are reserved for Full Council on the recommendation of the relevant committee. For example, new policies or changes in policies must be recommended from the committees to Full Council if they require resources beyond those allocated to the committee.

		<p><i>The Council currently operates 5 committee cycles. This is where the four policy committees plus Audit & Scrutiny meet within a few weeks of each other. The Planning Committee meets more often. The cycle concludes at a meeting of Full Council, where a report and the minutes from each committee are presented to the Council to note or for approval of recommendations.</i></p> <p><i>There is no proposal to alter the governance model. However, it could potentially be adapted in light of a change in the number of Council seats.</i></p>
Portfolios	Key lines of explanation	<p>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p><i>The Council operates a committee system form of governance. Therefore, executive portfolios do not exist and decisions are taken primarily through committees. Committee Chairs have responsibilities for working with officers to develop forward plans of decisions within the remit of the committee, as well as comment on reports and recommendations, and other matters relating to the remit of the committee. They cannot, however, take decisions individually.</i></p>
Delegated Responsibilities	Key lines of explanation	<p>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p><i>Part E of the Council's Constitution specifies responsibilities delegated down to committees and officers. The terms of reference set out the duties, functions and provision of services each committee is responsible for. The committees are expected to make decisions or recommendations to Full Council on all aspects within their remit as laid out in the terms of reference. Whether a committee can determine a particular matter itself, or whether a proposed course of action needs ratification by Full Council, is also specified in Part E. Several committees delegate responsibilities to sub-committees, as specified in Part E.</i></p> <p><i>The Constitution also makes provision for delegation to officers by allowing the Chief Executive and Management Team to exercise, on behalf of the Council, all functions not reserved in the Constitution for determination by Full Council, Committees or Sub-Committees.</i></p> <p><i>The latest version of the Council's Constitution can be accessed from this page.</i></p> <p><i>In practice, this means that for most major decisions, a committee of the Council (in 2021/22 up to 12</i></p>

		<p><i>councillors) will make an initial decision.</i></p> <p><i>However, the scheme of delegation requires most major decisions to be ratified by Full Council. The matter would therefore be presented to the next Full Council following the committee meeting and all 42 councillors would be voting on whether to adopt the recommendation.</i></p>
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Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	<p>The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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><i>Reports to committees, including officer recommendations, are subjected to a cross party scrutiny process due to the committees being politically balanced. At each committee meeting, Members have the opportunity to debate agenda items and make amendments or vote against the officer recommendations.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, the Audit & Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the review and scrutiny of the decisions and performance of the Council. A review of the terms of reference and name of this committee was undertaken in 2020. As a result, the</i></p>

		<p><i>name was changed from Overview & Scrutiny to Audit & Scrutiny. The new terms of reference included requirements to scrutinise the budget, review allocation of finances, review compliance with Best Value obligations, review the Council's Strategic Plan and performance against targets. There are no plans to further amend the committee's remit. The committee has 11 members and the size of the committee is agreed at Annual Council each year depending on the nature of political balance and workload in the forthcoming municipal year.</i></p> <p><i>When matters require further scrutiny (or decisions require a greater level of involvement from members) working groups are set up by committees. There is no set number of these and the level of commitment from members depends on the issue under consideration. Some working groups are permanent (for example, to consider the local plan) whilst others may meet just once or twice.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has also established a call-in process whereby, subject to certain exceptions and criteria, the decisions of a policy committee can be suspended, pending review by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee. This process can only be triggered by five Members of that Committee giving notice within 7 working days of the relevant policy committee meeting.</i></p> <p><i>While there is no statutory obligation to retain a separate committee with a scrutiny function, or to operate a call-in system, we envisage that, in any event, a separate Member level forum will be required for audit purposes.</i></p>
Statutory Function		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p><i>The Council has constituted a single council-wide committee for considering</i></p>

		<i>Planning applications. This is considered appropriate for the level of applications that are to be determined by members. The Planning Committee meets 11 times a year. There are no restrictions as to which members can be appointed to the committee. Member involvement includes attending training annually, preparing for meetings, attending site visits, liaising with officers and attending meetings.</i>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<i>On average, the Council has 3 or 4 licensing panels a year. These are ad-hoc. Annual Council appoints 3 primary members, but membership can change due to availability. Member involvement includes attending training annually, preparing for and attending meetings.</i>
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>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<i>The Council has a Regulatory Sub-Committee which is made up of 3 primary members and is responsible for determining certain matters in connection with licenses other than those relating to the provision of alcohol, entertainment or gambling. This meets very infrequently, as most matters (e.g. taxi licensing) are delegated to officers.</i>
External Partnerships		<i>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>
	<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>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Councillors are appointed to outside bodies at Annual Council. Currently there are</i>

46 local and national outside bodies, plus a number of county-wide organisations which councillors can be nominated for. These are mainly local charities, community or sports associations, consultative boards, or boards with environmental responsibilities. In an average month, most councillors spend up to 5 hours a month working with each outside body they are appointed to and a third spend between 6 and 9 hours a month. 34 councillors are appointed to outside bodies.

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	<p>➤ <u>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors? Via email, phone calls, face to face meetings, texts, social media and newsletters. We usually reply direct to residents or businesses but, if we require additional information, we email officers to request it and then go back to the enquirer. If there is an important issue, we will hold a public meeting but do not hold regular surgeries as we think they are not effective in reaching residents (other than the usual few) and therefore not a good use of our time. We also attend meetings of community groups and charities in our areas.</u></p> <p>➤ <u>Eight of our Councillors represent the Oxted and Limpsfield Residents Group which has approx. 2,500 members who receive a regular newsletter on average twice a month.</u></p> <p>➤ <u>In addition, the leader of our group writes two monthly articles, one for the CR3 magazines which are distributed throughout the District apart from parts of the south, and the other for the Tandridge Independent.</u></p> <p>➤ <u>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers? No</u></p> <p>➤ <u>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs? See answer above.</u></p> <p>➤ <u>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the</u></p>

		<p>electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies? <u>Only the efforts we make ourselves as detailed above.</u></p> <p>➤ 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? <u>Yes. The District is fully parished and Councillors need to attend the monthly Parish Council meetings. In three councillor wards, that can mean three separate Parish Council meetings each month. There are a number of residents' associations and eight of our Councillors represent one (OLRG) which in itself involves considerable work updating association members on various issues via meetings, email and our own social media.</u></p> <p>➤ 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?</p>
	Analysis	<p>The Council undertook a survey of its members over the summer in 2022. 22 members completed the survey. The results show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 quarters of councillors regularly issue communications with their residents. These are multi-channel with 94% of councillors using email, 84% using face to face methods, 84% using social media, 64% using telephone and 53% issuing a newsletter. These methods are also employed for minority groups and young people. • 64% of councillors said the most common method that residents use to get in touch with them was email. Other common methods are phone and social media. Most councillors find residents are happy to communicate with them using these methods and so most do not hold surgeries. • Councillors are very engaged with their local community. All respondents said they spent time in an average month attending Parish Council meetings and 95% said they spent time attending other community group meetings. 53% of councillors spend between 3 and 5 hours a week on ward activities such as supporting local charities, residents' associations, and community centres.
Casework	Key lines of explanation	<p>➤ 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? <u>We are very conscious that Tandridge is a small council and officers struggle to cope with workloads. Therefore, we attempt to deal with casework ourselves and only contact officers when absolutely necessary.</u></p> <p>➤ What support do members receive? <u>Limited.</u></p> <p>➤ How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate? <u>None of us was a Councillor before 2016. Since then, technology has not changed the way in which we work and interact with the electorate. However, we would point out the above average percentage of residents aged over 65 in the District. We have found that this age group tend to use computers and social media less and</u></p>

		<p><u>rely on face to face contact or the phone.</u></p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors? <u>We are not aware of any way that this happens.</u></i></p>
	Analysis	<p><i>50% of councillors receive between 1 and 5 new cases from residents each week. 27% receive between 6 and 10 and 15% receive more than 10 a week. Councillors usually answer casework themselves or seek information from an officer before providing a response. Half of councillors spend up to 5 hours a week dealing with casework, with the other half spending more than 5 hours.</i></p> <p><i>The vast majority of meetings that councillors attend are face to face. 91% said that less than a quarter of the meetings they attend are virtual. However, councillors use technology to interact with their electorate. 94% of councillors use email to communicate with residents and 82% use social media.</i></p>

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. . Difference between north and south of the M25. There are considerable differences between the two and a very different feel to each half. The district south of the M25 is predominantly rural with less infrastructure and services. Settlements and residents are spread out and it takes time for a councillor to visit and engage with residents and to cover their ward. Residents have less access to public transport and services, in particular health services and community support.

Our analysis shows that the south of the district is three times the area of the north and each southern councillor has about three times their area to cover relative to each northern councillor. The north has a more concentrated population. The current split of councillors is 22 in the south and 20 in the north. This provides good electoral equality and clearly identifiable boundaries.

The District has the third highest elderly population in England.

The District is heavily reliant on volunteer groups, a fact that became evident during the pandemic where statistics showed that Tandridge had more volunteers than anywhere else in Surrey and community health care was, in some places, kept going by volunteers.

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.

Click or tap here to enter text. We propose no reduction in the current total of 42 councillors. We believe any reduction will be detrimental to residents and to the functioning of the council as explained in our answer to the question on page 4 “What impact on the Council’s effectiveness will your council size proposal have?”

In reaching our proposal we have considered all relevant factors, including but not limited to, the current workload of councillors, the extreme financial pressure on the council resulting in the current transformation programme which will slim down the council and further reduce officer support and input , the large elderly demographic, the rural and fragmented nature of much of the District with its lack of infrastructure and services, and the need for proper governance and scrutiny of council functions which has only recently started to improve.

Reducing the number of councillors is likely to impact our ability to continue and maintain acceptable standards of strategic leadership and governance – especially so at this time of change and financial pressure. With Tandridge expected to become a very different kind of council, it is vital that there are enough councillors to oversee service review and delivery through workshops and committees. In the past there has been poor management of contracts, of assets and questionable investment decisions – all of which require substantial ongoing member scrutiny.

Councillor workload has increased in the last few years reflecting a previous attempt to transform the council in 2018/2019 (Customer First) which was unsuccessful and led to the loss of many experienced officers and increased pressure on those who remained. This destabilised the council and substantially decreased support for councillors with officers sometimes unavailable to respond promptly or at all.

We believe that at a time when the council is being slimmed down due to lack of finances, and councillors are doing more and more of the customer services work, we should try to retain as many councillors as possible.

We note the comment on page 5 about levels of deprivation being low but this income-based statistic does not give a true picture. The demographic may seem to have health and wealth but in fact there are a number of recognised areas of deprivation within the District with residents having multiple indicators of deprivation including poor housing and long term illnesses.

Also, the south is very poorly provided with health facilities and those facilities further afield are inaccessible due to poor public transport. In particular, it is difficult to access established acute and emergency hospitals, none of which are located within Tandridge District. This area has

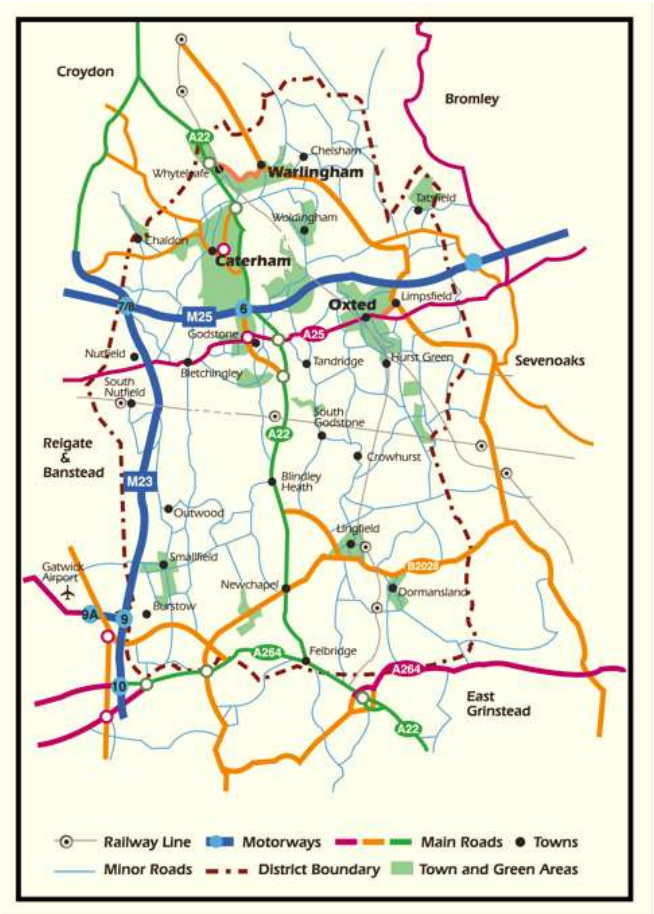
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the third highest elderly population in England and councillors play a significant role in providing access to care and keeping people thriving in their own homes.

To summarise, any reduction from 42 councillors will jeopardise the authority's ability to operate efficiently and effectively and ensure effective representation of, and support for, local residents. It would undermine recent efforts to ensure better governance and oversight.

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Appendix A – A map of Tandridge District Council



Holt, Nicole

From: Cllr Catherine Sayer <Cllr.Catherine.Sayer@tandridgedc.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 October 2022 16:54
To: reviews
Cc: Cllr Chris Farr
Subject: Council size submission - Tandridge District Council
Attachments: Independents and OLRG Alliance response on council size.docx

Categories: Submissions

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached the representation from the Independents and OLRG Alliance group regarding the future size of Tandridge District Council.

If you need any more information or clarification, please do get in touch.

Best Wishes

Catherine

Cllr Catherine Sayer
Leader, Tandridge District Council
Tel: 07967 148557