

Mr Richard Buck
Review Manager
The Local Government Boundary
Commission for England
1st Floor, Windsor House
50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

17th January 2023

Dear Mr Buck,

Worcestershire's Council Size Submission

Please find attached a copy of Worcestershire County Council's submission.

In compiling this submission, we have considered a variety of information including survey responses from County Councillors. We consider we have a strong case supported by clear evidence that Worcestershire will continue to be best served by 57 Members.

Should you need any further information I can be contacted on 01905 846101;
aspice@worcestershire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Spice
Strategic Director of Commercial and Change



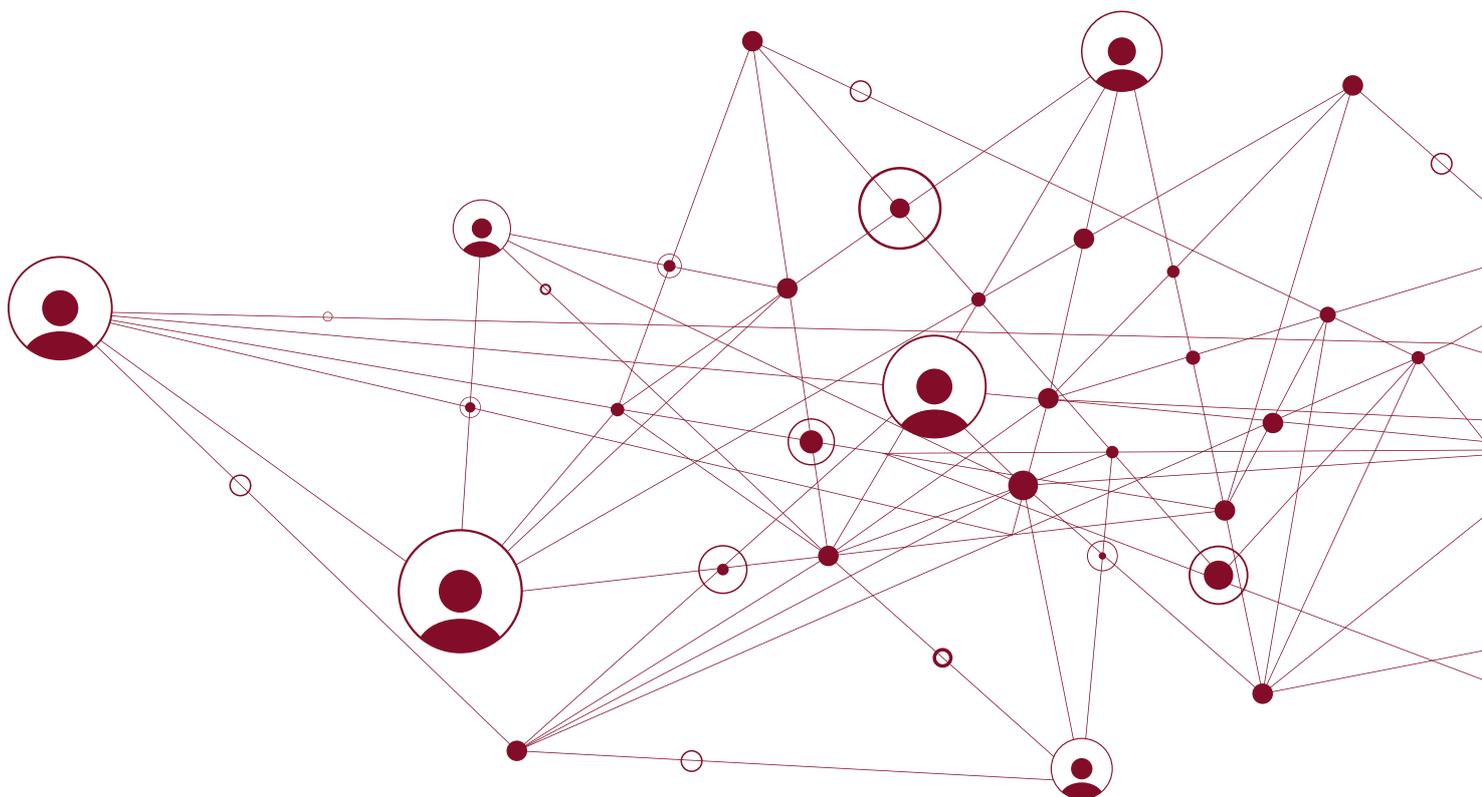
Electoral Review: Preliminary council size submission for Worcestershire County Council

January | 2023

Find out more online:
www.worcestershire.gov.uk

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Executive summary

Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) notified Worcestershire County Council in July 2022 that it would conduct a review of our electoral arrangements.

The main purpose of the review is to improve electoral equality across the whole of the county of Worcestershire. The Commission's criteria state that the review will address the poor levels of electoral equality in Worcestershire and the fact that Worcestershire's boundaries have not been reviewed since 2004.

This council size submission is the first stage amongst several in the process. It seeks to set out the county council's views on size, to get the best electoral representation for the people of Worcestershire, weighed-up against the working demands on our Councillors and acting within the council's governance arrangements.

The LGBCE provide tables summarising the electorate totals per ward on their website. According to those tables, Worcestershire has 15 divisions (of 52 in total) which were plus or minus 10% variance from the local authority average. This means 26% of the divisions had an electorate +/-10% from the average, which is above the threshold to trigger a review.

The last review of Worcestershire's electoral arrangements happened in 2004 and resulted in minor revisions to division boundaries and a reduction of 57 to 52 but did not lead to any reduction in Councillor numbers.

Evidence and Rationale

When considering the most appropriate council size, Worcestershire considered the following:

- Worcestershire has a population of 603,600 residents. The rate of growth over the last 10 years is 6.6 % which is comparable to regional and national levels. Worcestershire is largely a rural county by area, although around three quarters of the population of Worcestershire is defined as living in an urban area. It has an aging population, with significantly more residents falling into the 65+ category and less within the 40-50 age bracket. In terms of deprivation, there are 18 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Worcestershire that are in the top 10% most deprived areas in England, an increase of two since 2015.

Using the LGBCE forecast template adjusted for large housing developments Worcestershire County Council estimate that the electorate will increase by 8.2% by 2029. This is higher than the ONS projected increase in the Worcestershire adult population of 5.2%.

Worcestershire County Council have considered three options:

- Keeping the same number of Councillors
- Increasing the number of Councillors
- Decreasing the number of Councillors

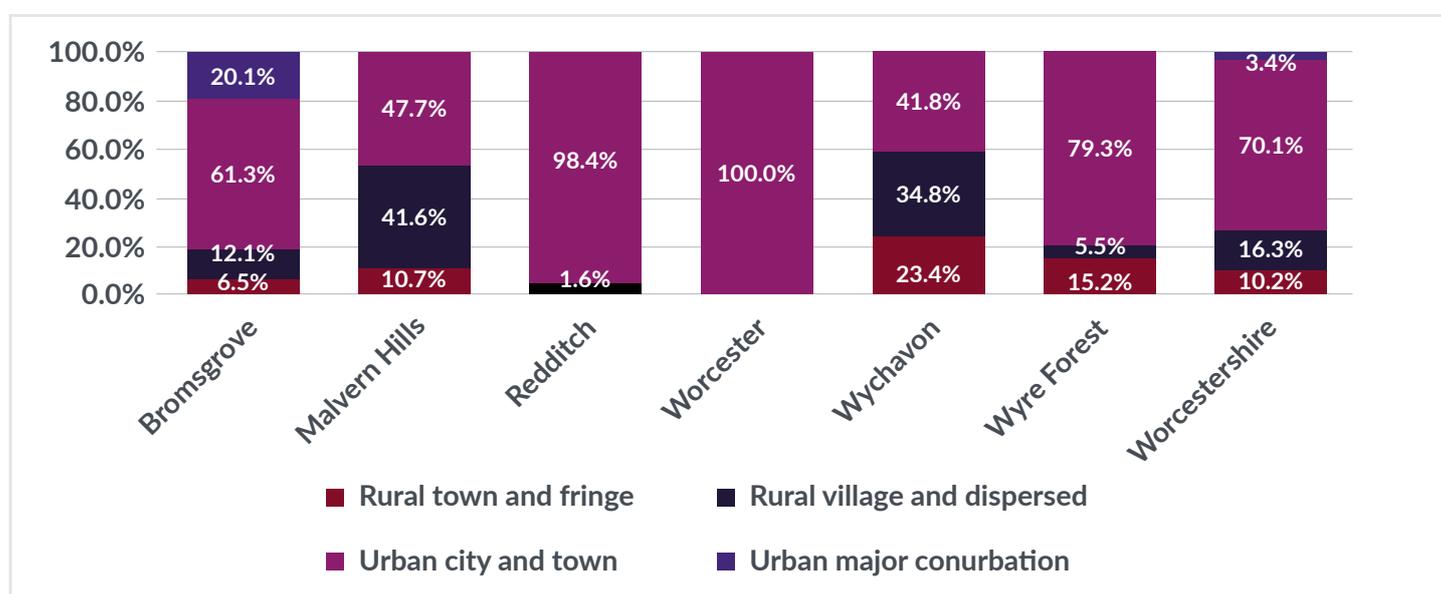
Worcestershire County Council recommend that the number of Councillors remain at 57

Worcestershire County Council Profile

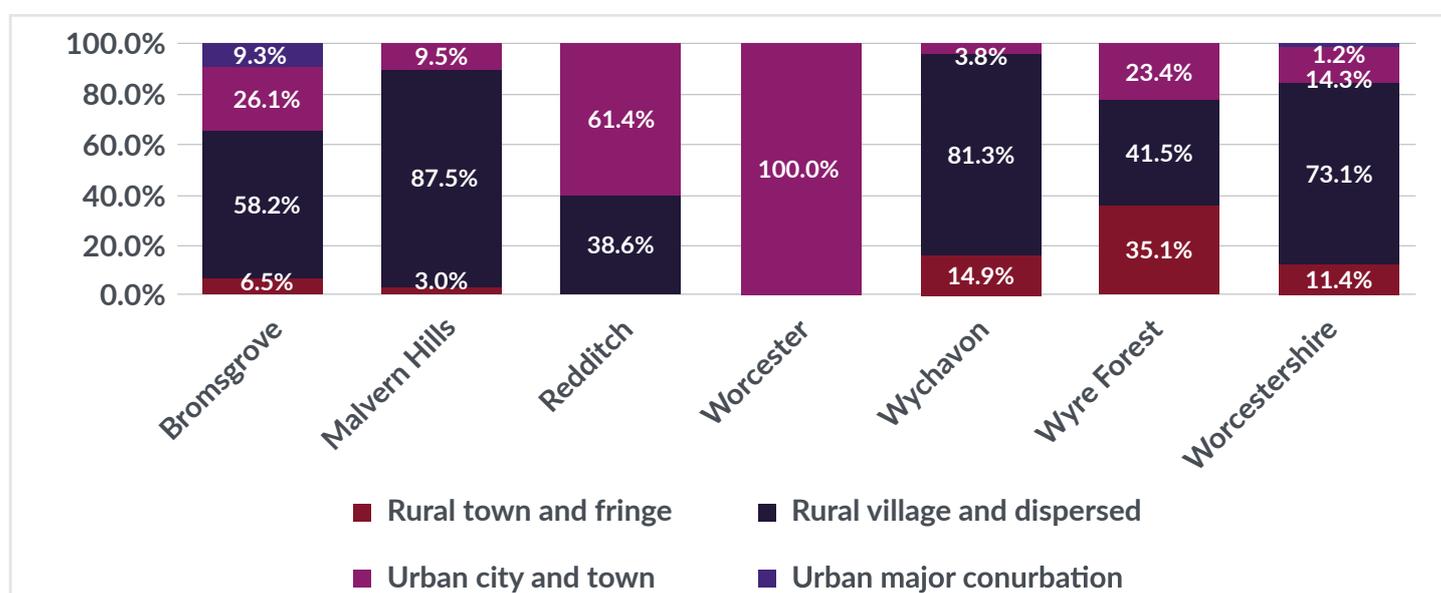
Worcestershire is a county located in the West Midlands in the heart of England towards the south of the West Midlands Region. The county borders Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, the West Midlands Metropolitan Area, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. Worcestershire has two main rivers running through it, the Severn and the Avon. To the west the county is bordered by the Malvern Hills, and the south is bordered by the Cotswolds. The northern part of the county is bordered by the West Midlands conurbation.

Worcestershire consists of 6 districts, namely Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon, and Wyre Forest. Worcester City is the main administrative city in Worcestershire, and the main towns of Kidderminster, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Stourport-on-Severn, Malvern, Evesham, and Droitwich are also situated in the county. By area Worcestershire is largely a rural county, although around three quarters of the population of Worcestershire is defined as living in an urban area. Wychavon and Malvern Hills are the two most rural districts, whilst Worcester City is a key employment centre and Redditch was designated New Town status in 1964.

Population by Urban / Rural Classification



Area by Urban / Rural Classification



Worcestershire's population according to the 2021 census is 603,600 persons. This compares to 566,200 in 2011. The population in the county has increased by 37,400 since 2011, an increase of 6.6% in the last 10 years. This compares to increases of 6.6% nationally and 6.2% regionally.

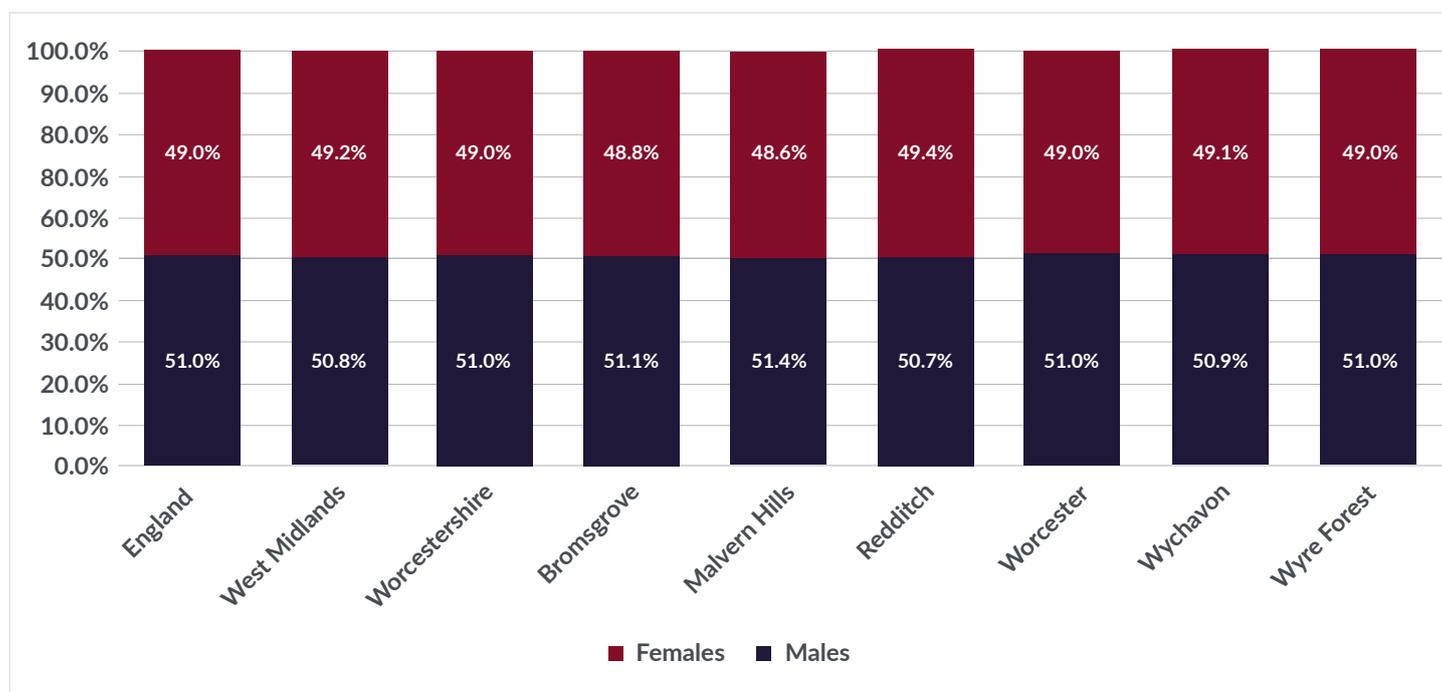
In terms of the Worcestershire districts, the highest proportional increase over the last ten years has been in Wychavon, at 13.3%, representing an increase in population of 15,600 persons. Malvern Hills has had a similar proportional increase to the county as a whole of 6.4% (4,800 persons), whilst Bromsgrove has had a proportional increase of 5.9%, or 5,600 persons

In contrast the proportional increase in Redditch over the ten-year period has been just 3.3%, representing an increase of 2,800 persons in that district, whilst the increase in Wyre Forest was around 3.7%, or 3,600 persons.

The average percentage population increase across seventeen of Worcestershire's closest CIPFA statistical neighbours is 6.4%, which is similar to the Worcestershire increase. Changes in population range from over 9% in Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Cambridgeshire, and West Sussex, to no change in Cumbria.

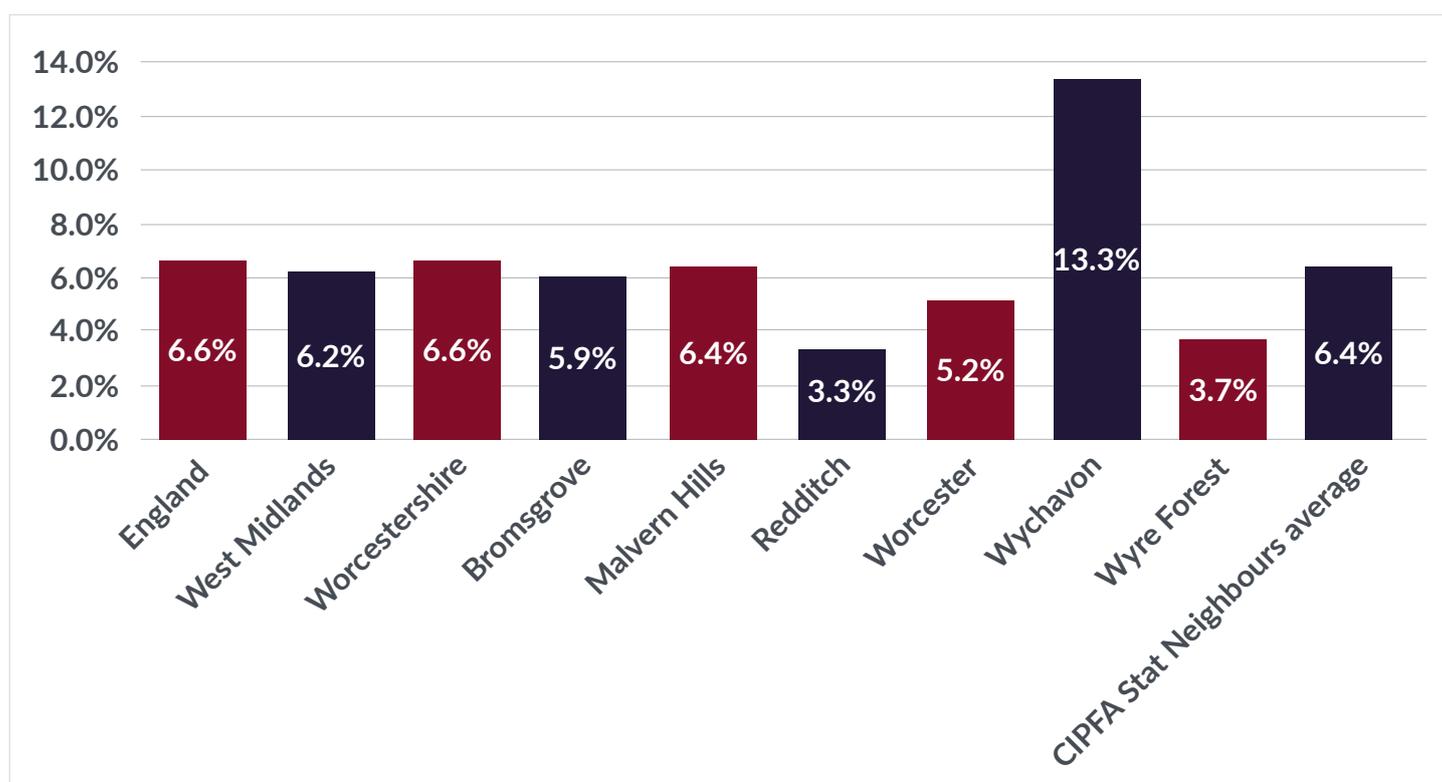
The population in Worcestershire in 2021 is 51% female, representing 307,900 persons. This is similar to the national average. Proportions of females are particularly high in Malvern Hills, and relatively low in Redditch, although all districts have a higher proportion of females than males.

Population by Sex (ONS 2021 data)



Change in population by district, 2011-21 (ONS Data)

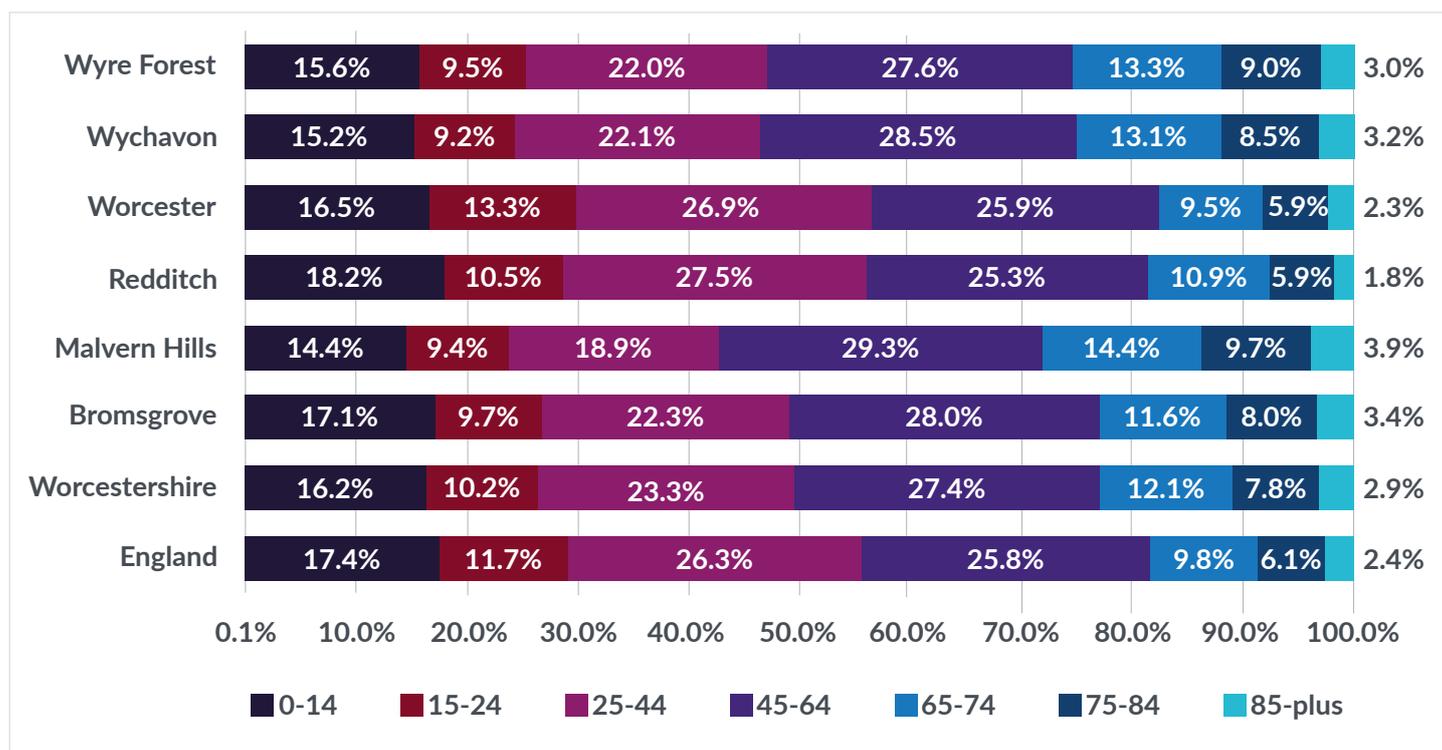
Area	2011	2021	Change 2011-21	% Change 2011-2021
Bromsgrove	93,600	99,200	5,600	5.9%
Malvern Hills	74,600	79,400	4,800	6.4%
Redditch	84,200	87,000	2,800	3.3%
Worcester	98,800	103,900	5,100	5.2%
Wychavon	116,900	132,500	15,600	13.3%
Wyre Forest	98,000	101,600	3,600	3.7%
Worcestershire	566,200	603,600	37,400	6.6%
England	53,012,500	56,489,800	3,477,300	6.6%



Worcestershire has a higher proportion of older people than the national average, and a lower proportion of children and younger adults. The proportions in the county and the whole of England are similar for the 45-49 age range, with proportions lower in Worcestershire than the national average for all younger age groups, and higher in Worcestershire for all older age groups.

Difference in proportions between Worcestershire and England are particularly prevalent in the 20 to 39 age range, with Worcestershire having a notably lower proportion of population, and the 65 to 79 age range, with Worcestershire having a considerably higher proportion of population.

Worcestershire and districts population proportion by broad age group, 2021



The proportion of people aged 65-plus in Worcestershire is almost 23% of all people living in the county representing 138,000 persons. This compares to the national average of just over 18%. Proportions of people aged 65-plus are particularly high in Malvern Hills (around 28%) as well as in Wychavon and Wyre Forest, both at around 25%. In contrast, the proportion of people aged 65-plus in Worcester is less than 18%, and in Redditch is less than 19%.

Almost 11% of people in Worcestershire are aged 75-plus, compared to less than 9% nationally. Proportions of 75-plus are particularly high in Malvern Hills, at almost 14%, and in Wyre Forest and Wychavon, at almost 12%. Proportions in Redditch and Worcester are around 8%.

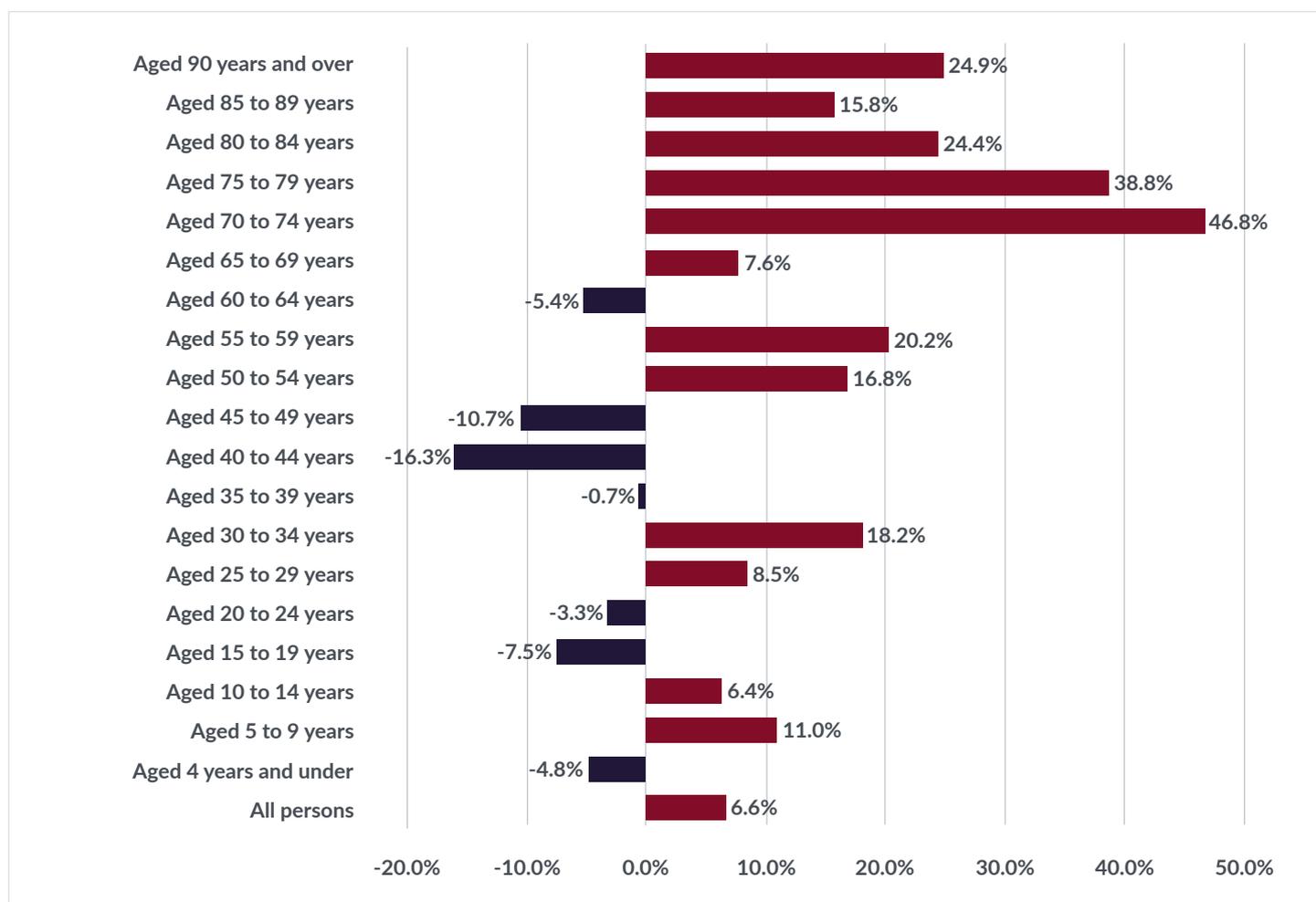
The proportion of people aged 0-14 is just over 16% in Worcestershire, representing 97,500 persons. This compares to the national average of over 17%. Proportions of people aged 0-14 are particularly low in Malvern Hills (just over 14%) and Wychavon (just over 15%). In Redditch, the 0-14 age group is over 18%, higher than the national average.

Just over 10% of people living in the county are aged 16-24, lower than the national average of almost 12%. Proportions of people aged 16-24 are particularly low in Wychavon, Malvern Hills, and Wyre Forest, at just over 9%. Proportions are highest in Worcester City at over 13%, higher than the national average, due at least in part to young people in the city attending the University of Worcester.

Change in key population age groups in Worcestershire 2001-2021

	Census 2011	Census 2021	Change	Percentage change
0-19	128,100	129,400	1,300	1.0%
15-24	65,400	61,800	-3,600	-5.5%
25-44	139,500	140,700	1,200	0.8%
45-64	158,500	165,600	7,1020	4.5%
65-plus	109,100	138,000	28,900	26.5%
75-plus	50,500	64,900	14,400	28.6%
85-plus	14,900	17,700	2,800	18.9%
Total population	566,200	603,600	37,400	6.6%

Proportional Change in population by 5-year age group in Worcestershire 2011-21



The above graph reinforces the notable rise in older age groups in the ten years since the 2011 census. Rises in the 70-74 and 75-79 age ranges are particularly prevalent.

Deprivation

Worcestershire is not seen as a deprived area compared to England as a whole. However, there are still almost 28,000 residents in the county living in the top 10% of deprived areas in the country, an increase from 25,000 residents on the 2015 figures. The results from the Index for Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 data tend to suggest that Worcestershire can be described as slightly “more deprived” in comparison with all other upper tier local authorities in England in 2019 than it was in 2015.

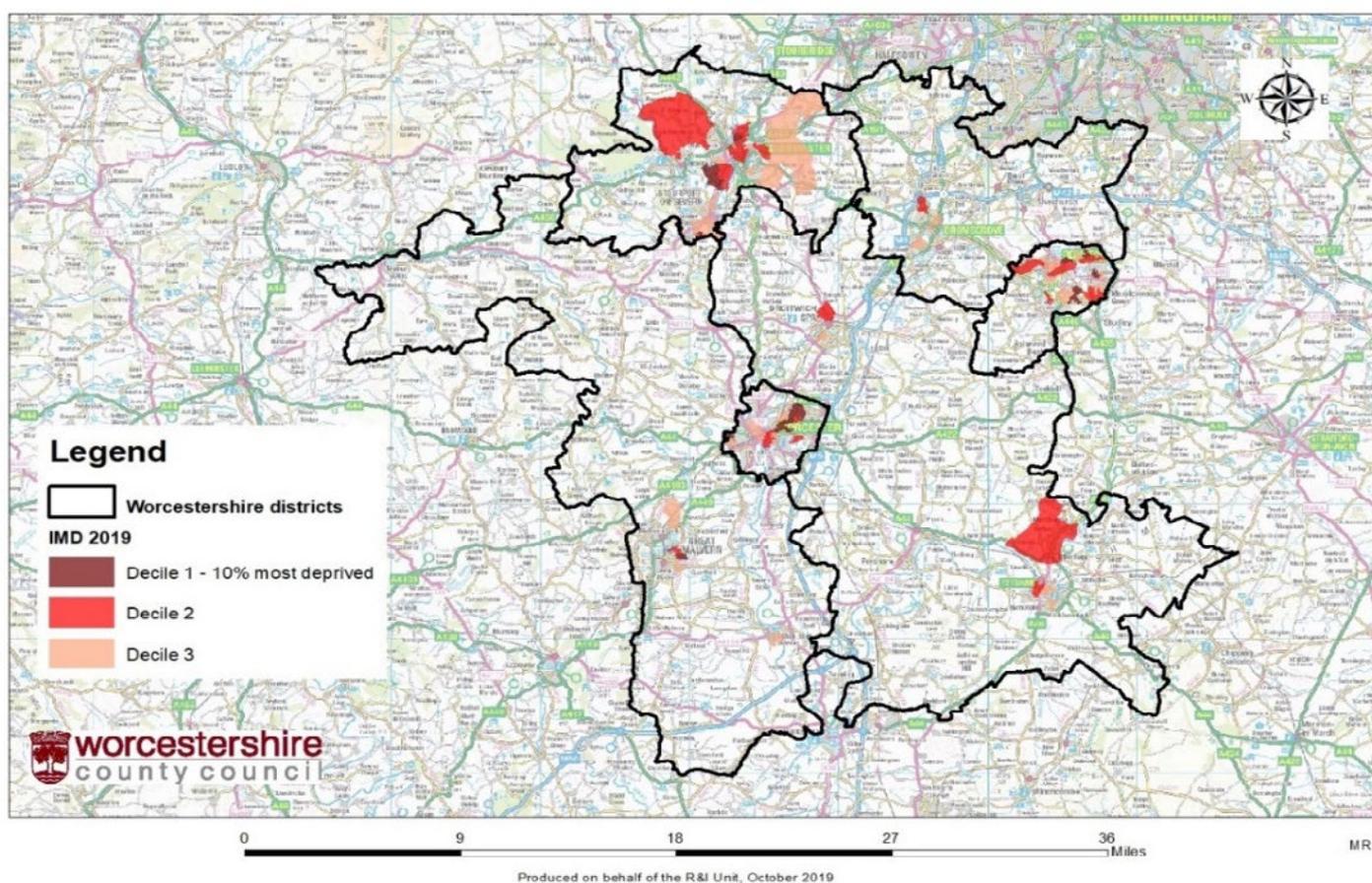
At the district level Wyre Forest and Redditch are very close in terms of overall level of deprivation and are the most deprived districts in the county.

There are 18 LSOAs in Worcestershire that are in the top 10% most deprived areas in England, an increase of two on the 2015 IMD release. There are 74 LSOAs in the county within the top 30% most deprived areas in England, an increase of six on 2015. Worcester City has the most LSOAs within the top 10% most deprived areas, with eight, whilst Redditch and Wyre Forest have the most LSOAs within the top 30% most deprived areas, at 21 and 20 respectively.

In the county almost 5% of the population are now living in LSOAs that are within the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. Just over 20% are living in places categorised as being within the top 30% most deprived area in England.

Map showing LSOAs in Deciles 1 to 3 for the IMD in Worcestershire¹

Contains OS data © Crown copyright 2022.



1 Rural/urban classifications - Office for National Statistics

Worcestershire's Priorities

The Council set our priorities in Worcestershire's Corporate Plan 2022-25, where four key priorities were identified.

- Open for Business
- Children and Families
- Environment
- Health and Wellbeing

The Council's continued investment in improving highway, rail and digital infrastructure is ensuring the County is truly **Open for Business**. Worcester Six, Malvern Hills Science Park and Redditch Gateway are great examples of where the council has supported business to grow and create new jobs in the County, and continued investment in digital offer to ensure residents are equipped to access future opportunities as we experience a shift in working patterns and value quality of life alongside earning potential.

Worcestershire is already home to a highly skilled workforce, supported by good educational attainment and schools the council continue to invest in and work with. With the vibrant communities, alongside a myriad of exciting attractions and places to visit, that makes Worcestershire a great place for **Children and Families** thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

The County is blessed with an outstanding **Environment** with easy access to beautiful countryside and waterways which are home to many rare and important wildlife habitats and provide great recreational opportunities for our residents to enjoy.

Within Worcestershire, country parks, 4,600km public rights of way, and growing number of attractive walking & cycling routes provide ample opportunities for our communities to exercise and support their **Health and Wellbeing**. Our health and social care journey, moving to prevention and promoting independence, is also crucial in supporting people to live in good health for longer and lead fulfilling lives.

Worcestershire provides a great quality of life and excellent opportunities for all; however the council are committed to adapt and harness the benefits of change to maintain this and unlock future potential. The best way to do this is through the 'One Worcestershire' approach, as public, private & VCS organisations, working together to address the challenges faced and support our residents and businesses.

Worcestershire County Council delivers an array of services which support residents and businesses. These include providing social care for some of the most vulnerable in society, helping the next generation get the best start in life through education, investing in our transport network, disposing of household waste sustainably, provision of library services & country parks and supporting health & wellbeing within our communities. The council oversee over £1 billion of public expenditure each year and employ 2,672 full-time equivalent staff across the Council and Worcestershire Children's First, making the council one of the largest organisations in the County.

Worcestershire have made great strides to become a more financially self-sufficient organisation, with around 80% of our net revenue budget being raised locally through Council Tax and Business Rates.

Around 69% of the council's net budget goes towards providing adult and children's social care. The council's priority is to ensure we support society's most vulnerable. To achieve the best possible outcomes partnerships are formed closely with communities to build local capacity to enable people to live independently in their local area for longer. Worcestershire also ensures ambition for the county and invests in schools, transport system and employment sites to ensure the growing County has what it needs for residents and businesses to thrive.

Strategic Leadership

Worcestershire County Council is currently made up of 57 councillors. At the time of writing, Worcestershire County Council's political profile is as follows:

- Conservative 44
- Labour 4
- Liberal Democrat 4
- The Green Party 3
- Independents 2

These are represented by 3 Political groups on the Council: Conservative (the 44 Conservative Councillors) Unity (4 Labour and 4 Liberal Democrat Councillors) and the Green and Independent Alliance (3 Green Party and Two Independent Councillors).

The council operates a leader and cabinet model of decision making. Full council meets six times per year and is responsible for agreeing budgets and major policy issues affecting Worcestershire people.

Ten councillors (including the Leader of the Council) form the Cabinet, each with a specific area of responsibility. The Cabinet areas of responsibility are as follows:

- Finance
- Adult social care
- Economy, infrastructure & skills
- Highways & transport
- Environment
- Children & families
- Education
- Communities
- Health & wellbeing
- Corporate services & communication

Cabinet usually makes decisions collectively at meetings held in public. Some specific decisions are delegated to individual members of the Cabinet or to senior officers, but these are not routine.

Of the remaining 47 Councillors 13 of them sit as Chair of the Council or Chair of a Panel, Committee or Board and a further 11 sit as a Vice Chairs.

Overall, there are 113 places available on Committees and Panels, with an additional 19 places on the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority.

Accountability



The scrutiny function comprises an overarching Board with Panels reporting to it which enable Councillors to focus on specific areas of council activity. The scope of each of the Panels aims to ensure that Cabinet members are not required to attend multiple scrutiny meetings to be held to account. The Panels are.

- Health Overview and Scrutiny - which includes members from each of the 6 District Councils.
- Adult Care and Wellbeing
- Children and Families
- Corporate and Communities
- Economy
- Environment

At its Annual Meeting in May 2022 the Council agreed to establish an additional Scrutiny panel to focus on Environment. The increase in capacity of the scrutiny function reflects the complexity of the Council's activity and the recent update to the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Council is also a key stakeholder on the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board, which is chaired by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Wellbeing. Two other Cabinet members are members of the Board, along with representatives from the Integrated Care Board, senior County Council

officers, plus representatives from other health Trusts, local Healthwatch and the Local Enterprise Partnership. It meets four times per year.

There are also a small number of sub-committees and working groups which meet from time to time to consider specific issues and policies. Examples of this include:

- Advice for Cabinet members
- Small scrutiny task groups work in detail on specific issues – usually a maximum of two running at one time to enable appropriate officer support and member involvement
- Sub committees are part of the Council's governance of the pension fund.

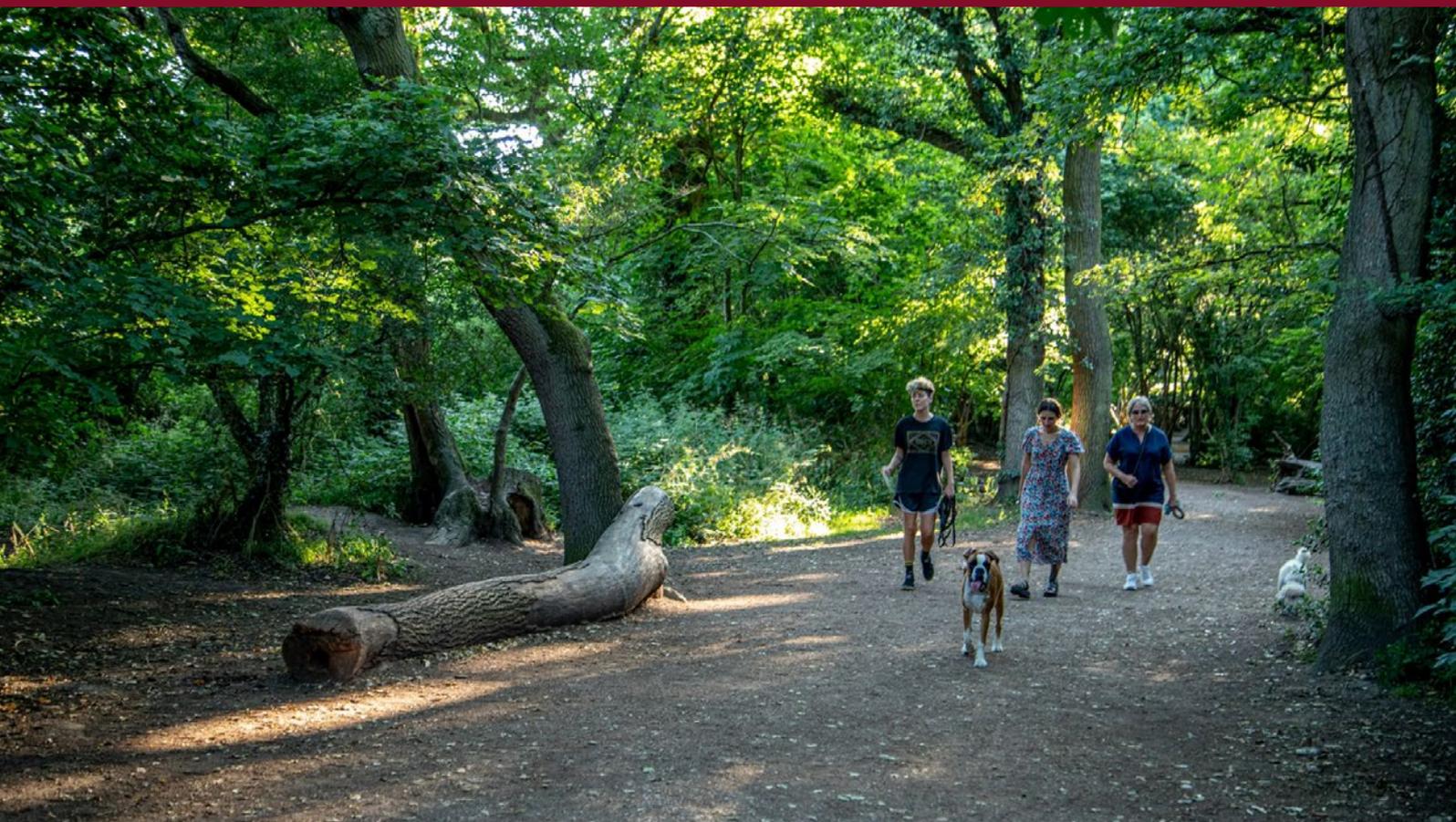
Members also help the council to maintain effective partnerships with a number of external organisations as, although these are independent of the council, they have an impact on its services and the way we deliver them, as well as an operational effect on its service areas. The Council generally appoints local members to outside bodies which operate in a specific geographical area to support the Councillor's local leadership role. At the time of writing, councillors have been appointed to 61 'outside bodies' and a list of these bodies is appended to this paper. Committee membership is shown in the table below.

See list of Committees, Panels, Boards etc for Worcestershire in Appendix 1

Committees	TOTAL SEATS	CONSERVATIVE	UNITY	GREEN AND INDEPENDENT ALLIANCE
Planning & Regulatory Committee	15	12	2	1
Standards & Ethics Committee	8	6	1	1
Audit & Governance	8	6	2	0
Pensions Committee	5	4	1	0
Waste Credit Governance Committee	8	6	1	1
Appointments etc Panel	6	5	1	0

Scrutiny	TOTAL SEATS	CONSERVATIVE	UNITY	GREEN AND INDEPENDENT ALLIANCE
OSPB	9	7	1	1
HOSC	9	7	1	1
Adult Care and Well-being	9	6	2	1
Children & Families	9	7	1	1
Corporate and Communities	9	7	1	1
Economy	9	7	1	1
Environment	9	7	1	1
TOTAL SEATS AND ALLOCATIONS COMMITTEES AND SCRUTINY	113	87	16	10
TOTAL SEATS AND ALLOCATIONS	19	15	2	2

In addition, the Council has established a wholly owned company, Worcestershire Children First, to deliver its Children's services. The Council's Director of Children's Services is also the Chief Executive of the Company.



Engagement and casework

County Councillors carry out resident engagement through a variety of methods. Several social media channels are used to promote events and communicate directly with residents but due to the population demographics in Worcestershire there is still also a fairly high use of more traditional methods such as posters, postcards and business cards.

Results from the Councillor survey show that casework is an area that forms a significant part of a Councillor's workload. In response to Councillor requests, a Member Portal has been introduced whereby Councillors can log issues for Officers to investigate and respond to. This enables Councillors to log issues at any time, not just during standard working hours, and provides a more streamlined approach to tracking the progress of enquiries. Councillors have reported this helps them to manage local issues and, following feedback from them, they can use a map-based approach to track enquiries on a geographical basis which helps them when reporting to Parish Councils and the community on issues in specific areas. The Council is committed to providing digital applications for Councillors to support them in their roles and to reduce the need to come to County Hall, and better able to manage demands on their time dealing with local issues.

In addition, the Council supports the Councillors in their work by providing IT equipment and support, access to divisional funds for allocation to initiatives which promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Division or the people within it

and Economy & Infrastructure funds for minor infrastructure work in their division. Administrative support is also available to all Councillors from the Member Support team.

Comparison with neighbours

When comparing Worcestershire with a family set of 10 CIPFA statistical neighbours we rank 5th in terms of electorate per Councillor, with 7,992 electors per council member.

Of these statistical neighbours North Yorkshire has the lowest number with 6,657 electors per Councillor and Staffordshire has the highest with 10,704 electors per Councillor.

The mean (average) of this family set is 8,362, Worcestershire being slightly below this.

CIPFA statistical neighbours	Total electorate	Council size	No of electors per Cllr	Rank on electors per Cllr
North Yorkshire	479,322	72	6,657	1
Suffolk	569,261	75	7,590	2
Warwickshire	443,920	57	7,788	3
Somerset	434,384	55	7,898	4
Worcestershire	455,560	57	7,992	5
Lincolnshire	566,353	70	8,091	6
Norfolk	693,144	84	8,252	7
Nottinghamshire	617,973	67	9,223	8
West Sussex	659,680	70	9,424	9
Staffordshire	663,673	62	10,704	10

LGBCE data

When looking at all two-tier County Councils across England Worcestershire ranks 7th out of 24. The mean number of electors per Councillor across this group is 9,439, 1,447 higher than Worcestershire, however this average is bought up by more urban counties with a higher density of electors.

Parish Information

Working with information supplied by Worcestershire Association of Local Councils (CALC), officers identified 234 parishes, or grouped parishes, in the county. The number and size of parishes varies considerably across divisions in the districts, but the presence of parishes adds to the role expected of County Councillors. In Malvern Hills and Wychavon in particular the Parish Councils and meetings provide points of contact and communication for local members.

By contrast, Redditch Borough and Worcester City are not divided into parishes, with 1 and 2 Parish Councils respectively, so County Councillors in those areas maintain a relationship with the Borough and District Councils as part of their role.

Some of the other urban areas, such as Droitwich, Malvern and Evesham have one town council, but more than one electoral division covering the area. Overall, 41 of our 52 electoral divisions include parishes (including town councils)

Wychavon District has the largest number of parishes with 96; followed by Malvern Hills with 72. Bromsgrove with 25 and Wyre Forest with 19.

The Council acknowledges the commitment involved in attending Parish Council meetings to report to communities and hear their concerns, as attending Parish Council meetings is included in the approved duties for claiming travel expenses in the Members Allowances scheme.

Each Council directorate sends information directly to Parishes as part of their day-to-day activity, e.g., planning consultations, footpath diversions and road closures. The County

The County Council has recently developed a digital Councillor Portal. This enables councillors to log issues affecting their communities onto a system where officers can provide a response and each case history is retained for reference and Councillors can use it to report back on progress/outcomes. This reduces reliance on e-mails and phone calls and aims to simplify record keeping and ease of reporting for local members.

List of Civil and non-Civil Parishes in Worcestershire

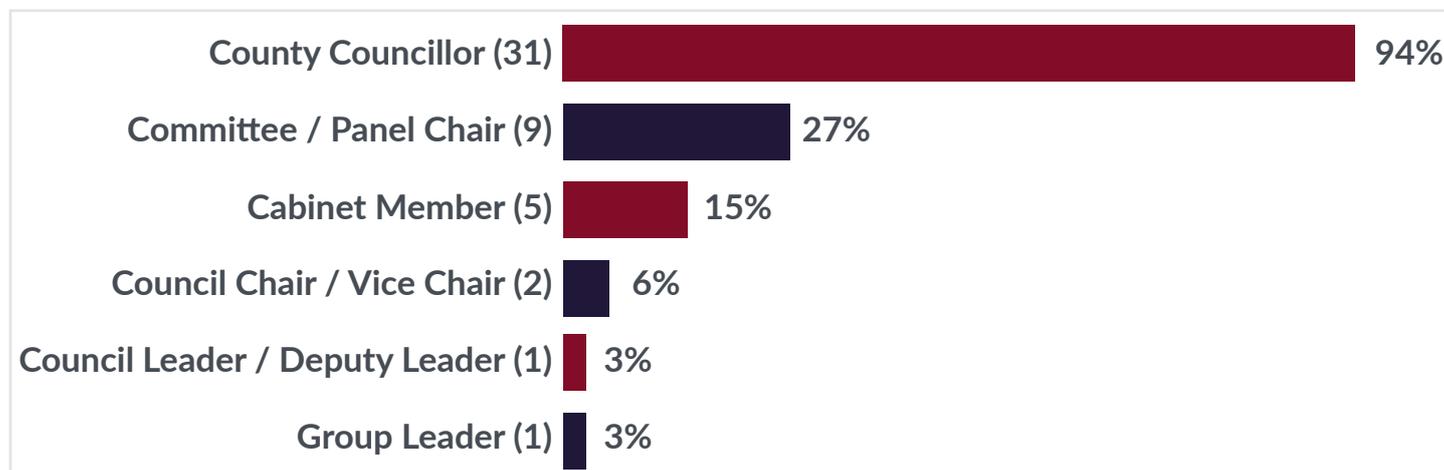
	Civil Parish or Community	Non-Civil Parish or Community	Total
Bromsgrove District	25	5	30
Alvechurch	3		3
Beacon	3	1	4
Bromsgrove Central	1	1	2
Bromsgrove East	4	1	5
Bromsgrove South	1	1	2
Bromsgrove West		1	1
Clent Hills	6		6
Woodvale	6		6
Wythall	1		1
Malvern Hills District	72		72
Croome	7		7
Hallow	12		12
Malvern Chase	3		3
Malvern Langland	1		1
Malvern Link	8		8
Malvern Trinity	2		2
Powick	16		16
Tenbury	23		23
Redditch Borough	1	4	5
Arrow Valley East		1	1
Arrow Valley West		1	1
Redditch North		1	1
Redditch South	1	1	2
Worcester City District	2	10	12
Bedwardine		1	1
Claines		1	1

	Civil Parish or Community	Non-Civil Parish or Community	Total
Gorse Hill and Warndon		1	1
Nunnery		1	1
Rainbow Hill		1	1
Riverside		1	1
St John		1	1
St Peter	1	1	2
St Stephen		1	1
Warndon Parish	1	1	2
Wychavon District	96		96
Bowbrook	10		10
Bredon	18		18
Broadway	9		9
Droitwich East	1		1
Droitwich West	1		1
Evesham Northwest	1		1
Evesham South	1		1
Harvington	9		9
Littletons	10		10
Omersley	11		11
Pershore	6		6
Upton Snodsbury	19		19
Wyre Forest District	19		19
Bewdley	4		4
Chaddesley	6		6
Cookley, Wolverley and Wribbenhall	3		3
St Barnabas	1		1
St Chads	1		1
St Georges and St Oswald	1		1
St Johns	1		1
St Marys	1		1
Stourport-On-Severn	1		1
Grand Total	215	19	234

Councillor workloads

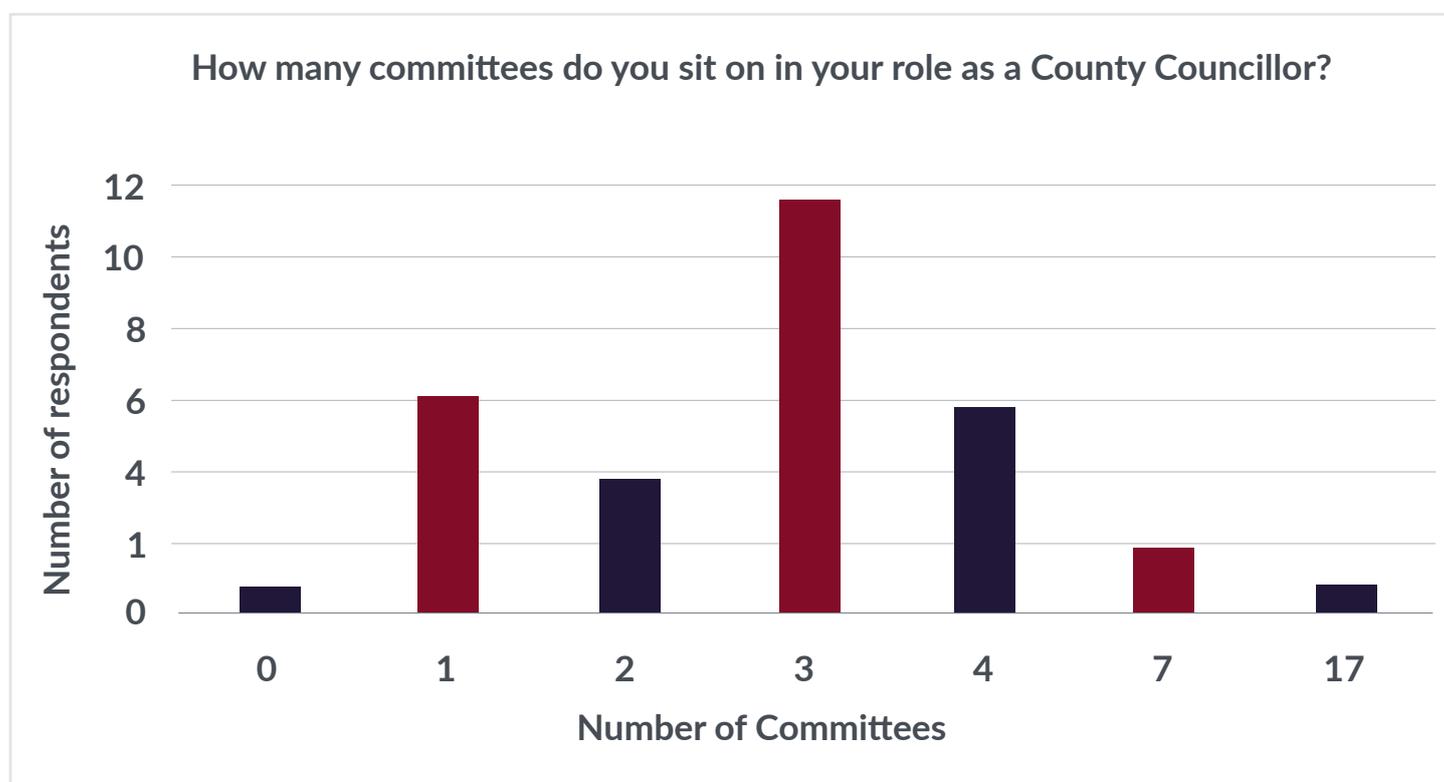
In October 2022, Worcestershire County Councillors were invited to complete an anonymous questionnaire about their workload and views on council size. 33 responses out of 57 were received. This is a response rate of 58%. The results are illustrated below and strongly support the view that a reduction in the number of County Councillors is not a viable option. The evidence does, however, indicate that although workloads and Councillor's expectations have increased significantly, 57 County Councillors is the appropriate number, with 79% of respondents expressing that view.

Responses were broken down by position in the council as below:



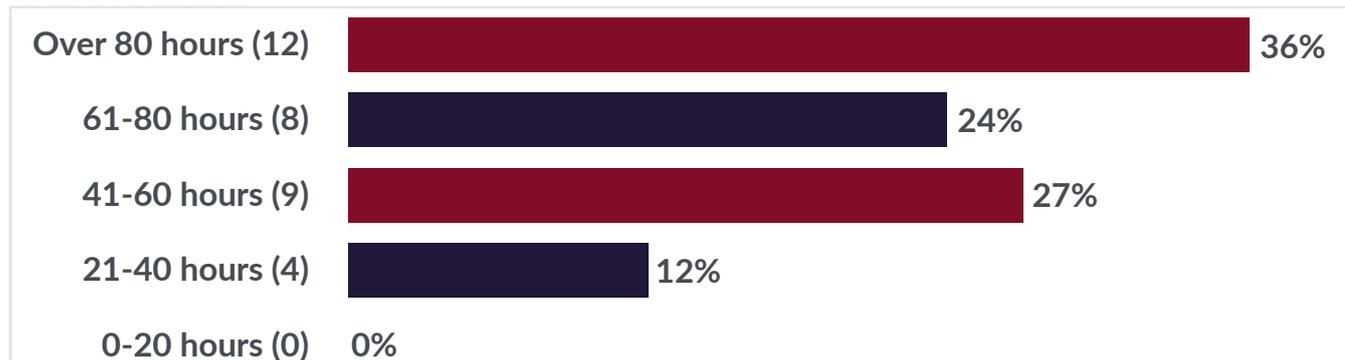
Number of Committees

Respondents sit on an average of 3.2 committees, ranging from 0 to 17.



Amount of time spent on Council work

Respondents spent a range of time on their work as a County Councillor – from between 21-40, up to more than 80 hours a month.



How time was spent on County Council work

There was quite a range of responses to how long respondents spent on each time of council work.

All respondents spent at least some time on:

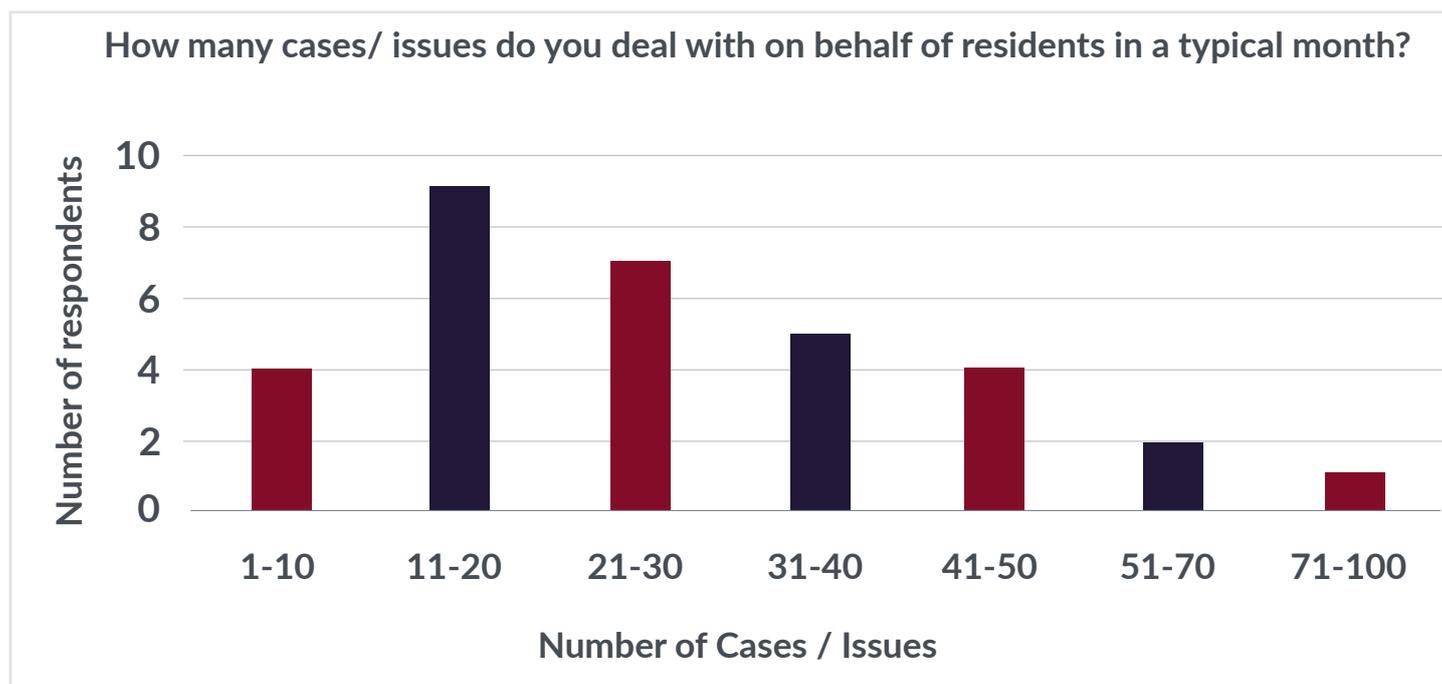
- Council meetings, Committees and scrutiny panels etc. including joint committees
- Emails, Letters, phone calls
- Case work with residents
- Meetings with officers e.g., meetings on site about highways issues
- Political group meetings

Area of Work	Average Time Spent (hours)	Minimum Time Spent	Maximum Time Spent
Emails, Letters, phone calls	21.8	4	64
Council meetings, Committees and scrutiny panels etc. including joint committees	17.8	6	50
Case work with residents	17	2	50
Attending Parish or Town Council meetings as a County Councillor	9.5	0	30
Meetings with officers e.g. meetings on site about highways issues	6.9	2	24
Other	6.9	0	16
Attending external meetings as a County Council representative ('outside body')	6.1	0	20
Political group meetings	4.1	1	12
Briefings for Councillors e.g., CMR Directorate briefings	3.7	0	12
Informal Council meetings e.g., scrutiny task groups, IT working groups, agenda meetings	2.6	0	15
Training and development	2.2	0	15
Resident Surgeries	2.1	0	5

Responses recorded as other include things such as volunteer and residents' groups, the member portal, Environment Agency meetings, reading and writing reports for meetings, travel time, social media updates and talking to residents on their doorstep

Number of Cases and Issues

50% of respondents deal with between 11 and 30 cases or issues a month.



Number of meetings attended

Officer meetings (including site visits) and full council, cabinet and planning meetings were the only meeting types which all respondents attend in a typical month.

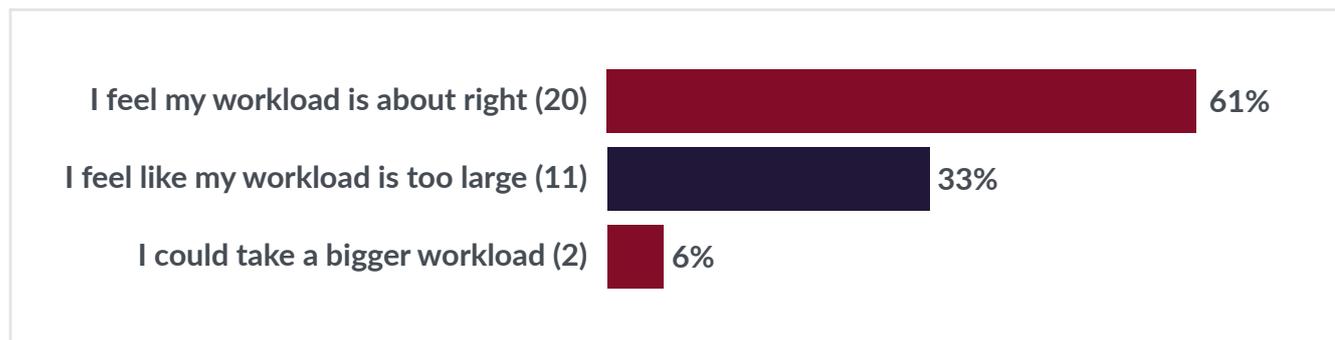
Some respondents are typically attending a large number of Parish/ Town Council meetings and Scrutiny and Health & Wellbeing board meetings in a typical month; however, this is not the same across the board with some respondents attending none of these meetings.

Type of meeting	Average number of meetings	Minimum number of meetings	Maximum number of meetings
Parish or Town Council meetings	4.5	0	19
Officer meetings including site visits	2.8	1	10
Full Council, Cabinet, Planning etc.	2.6	1	8
Other	2.5	0	7
Scrutiny, Health & Wellbeing Board etc.	2.4	0	12
Agenda preparation/ pre-meetings	2.1	0	8
Briefing meetings including CMR Directorate briefings	1.8	0	6
Informal Council meetings	1.9	0	5

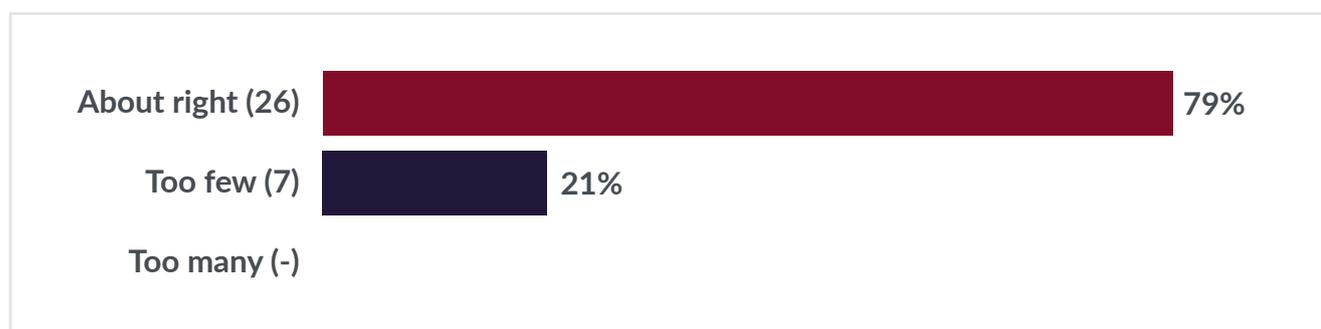
Responses recorded as other included things such as trustee meetings, meetings with and on behalf of the Fire Authority, CBB, meetings with outside bodies and resident groups/ association meetings.

Workload as a Councillor

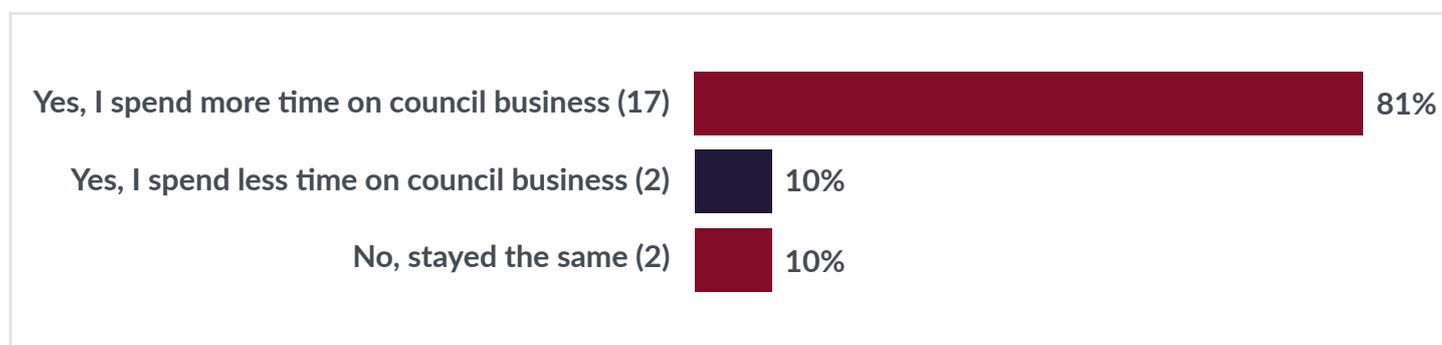
Most respondents thought their current workload is about right (61%), however a third of respondents said that their workload is too large currently (33%).



This is also reflected in responses around the number of Councillors in Worcestershire with 79% saying they think that the current number is about right and a small proportion (21%) who feel there are too few Councillors currently.



Councillors who have served for more than one term also feel that they spend more time on Council business now than they did previously.



Comments about the change in workload discuss issues such as:

- Taking on new roles or responsibilities – e.g., becoming a cabinet member, committee chairman, having a new portfolio
- Demand from social media has increased
- Specific projects driving demand – e.g., a major highways project in their district
- Covid-19 fostered awareness in local area
- Residents become more aware of local councillor meaning they are more likely to contact them
- Rise in casework

Employment status outside of Council role

There is an even split of councillors and their employment status.



Other comments

Overwhelmingly the main theme of the additional comments was the ability of councillors who are working – especially those who work full time – to fit their council responsibilities around this work.

“I wouldn’t be able to take on greater responsibilities if there were fewer councillors without taking a personal financial hit by reducing my other work commitments.”

“The volume of work is just about manageable for anyone in full time work. To increase this by decreasing seats/ changing boundaries that resulted in this, quite simply would exclude working people from becoming County Council.”

“I am under 40 and can see why there is a lack of representation in our local politics. The role is very time consuming and hard to fit around a full-time job. This restricts who can be a councillor and the number of councillors is important here as it determines how accessible this role can ever be.”

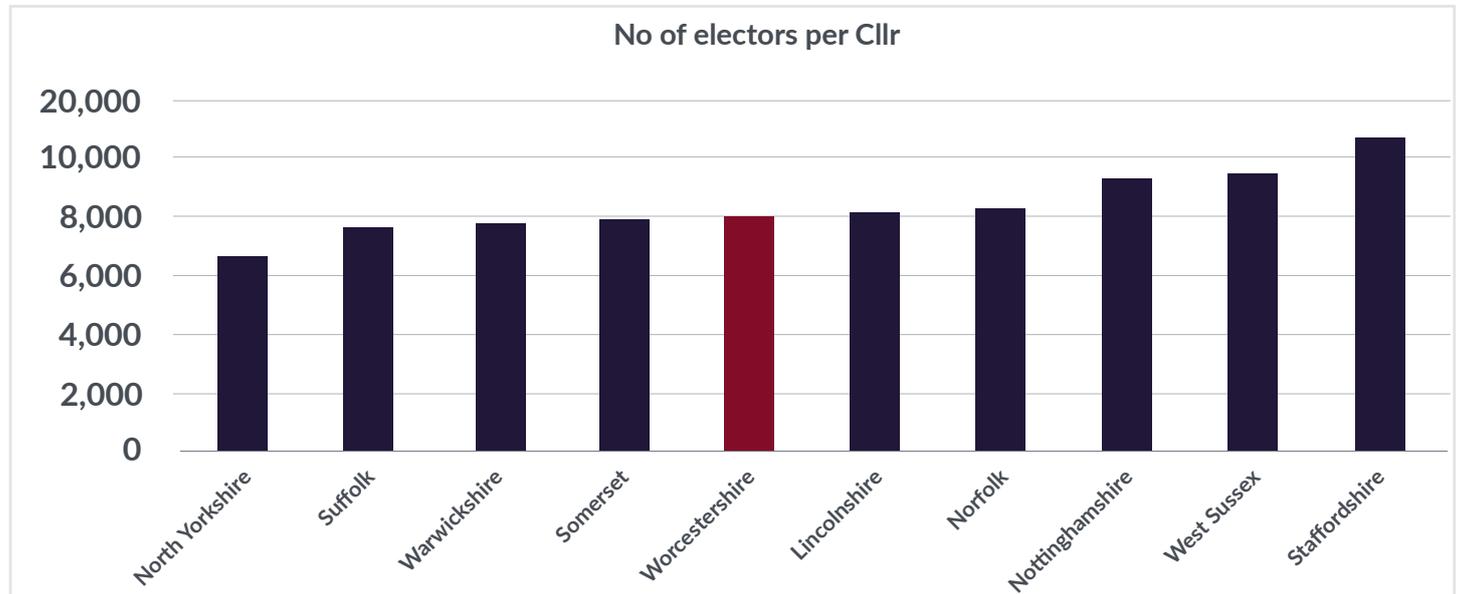
“To increase diversity in our council we need either the same number of councillors or more councillors and an uplift in the allowance, or a decrease in the number of councillors but we look at professionalising the role and increasing allowances significantly.”

“It is very difficult to retain a full-time job as well as being a County Councillor. A lot of employers don’t understand the role and therefore it’s very difficult to get the required time off for meetings. I would also add having council meetings and scrutiny meetings in the daytime isn’t ideal.”

Analysis and Recommendation

Option 1: Keeping the same number of Councillors

Our growth predictions show that Worcestershire will remain average when comparing the ratio of electorate to councillors against our statistical neighbours. The data suggests that retaining the same number of councillors would maintain effective representation, notwithstanding that a review of boundary lines is required.



Councillors have seen a significant increase in demand and casework from residents. In a survey conducted by Worcestershire County Council, 81% of respondents stated that they have seen an increase in their volume of work. A proportion of this will be down to the rise in resident's awareness of Councillors, and their role within the community, throughout Covid 19. This has led to an increase in workload as demands from social media increase, demanding a much more immediate response. This has also been coupled with an increase from the more traditional methods of the growing 65 + resident population.

The results of the Councillor's survey show that 79% feel that 57 councillors is the right number, with only 21% who feel the number should be increased.

Experience of operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model for a significant number of years has led the Council to conclude that any major change to the number of the Councillors either way would not lead to improvements in the effectiveness of the organisation or other improvements for residents.

The current number of Councillors is sufficient to fulfil all requirements for scrutiny.

The evidence in this document illustrates how the current governance arrangements and councillor number are enabling the Council to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership.

Option 2: Increasing the number of Councillors

In reviewing if the number of Councillors should be increased, both the statistical data on population increase and the comparison with statistical neighbours were considered. Both sets of data, evidence that the current number of Councillors would be sufficient and there was no compelling rationale to increase the number. In addition, the following factors were considered:

- An increase in Councillors would mean an overall cost increase in the running of Worcestershire County Council from public funds
- The continued development of Worcestershire's digital capabilities and members portal, should ease the pressures of increased workload noted in the survey, therefore indicating an increase in Councillor numbers is not required.
- When comparing against our statistical neighbours, an increase in Councillor numbers would mean that we had a higher proportion of electors per Councillor.

Option 3 – Reducing the number of Councillors

When considering if there was any evidence to reduce the number of Councillors, the results from the Councillor's survey illustrated:

- Complexity and volume of casework was increasing therefore impacting the amount of time councillors spend on dealing with casework
- There was little capacity to increase workload as many councillors hold full time jobs and are already finding their workload hard to fit around these commitments.
- The pressures being placed on elected members are such that any reduction in numbers could overburden them. The size of the Cabinet is limited by law and largely governs the role those Executive members can play. The recent addition of a Scrutiny Panel to current arrangements has already added to the number of committee places needing to be taken up by Members. A reduction in the number of Councillors may require a further need for Councillors to increase the number of Committees or Panels etc that they participate in and risks them being unable to carry out their role effectively.
- With an increasing demand clearly being illustrated post COVID on Councillors' time, there would likely be a negative impact on residents if the number of residents per elector increased.

Conclusion

Having considered all of the evidence – rising demand for services, growing levels of complex casework, electorate growth and the increasing councillor demand via social media and other technology – Worcestershire County Council recommends Option 1 to the LGBCE. The Council believes that a reduction in the number of councillors would be detrimental to the residents of Worcestershire as it would undermine councillors' ability to effectively represent residents and communities. The reasoning for this view has been highlighted throughout this submission. Worcestershire County Council believes that retaining the council size at 57 members, whilst introducing further methods of support for councillors such as the member portal, is the optimum way forward.

Therefore, Option 1 is recommended to the LGBCE.

Appendix 1

List of Committees, Panels & Boards that County Councillors sit on (23 in total)

- Adult Care & Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Appointments Panel
- Audit & Governance Committee
- Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Health & Well Being Board
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority
- Joint Museums Committee
- Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board
- Pensions Board
- Pensions Investment Sub Committee
- Pensions Committee
- Planning and Regulatory Committee
- Standards & Ethics Committee
- Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
- Waste Credit Governance Committee
- West Mercia Energy Joint Committee
- West Mercia Police & Crime Panel

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This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact Lousia Mann by emailing lmann2@worcestershire.gov.uk

To the best of our knowledge all information was correct at the time of publication: January 2023