

The Green group of Councillors on Sheffield City Council

Council Size Submission: Template

Sheffield City 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.

We are The Green group of Councillors on Sheffield City Council. There are 14 Green councillors, representing 6 different wards in the central part of the city – i.e. with the most dynamic population change. We are one of the 3 parties in the council administration.

This submission is to be read alongside the factual submission of evidence from the council's officers and we do not intend to repeat the information they have already supplied.

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.*

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

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?

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

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?

[Please refer to data from our council officers for this section.](#)

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>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>Currently, Sheffield City Council comprises 84 members, being 3 councillors in each of 28 wards. The council size and ward boundaries were last established before the local elections in 2016. At that time, the council was run under a Leader and Cabinet system; now it is governed through the committee system following a referendum in 2021.</p> <p>The Government has confirmed this arrangement will continue for Sheffield, through making amendments to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and these arrangements can now continue for at least 10 years. This followed intervention where our group submitted written evidence to the bill committee, which can be found at:</p> <p>https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmpublic/EnglishDevolutionCommunityEmpowerment/memo/EDCEB36.htm</p> <p>In our evidence, we referred to the council's cross-party motion from July 2025 when the council voted unanimously that the benefits of the Committee System demonstrated in Sheffield include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater collaboration across political groups in policy formulation and in decision making; • overcoming party political tribalism and focussing on areas of agreement, not antagonism; • improving the culture of the Council, with officers and Councillors focusing on what is best for the city;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all Councillors being involved in the decision-making of the Council, and greater accountability to the electorate; and improved outcomes for the residents of Sheffield. <p>There is no appetite amongst any party to return to the Leader and Cabinet system.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Please see evidence from council staff. In Sheffield's committee system, most policy committees have 9 members. This has proved to work well in practice. As we note below, increasing the size of the council from 84 to 93 councillors would conveniently allow an additional committee to share the workload.</p> <p>This is important as the remits of committees are constantly under review and in fact we have a governance committee with this function. Most of the committees currently have very wide-ranging roles.</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	Please see evidence from council staff.

Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.

<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis		<p>Please see evidence from council staff. What we would add from the point of view of the smallest of the 3 groups in the administration is that smaller groups have to find disproportionately more councillor resource to take part in all the ancillary roles of the proportionate committees, such as task and finish groups and other working groups. These are generally small. If each group has to provide 1 member, it is easier to draw one member from a larger group than a smaller one. In the Green group, we all have multiple responsibilities, far beyond just the formal committee meetings.</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>Please see evidence from council staff.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Please see evidence from council staff.</p>

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	Please see evidence from council staff.
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		Please see evidence from council staff.

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
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Community Leadership	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	<p>With a more modern demographic in the wards represented by Green councillors, a lot of our interaction with residents is done by e-mail, text, WhatsApp or via social media, not just traditional, in-person surgeries, although most of us do these too. This is better for flexibility of engagement but does mean that councillors receive calls on their time at any time of day or night, rather than being controlled into formal surgery hours.</p> <p>We all produce regular printed newsletters which are then hand-delivered to residents across the wards. Although we have volunteer help, councillors are expected to do their fair share of these deliveries, which also has the effect of engaging with residents directly in the wards.</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>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Please see evidence from council staff on casework systems. The Green councillors tend to use the officer-based casework systems less than the other parties, have more direct contact with residents and go directly to the relevant council officers, compared to other parties. This is the nature of the political positioning of the Green councillors in particular.</p>

Other Issues

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

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.

Since 2016, Sheffield has grown in population; it is due to grow further by 2032 as is set out in the projections for the draft local plan.

Officers project the electorate is set to rise by 5% from 386,629 in 2025 to 405,867 in 2032. A simple proportionate rise in the number of councillors would take us to 88. Certainly, the status quo of remaining at 84 is not justified. However, there are other factors we believe should be considered:

1. The local plan, which is nearing its final stages, expects to see an increase in 38,012 homes up to 2038. Although this is 6 years beyond 2032, it is not so far removed that this very significant population increase is not relevant.
2. In terms of representation and casework, we are seeing, in practice, an increase in the number of people who live in the city but are not registered to vote. Partly this is because of the number of residents who are ineligible to register because of their nationality, as the city becomes increasingly international in outlook and economic growth. Partly, though, it is that an increasingly mobile working population simply does not register to vote when entitled and required to do so. We see this most in City Ward, which covers the city centre. It is largely characterised by significant growth in size in the last few years – which is set to continue: the local plan expects that over half of the 38,012 new homes will be in the “central” area, which is close to coterminous with the existing City Ward. Although the numbers of registered electors in City Ward appear to have been fairly constant over the last few years, this does not reflect the very high level of turnover. A quick analysis of the ward shows that 6,833 new people have registered to vote in the 18 months from the last local elections in 2024 in this ward alone. We believe there will be literally thousands of people in this ward alone who could register if they chose to do so – or alternatively if there were more resources encouraging them to do so.
3. Since the last boundary review, the council has moved to a committee system. This is working well– it doesn’t mean members always agree but it does mean there is scope to implement areas of agreement. As predicted, however, this has led to an increase (quite properly) in the amount of democratic work now that all 84 councillors have a role in decision-making on policy, rather than just 10 under the previous system. Each of our principal policy committees has 9 members. The remits of each committee are modified from time to time – there is a separate governance committee to consider

such matters. An increase of 9 members would take the council to 93 members and this would conveniently fit the democratic model by accommodating a single extra committee to spread the workload better.

4. We note that Sheffield has one of the lowest numbers of councillors per head of population, even amongst other large unitary authorities. For example, we note the comparison with Manchester City Council, which now has 96 councillors for an almost identical electorate.

We understand the principal reason for opposing an increase in councillor numbers – despite the obvious growth of the city – is largely due to additional costs, such as paying councillors allowances.

Councillors should be paid a fair wage so that people from all walks of life can afford to represent their communities. We appreciate that levels of allowances are outside the scope of the Boundary Commission. However, we do say that the amount spent on councillors' allowances is negligible compared to the cost of running the council and staffing costs. There is necessarily going to be a modest financial cost to democracy. That is not a reason to restrict the levels of democratic representation.