

North Northamptonshire Council

Green Alliance Response to Council Numbers question

20th October 2022

Preamble by Cllr Jim Hakewill

The Alliance Group nominated me, Cllr Jim Hakewill, to draw the Group's submission together and to be the Group's member on the Council's Boundary Review Working Group which met a number of times when coming to recommendations for the NNC Full Council to debate.

I must offer a sincere apology to Boundary Commission colleagues as I had assumed that our Alliance Group's submission was to be sent as an Appendix to the Council's "voted for" submission. My assumption was that it would be attached as a 'minority report' which is custom and practice in local government where a consensus cannot be agreed across an elected body. I only learnt on 12th October that our original Green Alliance submission was not included at a meeting called by the Council Leader following the rejection of the 99/88 council proposals. Until that time, we believed that the Commission had seen our submission and were minded, in their response, to concur with our submission of 60 councillors.

I did note in the 24th August 2022 letter from Jolyon Jackson CBE (see Appendix H) additional information would be welcome from the Alliance (and Labour Groups) but believed this to be *in addition* to our original submission, that we then learnt had not been included by the Council.

A salutary lesson about making assumptions!

All that said the Green Alliance Group have worked to produce this document that incorporates the original and updates as of today.

The following document and appendices are updated as of the 20th of October and sent separately as there was still no cross-council consensus as to councillor numbers resulting from the meeting on the 12th of October 2022.

The Green Alliance have concluded the following response to the request for the number of councillors to be considered by the Boundary Commission for elections to North Northamptonshire Unitary Council in 2025 and beyond.

(Our original submission is on the following link: [Appendix C - Views of the Green Alliance Group.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#))

Who are the Green Alliance on NNC?

At the NNC elections in May 2021 there were three Elected Green Party Councillors, namely Emily Fedorowycz, Sarah Tubbs and Dez Dell. Discussions took place between the Green Councillor colleagues and the only elected Independent Councillor, Jim Hakewill. A strong

consensus of aspirations was evident, and the Green Alliance was formally established under the Council's constitution. Following a byelection in February 2022 Councillor Charlie Best (Liberal Democrat) joined the Green Alliance. We work as a group, as we have done in preparing this submission, whilst at the same time valuing and promoting individual beliefs politically or otherwise.

Representation at the Council's Democracy and Standards Committee – Cllr Jim Hakewill

I did go to the Democracy and Standards Committee when it debated and resolved what was to be forwarded to Full Council.

Please see Appendix B for the comments I made and Appendix D for minutes of that Meeting.

Background

The analytical data compiled for the Council's main, and only, submission document is not repeated here. We simply have a different view on interpretation of the data.

Our starting point for the calculation of councillor numbers is the conclusion reached by Lead Inspector Max Caller MBE in his report "Northamptonshire County Council Best Value Inspection" published on March 15th 2018. The relevant extract appears on page 37 and is as follows:

Best Value Inspection of Northamptonshire County Council, January – March 2018

Page 37 of 50

'A two unitary model

This could be configured as a doughnut, Northampton alone and the others, or as a West (Daventry, Northampton and South Northants) and a North (Corby, East Northants, Kettering and Wellingborough). The doughnut model suffers from a range of defects including a lack of cohesion in the outer ring, a too tightly bounded centre and financial viability issues.

*The alternative model better reflects the established economic drivers of the area and are each of a size which would make them viable. It would be necessary to establish a council size which complied with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's guidance **but in the experience of the inspection team 45 members each would be appropriate**'.*

(Highlighting inserted by the author).

Max Caller is the former chairman of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, a role he occupied from April 2010 to December 2015. Clearly his knowledge on Council numbers is a material issue.

There is no evidence as to why a figure of 78 Councillors was selected for the new North Northamptonshire Unitary Council, despite attempts to find out by researching papers from meetings during the time of the preparation of the Structural Change Order.

Setting aside the lack of evidence for the current council composition of 78, we recognise that a Boundary Commission review could not be carried out and implemented before Unitary

elections in May 2021. We feel that the best fit would have been to elect two Councillors for each of the former 26 County Council divisions in North Northamptonshire making a total of 52 Councillors 7 more than the recommended 45, but significantly less than the 78 elected.

It is the opinion of the Green Alliance that the current operating structures for the Committees/Executive have been created to make use of the figure of 78 Councillors, rather than a structure which more logically aligns to the lower figure of 52.

It should be noted that a Boundary Commission review was carried out prior to the County Council elections in 2013 where the new divisions were used. The same divisions were elected in 2017 and then again in May 2021. It will be just 12 years since the last review. There is a logic in retaining connections between current Councillors (who may be elected in 2025) and communities they serve after the 2025 elections, especially as so much change has occurred in structures and delivery of services. Residents are familiar with the Ward names which could largely stay the same.

Full council debate Thursday 23rd June 2022 commencing at 25:55

On the following YouTube link is the Full Council debate including contributions from many members including the Alliance Group:

[Annual Council, Council - Thursday 23rd June, 2022 2.00 pm - YouTube](#)

Growth in the population being represented.

The significant predicted growth in population across North Northamptonshire is focussed on major Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) on greenfield sites. These new homes will have the latest in communications, for example internet connectivity and will largely encourage a more communications enabled population. A population that will seek less support from their Councillors given the brand-new infrastructure. Councillors' workload will be less than that in long time established communities, which are less well connected, both urban and rural. We do not concur that population growth in itself is a reason for increasing councillor numbers.

SUEs will logically evolve into their own Parishes in the future, with increased representation at that level.

The SUEs are all closely related to existing Towns and rely on the infrastructure they provide.

We conclude that some of the additional eight councillors (52 to 60) would be elected in ward structures that acknowledge the main growth areas of Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden. Whilst there will be growth in other areas it will not be to the same scale of these areas.

See Appendix C the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy showing the SUEs

Evidence from West Northamptonshire

Whilst it is recognised that North and West Northamptonshire's Councillor numbers review are separate. The Alliance Group have noted that the conclusion for the West

Northamptonshire Unitary was a reduction from 93 councillors to 77. This is based on a larger population than the North. The two councils have very similar demographics and history giving some support for a similar reduction for the North.

Social Media

The effective use and monitoring of social media has the benefit of Councillors being able to identify issues relevant to their work and respond, often without the need to make physical visits. This reduces the time involved and increases the speed with which problems can be identified and resolved. The effective use of social media and training for Councillors is ongoing and will only increase in importance at the time that candidates are being selected for the 2025 elections.

Town and Parish Council liaison

Since the establishment of NNC all areas are Parished with Town and Parish Councils. The three big new Town Councils (Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough) will have settled into a routine as they, and their elected members, come up to the 2025 elections. The division of services and decision-making will be clearer between the two tiers and candidates chosen according to their time and motivation to serve at either level.

The role of a Unitary Councillor is to give a strategic view from the Unitary organisation to both Town and Parish Councils and the communities they serve. Town and Parish Councils have a Clerk and processes for dealing with residents' issues, such that many are resolved without reference to their Unitary Councillors. Where there are exceptions or a need to expedite issues, then Unitary Councillors should have the resources to contact the right people and services within NNC. The opportunity to reduce the overall number of Unitary Councillors is complimented by the existence of effective Town and Parish Councils.

The Council Leader sends out a weekly Leader's update to all Town and Parish Councils to cover issues from his viewpoint, maintaining a communications link between the two tiers.

Councillors Elected and sitting on councils in both tiers

The three new Town Councils (Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough) attracted candidates who also stood in the Unitary Elections (on the same day). This created a significant cross over with Councillors being elected to both Town and Unitary. Whilst that is logical in a newly established structure. Some of the Unitary Councillors not only were elected to the new Town Councils, but also took on Leader and Mayoral roles. In the Councils preferred submission, it is not clear whether some respondents to the question of how much time they spend on "council" work was split down between Town and Unitary duties. This may have over identified the amount of time spent just on Unitary issues and meetings.

This lack of electoral history will not be an issue in the 2025 and subsequent elections, as voters will be electing for a second four-year term. The move to 60 councillors would free up candidates to choose one or the other tier (or both if they so wish) based on the experience of the time commitment. This would also have the benefit of the Unitary being more strategic and Town and Parish more local and reduce the risk of the Unitary failing to focus on

the big strategic issues. See [Appendix xxx](#) for a breakdown of Town versus Unitary twin hatters.

Aggregation and disaggregation Boroughs, Districts and County Council.

The next Unitary Elections for which this Boundary Review is intended to set the council size will be in 2025. By that time the significant amalgamation (Borough and District Services) and disaggregation (County Council Services) will have largely been completed. The workload of Councillors will have settled and a more “business as usual” will be established. It is our position that fewer councillors will be required to populate the decision-making functions of the Council.

Whilst the change to Unitary has involved a lot more work in the initial years, much of this is organisational and not heavily dependent on member input. It has to be acknowledged that post 2025 and beyond the vast majority of the changes will be implemented.

Being mindful of the growth in population anticipated (although all previous estimates of house building have not been delivered in predicted timescales), 60 Councillors should be effective and understood by our communities.

This figure is supported by the Electorate Forecasts shown in [Appendix A](#), outlining that 60 councillors would offer the leanest member structure whilst having a manageable electorate to member ratio. The proposed number of members must be rooted in this data because the number of electorate that each member serves is the fairest way to ensure that councillor service is consistent and continues to be over time as areas expand.

This would mean that the current Ward structure could remain essentially the same but with one, two and three member wards. Two member wards could remain for most of the Unitary area. It is appreciated that warding arrangements are the next stage of the process.

Areas of greater deprivation and “levelling up”

In those Wards which are identified as being within ‘levelling up’ areas of greatest deprivation, three member wards would be logical given the greater emphasis on community leadership and funding expected to be directed towards them. These areas are in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. Alternatively converting existing three member wards in these areas into two, two member, wards might better reflect the workload in future years.

There would be some benefit in considering single or two member wards in areas where rural Parishes were combined with their nearest local towns within the County Council divisions. Often there are few real associations between these towns and villages.

Differences from the County Council – Children’s Trust and Fire Service

The establishment of the independent Children’s Trust in November 2021 retained the Corporate Parenting role but reduced the level of scrutiny over Children’s services. NNC is allowed to call on the Children’s trust to appear before it three times a year but there is not a

real ability to question the budgets of the Trust who have an absolute right to require additional funding for NNC.

The representational role inherited from the County Council changed as time progressed from the 2013 Boundary Commission review. The Fire Service was amalgamated into a new structure, the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Budget and service overview was removed from NCC and thus the workload of NCC and thus NNC Councillors was decreased

Council Structures - general

We are asked to offer reasoning for the suggestions being put to the Boundary Commission in suggesting this number.

The Council will be in a position of post reorganisation stability by the time elections are held in 2025, with fewer structural decisions to be made and committee time required.

The Council operates what is described as a 'hybrid' system of creating advice for the Executive, namely Executive Advisory Panels. These panels are not scrutiny committees as they are created by the Leader and Chaired by Executive members. It is our opinion that these panels should be discontinued, and a traditional scrutiny model be established as at all other councils nationally.

The post 2025 Council could have three scrutiny committees rather than the two present ones, each with the power to establish quick and effective Task and Finish Groups that focus on forward and historical scrutiny. This would require less committee places than the Executive Advisory Panels require and reduce the time burden on Executive members and senior Officers

Since the original submissions were forwarded to the Boundary Commission a debate has been commenced on the future of Scrutiny and Executive Advisory Panels which predicates towards a slimmer and more focussed structure which aligns with the Alliance Group's conclusions on Councillor numbers.

The Audit Committee could be incorporated into one of the new scrutiny committees, removing the need for a separate one.

The Democracy and Standards Committee and the Employment Committee could also be amalgamated into one committee that could create subgroups to tackle issues which are out of the ordinary when they arise.

The Executive Committee currently has ten members, and it is our contention that that number could be reduced to eight and most likely without assistant cabinet members so that in our model there would be 52 members available to populate the reduced number of committees.

We have been advised that the lack of suitable meeting places around the Council's area for the existing 78 Councillors and people in the public gallery is not a factor. We think that a

smaller number would make for a more mobile democracy meeting closer to the people we represent.

Council Structures - planning

Informal conversations subsequent to a review from the Planning Advisory Service have highlighted the need for the legacy structure of four area planning committees plus a strategic planning committee. Analysis of the data for the number of meetings of the legacy planning meetings suggest that two or even one Planning Committee would have a reasonable workload and avoid committees being cancelled due to lack of business or only having a very small number of applications to consider. It is highly unlikely that there will be four legacy planning committees and even a separate Strategic Planning Committee after the 2025 elections.

Full Council Meeting times

A recent debate has surrounded the start time for Full Council Meetings. When creating the constitution and processes for the Unitary a start time for full Council meetings was set at 7pm (with the exception of the Budget meeting - 10:00 am).

On the 29th September 2021 The administration group started a trial start time of 2pm.

This was controversial as those Councillors who had been attracted to stand, and were subsequently elected, were expecting evening meetings that did not affect their position in full time work or other responsibilities.

[Agenda for Democracy and Standards Committee on Monday 12th September, 2022, 7.00 pm - North Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

See Appendix E and F for background Data

Travel and Virtual Meetings

The former County Council Ward configuration required significantly more travel time, to the County Council's base in central Northampton, than is the case with the North Unitary. Splitting the County into two Unitary Councils has reduced this element of being a Councillor.

Citizens Assembly

We believe that the council should set up a Citizens Assembly to bring in fresh ideas and feedback from the communities we represent, between elections. Such a panel would enable a wider input from our communities through an informal process and should include younger people, perhaps as a young persons' element to the Assembly. Whilst this isn't directly related to the Boundary Commission review it would enable greater representation and support for Councillors to hear and respond to.

Member bulletins

A new initiative was established on 5th October 2022 with the start of a fortnightly Member Bullet. It seeks to give reminders of meeting times and dates, consultations and issues which are directly related to Councillors' activity. This will reduce time for existing and new councillors to identify information and spend more time on casework and meeting commitments.






Member casework and other questions answered by the Alliance Group Team

Please see Appendix AA for answers to questions posed by the commission from Alliance Group Members.

Conclusion

We feel that a council of 60 members would be appreciated by the community and would strike a better balance for using officer and member resources. It would create a more focussed council and an easier to understand Council for the people we represent.

It is appreciated that this is an initial set of recommendations from Councillors and that more detailed work is required to support the recommendations referred to here, which we are prepared to carry out as the process evolves.

Councillor	Emily Fedorowycz (Leader)	Dez Dell (Deputy Leader)	Sarah Tubbs	Charlie Best	Jim Hakewill
Elected to NNC	6 May 2021	6 May 2021	6 May 2021	17 Feb 2022	6 May 2021 (Previously KBC 1987 – 2021 NCC 2013 – 2021)
Party as elected	Green	Green	Green	Liberal Democrat	Independent
Members of the Green Alliance Group					
Signed					
20 th Oct 2022					

Appendix AA

MEMBER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CASEWORK		
Community Engagement		
Green Party Councillors Fedorowycz Tubbs Dell	Liberal Democrat Councillor Charlie Best	Independent Councillor Jim Hakewill
In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?		
<p>We actively try to get out into our respective wards wherever possible, for example through civic or community events, or litter picks. On a more personal level, we spend time in our wards though dog walking, frequenting eateries or public houses or using the shops/facilities. During such formal or informal activities, we are always councillors and are happy and encouraging for electors to engage with us. We are also always looking out for electors that might need our help or support. In addition, many of us attend town or parish council meetings.</p> <p>We host regular surgeries and street surgeries and are accessible to our residents, so that they can raise issues as and when they arise. We support them with their issues, connecting them with the right officers at the council to get a resolution, and work with officers on the behalf of residents.</p> <p>We regularly communicate with electors on local issues and work being done, and being visible is a key part of being accessible.</p>	<p>I don't understand the question. I live in the community and see the people I represent every day.</p>	<p>My role involves attending Parish/Town council meetings where appropriate. Receiving requests for help by telephone and email (occasionally by letter). I visit local events whenever I can including to the local Library where there is a monthly tea and cakes event. The arrival of Covid meant that I attended many meetings via video link. A number of these continue in video format such as East Midlands Councils/LGA boards.</p> <p>I use Zoom for other meetings especially where distances involved from experts not living locally are helpful.</p> <p>I also visit locations and meet residents where seeing a problem is the best way to get it resolved.</p> <p>I attend many meetings as possible that I am a member of and often other meetings where there is a Ward interest like planning and Executive,</p>

<p>A very important part is also making the council accessible, encouraging members of the public to speak at meetings where relevant, and otherwise ensuring we take resident's views into the council chamber and to the committees we sit on to make sure their voice is heard. We also look at the bigger picture of the deeper issues within the locality - or within the council itself - and push for improvements.</p>		
<p>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</p>		
<p>There are areas committees for planning. They can approve planning applications for the locality.</p>	<p>Not as far as I know</p>	<p>There are no area committees. The concept is a good one and it was discussed during the formation of the council but I sense it was discounted based on lack of finance as most area committees at other Unitaries have funding allocated</p>
<p>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</p>		
<p>We engage with our representatives by being present in the community as much as possible. We produce and distribute regular newsletters with our contact details on for residents to contact us with concerns they have. We organise regular events and surgeries in the community for residents to approach us at face to face. We make regular updates and share information on social media and are always open on social media to hear from our residents too.</p>	<p>Newsletters, engaging with key stakeholder groups in the ward, meeting constituents in the street every day, social media</p>	<p>I trialled surgeries some years ago but it tended to mean that one-on-one conversations emerged which were often not relevant to the whole audience. I hold public meetings on major issues where there is an appetite and interest for that. Based on the wide geography of my ward its is hard and relatively expensive to produce and distribute newsletters other than political ones at election times. I use face book extensively to</p>

<p>This can vary dependent on the councillor – but we work hard to keep people up to day via community newsletters and have regular surgeries and street surgeries to hear from residents. We hold public meetings as needed, usually on a particular topic such as crime or local funding.</p>		<p>capture issues of interest and broadcast messages such as Covid information, highways alerts for poor weather conditions and the outcome of meetings. This does give an effective form of blog.</p>
<p>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?</p>		
<p>Many councillors have strong relationships with youth groups such as ‘Youth Works’ as well as groups that tackle homelessness. The level of engagement with such minority groups varies councillor by councillor. I would say, not so much. I have been working hard to get in touch with hard to reach group and minority groups, and it has been very difficult and slow. There is no support to do this.</p>	<p>Not as far as I know</p>	<p>We do not have particular channels to engage with young people. I have been to schools to talk about the work of the council and give talks on how the council works and what happens at elections, but this is through contacts I’ve made rather than a formal council process.</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?</p>		
<p>There are no expectations however councillors often attend such meetings as it is a good way to hear about and engage with local issues. Councillors often advertise topics that will be discussed at such meetings, speak at meetings, and some also act as parish or town councillors. Where these exist, councillors should try to attend so that they are part of these local conversations, as they may be able to offer immediate help at these meetings. If there are a</p>	<p>There's an expectation that members will attend some parish and town council meetings and work with those groups</p>	<p>I do attend Parish Council and other meetings. On occasion for controversial planning applications for example I have been asked to both attend and on occasion chair such meetings. My residents see my role as being conversant with how the council operates and explaining how they can engage both vis myself and through other channels, for example commenting on planning applications and being involved in consultations. Often</p>

<p>number of groups we find it is more helpful to split these between the team so that the workload is more manageable and so councillors can give more time, energy and headspace to each group. The main role they play here is a connecting role, linking the group with individuals or council departments that can help them advance their aims, or support with funding access or whatever is needed.</p>		<p>residents are engaging for the first time and explaining how the system works is important. I will often sit and simply listen but more often than not I am asked for information which I offer up.</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?</p>		
<p>The council, including its elected members, make decisions for the North Northants area. There are several advisory groups, made up of elected members, that can advise for future decisions to be made by council. Council meetings are all supported and guided by council officers. The council often request the input of parish and town councils on matters pertinent to them.</p>	<p>What is an Area Governance Structure? I work with town and parish councils to identify issues I may be able to help with.</p>	<p>Unfortunately there is no Area Governance established at NNC. Thus all promotion and feedback on Council issues is via established contacts or Parish and Town Councils.</p>
<p>Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</p>		
<p>I think community engagement needs to be improved as a council, specifically around consultation. Possibly even asking people how they would best like to feed in on council proposals – eg. Social media polls, Facebook live consultation events, a video explaining the proposal (as this is how a lot of people like</p>	<p>Don't understand the question. Which decisions? Made by whom?</p>	<p>An Area Governance system would be an excellent enhancement particularly if it has a budget allocated and allowed for Unitary/Town/Parish Councillors to be involved along with ideally other representatives for other organisations, for example Police, Health voluntary organisations.</p>

to consume content) – and also taking information to the community: schools, community centres, religious groups, doctors surgeries etc.		Such a structure with a relevant devolved budget would have the power to understand issues and actually, quickly, apply resources financial and human to resolve them.
Casework		
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 tend to take a more in depth approach in order to maintain contact with the people requesting my help. Like all councils there are times when I can delegate responses to officer colleagues and have updates on solutions offered.
What support do members receive?		
We have been given a list of the heads of department and their contact details. Everything else has been us having to find our own way.	None	Most of my support comes from historical and newly created contacts within the council. Evolving staffing process from the formation of the council have made it more difficult than in the past to get support. This is particularly frustrated by the number of vacancies that the council is continuing to carry.
How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?		
I get most of my casework via email versus phone calls, but the ability to contact via our social media channels also offers another route for residents to get in touch, which many prefer. Social media has also given us	Not significantly so far. Email rather than letters or phone calls is it to date.	Massively changed since I was first elected in 1987. The advent of email and self service systems that reduce the involvement of councillors in straight-forward transactions has reduced workload. I extensively use Facebook

<p>a more direct way to communicate with electorate, especially on timely or urgent matters, such as emergency weather alerts or decisions made at committees or full council.</p> <p>Social media groups also allow us to understand our communities better, as residents often post about local issues such as parking or dog poo. Engaging with residents in the comments can help us glean information on the problem and respond quickly.</p>		<p>pages operated in the Town and Villages I represent and have my own Councillor Page through which residents can contact me.</p> <p>This is amazingly useful for things like fly-tipping, road defects, vegetation over growing, flooding where residents can take photographs and easily pass them on for me to get them to the right officer colleagues.</p> <p>This is very much a two-way communication.</p>
--	--	--

In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?

<p>This has not been promoted to me. I have tried to solve disputes and have had some real difficulties with some very tricky residents.</p>	<p>I don't know what the Councils dispute resolution process is. I have had constituents contact me because complaints they made have been ignored.</p>	<p>This is an area where I feel there could be greater integration between officer and councillor colleagues. Often issues are resolved and I am unaware of that, which is a good thing as long as there is communication to identify when an issues is repetitive or wide spread and should have attention at committees for service improvements to be made. Occasionally I have supported reference to the Local Government Ombudsman where a resident has exhausted internal line of complaint. Not often though.</p>
--	---	---

Appendix A

Electorate Forecasts

The Council has provided electorate forecasts by separate cover to this document. This is based upon significant growth and the formulas provided by the LGBC. The Council's proposal for Council Size is reflective of the challenges outlined above which consider the situation now but also recognise the challenges that are likely to arise in the coming years.

The Council recognises that its residents will be going through a period of hardship as a result of national and worldwide issues. It is accepted that this will have an impact on the support that residents will require, and it is at the forefront of members minds that the most vulnerable residents must be able to adequately get the support and member representation that they require.

The proposal on Councillor numbers is largely based on ensuring that there is an appropriate ratio of elected member to electors. Clearly, comparison with other authorities will not be the only way to demonstrate what is appropriate but the Council recognises that this is a good way of assessing what is likely to be reasonable and will allow effective representation.

The Council has included a table below from Councils that have recently undergone local government reorganisation. West Northamptonshire Council has been included but it is noted that the number has not yet been confirmed.

The average ratio as set out in the table is 4,316 per member. The Council therefore believes that a ratio of between 4,016 and 4, 616 is appropriate.

Bristol	Bucks	Dorset	BCP	Wiltshire	West Northants
2020	2027	2023	2023	2024	2028
70	98	82	76	98	77
341,607	443,064	308,050	309,792	417,228	339,281
4,880	4,521	3,757	4,076	4,257	4,406
Average Ratio- is 4,316					

Submission

The Council has included a table below from Councils that have recently undergone local government reorganisation. West Northamptonshire Council has been included but it is noted that the number has not yet been confirmed. The average ratio as set out in the table is 4,316 per member. The Council therefore believes that a ratio of between 4,016 and 4, 616 is appropriate.

Bristol	Bucks	Dorset	BCP	Wiltshire	West Northants
2020	2027	2023	2023	2024	2028
70	98	82	76	98	77
341,607	443,064	308,050	309,792	417,228	339,281
4,880	4,521	3,757	4,076	4,257	4,406
Average Ratio- is 4,316					

	60	65	70
350,827 (2021 population figure)	4,347	4,012	3,726
281,713 (2028 electorate forecast)	4,695	4,334	4,024

Appendix B

Boundary commission Democracy and Standards Committee.

Right to Speak opportunity - Cllr Jim Hakewill 12th April 22

In support of the figure of 60.

I have been a part of and subject to Boundary Commission Reviews at both the legacy Councils I have been elected to, so I have a fair amount of experience in how they should run.

I am so proud to be part of the Green Alliance and I have had great support in discussing this issue from my colleagues including our Leader Cllr Fedorowycz who represents the Alliance on this committee.

I was on the Working Group of five and was disappointed that at our first meeting that whilst I proposed Labour colleague Cllr Matt Keane to be the deputy Chairman, it was yourself and two Conservative colleagues who used your majority on the committee to take both the Chairman and Deputy Chairman's positions. Whilst calling it cross party its only in name as clearly Conservative colleagues can outvote anything other parties put forward.

The boundary Commission were at pains to point out in our briefings with them that this is not a political process but one which should represent people fairly whatever their politics or none.

The report of the working party tonight places the Alliance's submission at the very end of the proposed Council submission and receives no mention within the text of the Administration's proposals.

We don't think that the communities we represent will take kindly to the proposal of more councillors to the level being proposed by the Conservative Leadership, namely 21 more councillors taking the total to 99. What the Alliance believes is that we want less but better focussed Councillors making decisions at meetings with focussed and timely agendas.

The NCC Inspector proposed 45 councillors no one has explained how that got to the current 78.

We don't think that the idea mentioned in the Working Group of proposing 99 and accepting that the number maybe reduced is the right way to tackle this issue. Our understanding was that the proposed numbers should be based on factual evidence not some form of bartering.

I would implore you to reduce the Council's formal proposals for 99 Councillors even at this late stage. Instead of building up numbers we should be creating a modern Council fit for the 21st Century with Members and Officers working effectively together in an economically viable organisation.

We also think that members of the community would find it hard to understand that we don't have a council chamber to house 78m Councillors let alone 99.

The Alliance understands that we can have a direct dialogue with the Boundary Commission on our version 01 submission in the papers tonight and work up our proposals to subsequent versions and substantiate our position on this.

Appendix C

Extract from the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy showing Sustainable Urban Extensions.

[joint_core_strategy_2011-2031_high_res_version_for_website.pdf \(nnjpd.org.uk\)](#)

Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) are key building blocks for growth in North Northamptonshire during and beyond the plan period to 2031. These large mixed-use developments are an opportunity to create well planned and managed new neighbourhoods that integrate physically and socially with the existing towns. The principal SUEs shown in Figure 16 include between 2,500 and 5,500 dwellings together with employment and supporting infrastructure and services.

These SUEs are committed through planning permissions except for:

West Corby SUE, which was agreed as a broad location in the 2008 CSS. Policy 32 now allocates this land for a mixed-use development including around 4,000 new homes and sets out development principles to guide the preparation and consideration of a planning application; and

Rushden East SUE, which is a new proposal including around 2,500 dwellings and associated jobs and facilities, reflecting the status of Rushden as a Growth Town. Policy 33 identifies the broad location for this SUE, together with the key issues and development principles that need to be addressed as this is taken forward through master-planning.

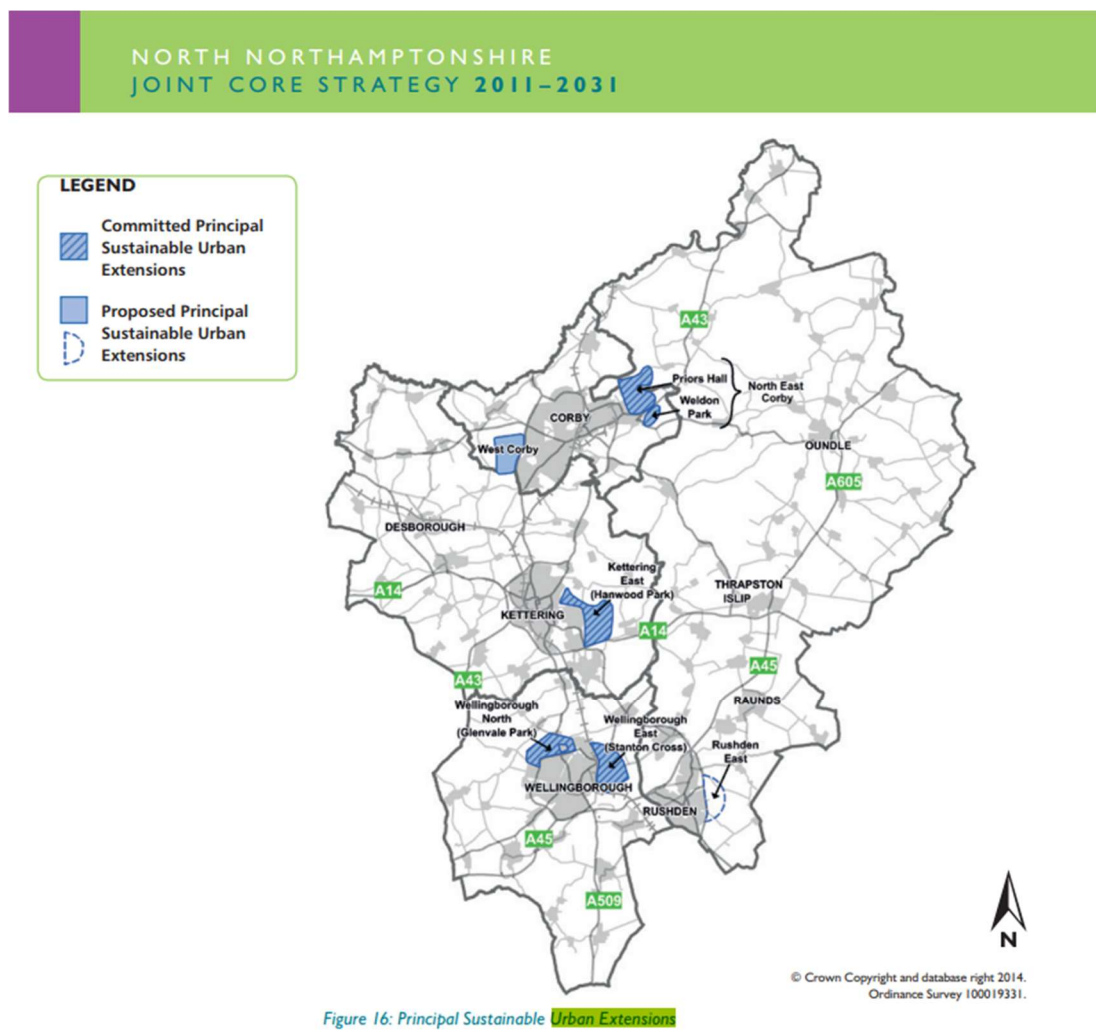


Figure 16: Principal Sustainable Urban Extensions

Appendix D

Meeting of Democracy and Standards Committee, Tuesday 12th April, 2022 7.00 pm (Item DSC/23). Weblink [Agenda item - Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review of Electoral arrangements - Proposed Council size - North Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/agenda-item-local-government-boundary-commission-for-england-review-of-electoral-arrangements-proposed-council-size-north-northamptonshire-council)

Minutes:

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Governance and HR was received to inform the committee of the proposals of the cross-party member/officer Boundary Commission Working Group, who had been considering draft proposals for the Council's size as part of the first stage of the review of electoral arrangements in North Northamptonshire.

Appended to the report were the following:

Appendix A - Draft submission on Council Size;

Appendix B - View of the Labour Group;

Appendix C - View of the Green Alliance Group

The working group's deliberations were detailed within the report along with a recommendation to be put before Council.

Councillor Hakewill addressed the meeting and thanked both members and officers who had worked tirelessly during the working group discussions.

Speaking on behalf of the Green Alliance, he expressed the view that the proposal for an additional 21 Councillors, making a total of 99, was excessive. It was considered that it would be more beneficial to create a modern council that was more economically viable, with less councillors who were more focused and who worked with officers effectively. The Green Alliance would be suggesting a membership of 60 and this would be submitted by the Group to the Boundary Commission, as being more beneficial for the community.

The chair thanked Councillor Hakewill.

The chair explained the work that had been undertaken by the working group, which had been considerable, and which had culminated in the recommendation to be put to Council, as detailed at Appendix A Council Size Submission document.

The working group's proposal, as part of the first phase of the Review, to determine the appropriate number of councillors for the future, is as follows:

“North Northamptonshire Council should petition the Boundary Commission to agree to an increase to 99 councillors i.e., 21 additional councillors to account and distribute the current and additional workload for the next 10 years and allow new committees to be set up to

accommodate the evidenced 13% increase in population = 99 councillors for the next 10 years”.

A lengthy debate ensued with the committee thanking the working group for the extensive work that it and officers had undertaken in preparing the submission before committee.

Many of the committee considered that the suggestion of increasing the number of councillors to 99 over the next 10 years was a good way forward and that this would accommodate the volume of work expected of them which was anticipated to considerably increase in the future.

Other members of the committee felt that they were unable to support the recommendation. They considered that the Independent, Government appointed, Inspector Max Caller, OBE’s original suggestion of 45 Councillors was deemed too low for the workload, but that an appropriate number would be between 84 and 86 councillors going forward.

Members also questioned how the current number of 78 councillors had been reached and where this figure had emanated from. It was confirmed that this had been agreed as part of the shadow structure. It was noted that during the ‘shadow period’ there had been a total of 152 councillors from all sovereign councils, and that this had reduced to 78 from 1 April 2021 when North Northamptonshire Council had formed.

It was suggested that this detail be included, in the form of a chart, in the submission documentation along with an explanation to demonstrate where the reductions had been in relation to the county council and each of the sovereign boroughs/districts.

The committee also expressed concern over the increase in members allowances should there be an additional 21 councillors. It was considered wise to explore different ways of working before suggesting an increase in councillors and that an option of 60 councillors should be considered. It was also noted that not all councillors fully engaged with all aspects of being a councillor, often due to work commitments and time constraints of family life. Consideration should be given to employing more officers, rather than increasing the number of councillors.

It was cautioned that there was expected to be considerable growth in the North Northamptonshire area in the coming years and this would result in more constituents and a higher workload generally for councillors, which had been fully considered by the working group in recommending the number of 99 over a 10-year period. Additional growth would also increase the number of meetings, such as planning committees. Encouragement was also needed to attract younger councillors.

Resolved that:

- (i) The work of the Member/Officer Working Group on the first phase of electoral arrangements for North Northamptonshire be noted;

(ii) Approval be given to the Council Size Submission, with the inclusion of an explanation chart at page 36 as detailed above, being submitted to an Extraordinary Council meeting, to be held in June 2022;

(iii) A Council size number of 99, as recommended by the working group and detailed in Appendix A, be recommended to full council;

(iv) The alternative options, submitted by the Labour Group and Green Alliance, as detailed at Appendix B and C respectively to the report be noted;

(v) It be delegated to the Director of Governance and HR, in consultation with the Chair of the committee, to make any amendments to the submission prior to consideration by full Council, in the light of any further comments from the committee and any minor/typographical changes;

(vi) It be confirmed that the working group continue to meet to address any queries or questions that the Boundary Commission may have regarding the submission, and to plan for, carry out and report to the committee any recommendations in respect of stage two of the Electoral review;

(Reason for recommendations: To update the committee on the work of the working group and to agree a submission to full Council.)

Appendix E

Full Council Meetings – Registered Apologies, Meeting Duration & Public Participation Statistics

Meeting & Date	Start Time	Meeting Duration	Recorded Apologies	Public Statements	Public Questions	Public Petitions
26 May 2021 Annual Council	7:00 pm	1hr 45	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
29 June 2021 Special Council	7:00 pm	1hr 47	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
28 July 2021 Full Council	7:00 pm	4hr 05	20	5	2	0
29 September 2021 Full Council	7:00 pm	3hr 12	10	4	0	0
1 st December 2021 Full Council	2:00 pm	4hr 13	24	0	0	1
9 December 2021 Special Council	7:00 pm	1hr 49	23	N/A	N/A	N/A
24 February 2022 Budget Council	10:00 am	5hr 31 (exc. lunch break)	14	1	0	0
31 March 2022 Full Council	2:00 pm	4hr 30	14	0	1	0
26 May 2022 Annual Council	2:00 pm	1hr 16	12	N/A	N/A	N/A
23 June 2022 Full Council	2:00 pm	2hr 55	20	1	0	0
28 July 2022 Full Council	2:00 pm	2hr 01	20	0	0	1

Number of views on YouTube (as at 09/08/22)

Since moving the Full Council meetings into the Council Chamber at The Cube, with the assistance of NNC IT, the following meetings have been live streamed onto the NNC YouTube channel.

Full Council (Budget)	24/02/22	565
Full Council	31/03/22	230
Annual Council	26/05/22	182
Full Council	23/06/22	360
Full Council	28/07/22	179

Appendix F

Start times of full Council meetings in other “similar” unitary authorities

Unitary Council	Council	Budget
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	7.00 pm	
Brighton & Hove	6.30 pm	4.30 pm
Central Bedfordshire	6.30 pm	
Cheshire East	11.00 am	3.00 pm
Cheshire West & Chester	6.30 pm	5.00 pm
Dorset	6.30 pm	
East Riding	2.00 pm	
Medway	7.00 pm	
Northumberland	3.00 pm	
Nottingham	2.00 pm	
Shropshire	10.00 am	
South Gloucestershire	7.00 pm	

N.B. the authorities listed were the same as used by the Electoral Boundary Review Working Group during their recent consultation response.

Appendix G

Twin Hat Councillors			
Town/Parish	Total Councillors	Unitary Twin Hatters	Newly formed Councils May 21
Corby	15	7	Yes
Kettering	20	8	Yes
Wellingborough	23	9	Yes
Barton Seagrave	8	4	
Raunds	12	2	
Rushden	20	5	
Finedon	10	2	
Geddington	10	1	
Higham Ferrers	16	2	
Irchester	13	1	
Irthlingborough	13	2	
Isham	6	1	
Rothwell	12	3	
Twywell	2	1	

Appendix H

Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

Rob Bridge
Chief Executive of North Northamptonshire Council
Rob.Bridge@northnorthants.gov.uk
24 August 2022

Dear Mr Bridge

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Thank you for North Northamptonshire Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England regarding the future size of North Northamptonshire Council. As you know, this submission was considered at the Commission's Board meeting on Tuesday 23rd August.

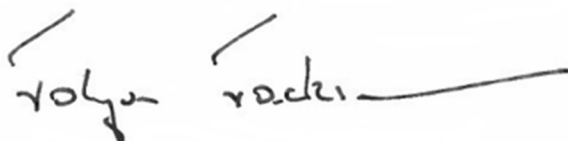
Unfortunately, the Commission did not consider that it had sufficient evidence to make a robust decision on Council Size. Specifically, the Commission was concerned about the proposal for the number of councillors to be based on projected population increases over the next decade. The Commission has never adopted a policy that there is a direct link between population changes and the number of councillors required to effectively manage the business of the Council.

Going forward, the Commission would like to invite the Council, and political groups, to submit additional evidence regarding the future size of the Council. We note that reference was made to alternative proposals from the Labour, and Alliance groupings on the Council, and we would welcome these groups providing additional evidence to support their proposals.

The Lead Commissioner for this Review, Susan Johnson OBE, is happy to meet with political Group Leaders to discuss the type of evidence that the Commission finds helpful when making decisions on Council Size. Officers from the Commission will be in touch shortly to suggest possible dates.

In terms of timescale, we would like to invite you to submit revised proposals by Friday 21st October 2022.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jolyon Jackson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jolyon Jackson CBE
Chief Executive
