

Conservative Group on Gloucestershire County Council

Council Size Submission: Template

[Gloucestershire County 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.

Conservative Councillor Group - GCC

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.*

[Commission identified Gloucestershire for review.](#)

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?

Gloucestershire County Council currently operates very effectively. It operates under a cabinet governance structure supported by efficient and effective scrutiny committees that challenge and improve decision making. This model allows for clear governance of each portfolio area and therefore a clear line of accountability. Likewise with local councillors, the division sizes are mostly of a manageable and appropriate size, with notable exceptions in areas where housing growth has been particularly significant. Housing growth has not been even across Gloucestershire but, for the most part, discrepancies can be smoothed out with redrawing of boundaries rather than creation of new divisions.

The council's size was last changed at the 2013 local elections. This change came about as part of boundary commission review, and the Conservative group proposed a reduction of 10 seats, in line with their manifesto commitment of 2009 which argued that the overall cost of democracy should be cut. The commission subsequently reduced the number of councillors to 53.

The reduction to 53 has had no material impact on the ability of either councillors to perform their duties or for council to operate effectively at a democratic level. The council has been able to react to governance changes from national policy directions, including the setting up of a Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee in the last 2 years.

Gloucestershire remains a two-tier area, one of only two remaining in the South West. In line with the recently published devolution white paper, the policy context would appear to be towards some form of reorganisation in medium to long term, and it would therefore not be sensible to make any major adjustments to the number of councillors at this time.

Therefore, we propose just a moderate change, an increase of two councillors, to accommodate the areas that have seen particularly intense housing growth. This will enable the council to continue operating effectively whilst more evenly distributing the population across the divisions.

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?

Geography

Gloucestershire is a predominantly rural county with two urban centres, Gloucester and Cheltenham that serve as the main business and commercial heartland. The urban settlements are complemented by vibrant market towns that act as valuable employment hubs and key providers of services. The development of the County has been strongly influenced by connectivity to the Midlands and South West via the M5 corridor and to London, the South East and Wales via the M4 corridor. While the M5 and M4 provide connectivity to surrounding areas they also act as a natural barrier for residents impacting the community identity of the surrounding areas. The River Severn which runs through the county, provides a similar barrier.

Just over half (51.4%) of the County is designated as an AONB. There are three AONBs in Gloucestershire, the Cotswolds AONB, Malvern Hills AONB and Wye Valley AONB. In addition to the three AONBs, Gloucestershire is also home to the Royal Forest of Dean, which covers an area of 9,064 hectares (35 square miles) and is situated between the Rivers Wye, Leadon and Severn in West Gloucestershire. The presence of three AONBs and the Royal Forest of Dean, can be seen as a barrier to growth, as it places constraints on development in rural areas. However, this environmental quality makes Gloucestershire an attractive area for businesses and residents to locate and also attracts large numbers of visitors. This does also mean that the urban and suburban areas take the lion’s share of the housing development and population growth which is starting to erode traditional community identities (for example, the expansion of Churchdown is geographically between Gloucester and Cheltenham so residents may identify with either conurbation, but it falls into the Tewkesbury district).

The county has a strong sense of place and is fairly unique in that its county boundaries are coterminous with the boundaries for the LEP, Police Force Area and Integrated Care Board. This strong sense of place is reinforced by the fact that in 2011 83.1% of Gloucestershire residents also worked within the county¹, meaning it is a strong functional economic area in its own right.

Demography

In 2021 the population of Gloucestershire was estimated to be 645,076. Gloucestershire accounted for around 11.3% of the population of the South West and 1.1% of the population

¹ 2011 Census, ONS

of England and Wales. Within the county, Gloucester district had the largest population with approximately 132,416 people or 20.5% of the county's population, followed by Stroud (18.8%), Cheltenham (18.4%), Tewkesbury (14.7%), Cotswold (14.1%) and finally the Forest of Dean (13.5%)².

There were 243 residents per square kilometre in Gloucestershire in 2021. This was lower than the national average of 395 residents per square kilometre in England and Wales but in line with the regional average of 239 residents per square kilometre. Across the county there is considerable variation in population density, the urban districts of Cheltenham and Gloucester have densities of 2,549 and 3,267 residents per square kilometre respectively. In contrast, Cotswold district has a density of 78 residents per square kilometre, which puts it in the 10% most sparsely population district and unitary authorities in England and Wales. These differences become even more pronounced at a small area level, the county's most densely populated Lower Super Output Area was St Paul's 4 in Cheltenham which had a density of more than 14,600 people per hectare, in contrast Northleach 2 in Cotswold had a density of 17 people per hectare. These extremes pose challenges for service delivery and councillor workload³. For example, some councillor's divisions are only a few miles across and (Gloucester and Cheltenham) have no parish councils. However, the biggest (geographically speaking) divisions can be twenty plus miles across and have upwards of a dozen parish councils. This can have dramatic effects on a councillor's ability to engage with the communities they represent as well as time taken up travelling between and communicating with each parish. A decrease in councillor numbers would only exacerbate this.

The population of Gloucestershire increased by 48,092 people (8.1%) between 2011 and 2021. The rate of growth in Gloucestershire was higher than nationally, with the population of England and Wales increasing by 6.3% between 2011 and 2021. Growth across the county has been uneven, population growth was greatest in Tewkesbury, with the population increasing by 15.8% from 2011 (a gain of approximately 12,951 people). As well as being the district with the highest growth in Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury has had one of the highest growth rates nationally, it was ranked 8th out of 331 district and unitary authorities in England and Wales. Cheltenham saw the smallest population growth in Gloucestershire, with the population increasing by 2.7% since 2011 (a gain of 3,104 people). This puts Cheltenham in the bottom 25% of district and unitary authorities in England and Wales in terms of population growth⁴. This uneven growth can be accommodated within districts by redrawing the boundaries in the majority of cases. However, where growth has been particularly high, we believe an additional division is needed to allow for this growth.

Gloucestershire's main source of population growth is internal migration, between 2019 and 2020, internal migration increased Gloucestershire's population by 0.51%. There were also more people immigrating to Gloucestershire than emigrating, which increased the population by 0.16%. In contrast there were more births than deaths meaning natural change reduced the county's population by 0.14%⁵.

² 2021 Census, ONS

³ Ibid.

⁴ 2021 and 2011 Census, ONS

⁵ Mid 2020 Population Estimates, ONS

Gloucestershire has an older population than the national average, with those aged 65+ accounting for 21.7% of the population - higher than the national average of 18.6%. Conversely, it has a lower proportion of people aged 0-15 and 16-64. In the county's more rural districts of Cotswold and the Forest of Dean the older population is even more pronounced than the county average with more than 25% of the population being over 65⁶. There are several universities and colleges in the county, which result in pockets of high student populations. This is particularly noticeable in Gloucester and Cheltenham, Hartpury in the Forest of Dean and around Cirencester in Cotswold district.

Population projections suggest the population in Gloucestershire will rise by 50,291 between 2018 and 2028, rising from 633,558 to 683,849. This increase of 7.9% on the 2018 projections is substantially higher than those for England (5.0%). Within the county, Tewkesbury and Cotswold are projected to have the largest percentage increases in population over the next 25 years (16.4% and 14.0% respectively). Cheltenham is projected to have the smallest increase (1.8%)⁷.

The notable feature of the projections is the sharp increase in the population aged 65 or over, which is projected to increase from 134,973 in 2018 to 167,288 in 2028. The percentage increase of 23.9% over this period is higher than the national average for England (19.6%). As a result of this growth the proportion of people in Gloucestershire who are aged 65 or over is predicted to rise to 24.5% of the population by 2028, while the proportion of people aged 0-19 and 20-64 is projected to fall. Considerable percentage increases in the 65+ age group are predicted in all districts. The increase is predicted to be greatest in Cotswold (65.1%) and lowest in Cheltenham (45.5%)⁸.

Community characteristics

In general, Gloucestershire is not a very deprived county. An average IMD rank for each of the six districts in Gloucestershire shows that even the most deprived districts (Gloucester City, and Forest of Dean) fall in the middle quintile (middle 20%) for deprivation out of 317 English authorities. Tewkesbury, Cotswold, and Stroud districts are in the least deprived quintile, with Cheltenham in the second least deprived quintile. However, there are pockets of deprivation, 12 areas of Gloucestershire are in the most deprived 10% nationally for the overall IMD. These 12 areas are predominantly located in Gloucester, with two in Cheltenham and one in the Forest of Dean⁹.

In 2021 93.1% (600,314 people) of Gloucestershire's population identified as "White". Gloucestershire was less diverse than the national average, with 81.7% of residents across England and Wales identifying as "White". However, in and around the urban districts of Gloucester and Cheltenham and around the market towns of Cirencester, Bishops Cleeve and Stroud the population is more diverse. The areas making up Barton and Tredworth in Gloucester are the most diverse in the county, with three LSOAs having less than half their population identifying as "White".

⁶ 2021 Census, ONS

⁷ 2018 Based Sub National Population Projections, ONS

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

Economy

The total GVA of the Gloucestershire economy was approximately £18.3 billion in 2020, representing 13% of the value of output in the South West and 0.9% of the UK economy. According to latest figures, GVA per head in Gloucestershire was £28,600, which was above the South West (£24,965) and below the UK average (£29,063)¹⁰.

There are around 28,835 businesses in the county¹¹ supporting a workforce of approximately 307,000 people¹². The majority of the businesses in the county are small, with 85% employing less than 9 people; this reflects the picture at national level¹³. Both manufacturing and health are significant sectors in terms of employment accounting for 10.4% and 14.0% of employment respectively¹⁴. Other major sectors include education, accommodation and food services and wholesale and retail. The cyber sector is also important to the county due to the presence of GCHQ in Cheltenham, the importance of the sector is expected to grow in coming years due to the creation of a Cyber Central Business Park in Cheltenham, at the heart of this park will be the National Cyber Innovation Centre, the UK home of the cyber, digital and creative sectors.

There is a positive entrepreneurial culture in Gloucestershire, businesses starting up have very high survival rates with 90.3% of businesses born in 2019 surviving 1 year and 45.4% of business born in 2015 surviving 5 years, this compares to a national average of 88.3% and 39.6% respectively. The unemployment rate is also consistently lower than the national and regional average. However, the ageing population, higher than average job density ratios and record job postings may pose challenges for future growth¹⁵. The cost of living crisis is also an issue impacting the county and elsewhere, causing future uncertainty particularly for those residents living with a poverty premium.

Accessibility

The rural nature of the county means accessibility is a challenge for many residents. Public transport can be unreliable and infrequent. Around 19% of residents in Gloucestershire live in neighbourhoods in the most deprived 20% nationally in terms of the IMD Domain Barriers to Housing and Services, this increases to over 40% of residents in Cotswold district¹⁶. Access to superfast broadband and good quality mobile signals can also be a barrier for residents particularly in the more rural parts of the county.

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.

¹⁰ Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components, ONS

¹¹ UK Business Counts – Local Units 2022, ONS

¹² Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS

¹³ UK Business Counts – Local Units 2022, ONS

¹⁴ Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS

¹⁵ Business Demography, ONS

¹⁶ Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

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		
Governance Model	Key lines of explanation	<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>
	Analysis	<p>Currently the council operates under an Executive Cabinet model. This has proved to be an effective, decisive and successful governance model which is why we propose this remains. Currently there are 10 cabinet members who work effectively as a team, each responsible for oversight and strategic direction of their portfolio. Policies are formulated between cabinet leads who provide the strategic direction and outline goals and officers who provide operational and technical support and advice. This model suits our communities best as it provides one, democratically accountable executive member for each area of council responsibility. Scrutiny members can therefore scrutinise decisions with a clear line of accountability.</p>
Portfolios	Key lines of explanation	<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>Leader of Council Finance and Change Adult Social Care Commissioning Adult Social Care Delivery Children’s Safeguarding and Early Years</p>

		<p>Education, Skills and Bus Transport Environment and Planning Fire, Community Safety and Libraries Highways and Flooding Public Health and Communities</p> <p>Each portfolio holder has the responsibility for their specific areas (outlined above) and works with relevant council officers to deliver on the policies and strategies that they set out. This requires considerable time, comparable with a full-time position when considered in tandem with their responsibilities as a local councillor. Decisions are delegated to cabinet members on issues within their portfolio but can be taken by the leader if needed. Decisions can be either individual cabinet member decisions or a whole cabinet decision.</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>All key decisions are taken by cabinet (either individually or as a whole). Where cabinet members take individual decisions, this is in consultation with the Leader and other cabinet members. Cabinet members can also delegate responsibility to officers in according with the procedure set out in our constitution (part 3 section 5 - <i>Scheme of Delegation</i>) https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/constitution/part-3-responsibility-for-functions/section-5-scheme-of-delegation/#main</p>

Accountability

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

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>Decision makers are held to account formally through our 8 themed scrutiny committees: Corporate Overview, Children and Family, Environment, Health, Adult Social Care, Economic Growth (joint body with district councils), Fire and Rescue and the Police and Crime Panel (joint body with district councils). These committees are also able to set targeted Task and Finish groups to carry out more detailed scrutiny (currently we have 2 active Task and Finish groups). Task groups don't follow a mandated structure and vary from a one-day scrutiny review to a piece of work spanning several months. Generally, Task groups have 3-8 members, whilst the scrutiny committees each have an average of 9 members. This number has been reached as it allows for political balance (allows a Conservative majority of 5 whilst granting the largest opposition group 2 seats and the two small opposition groups one each) and provides sufficient member resource to properly scrutinise the subjects at hand without allowing committees to grow too large to lose cohesiveness and focus.</p> <p>Committee work entails much deliberation, analysis and reading of papers as well as many hours of meetings every month. Reducing the overall number of members on the council would in turn reduce the number of members on each committee, or alternatively, increase the number of committees members have to be on. This would increase the workload of each councillor, thereby decreasing the quality of the scrutiny output. Equally, to significantly increase the number of councillors on the council would inflate the numbers on each committee and potentially risk the valuable, focussed nature of the committees being threatened and replaced with something less cohesive. This is one reason why we propose a modest increase in councillors only, from 53 to 55.</p> <p>The last scrutiny review took place at the end of the last Council in 2021 and led to the creation of an additional Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee. Previous reviews had led to the creation of Corporate Scrutiny to replace a Management Committee and the splitting of Adult Social Care from Health Scrutiny. The current number of committees allows valuable, detailed oriented work whilst not creating an unmanageable number of committees (for both officers and members).</p>
<p>Statutory Function</p>	<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	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members? ➤ Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated? ➤ Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee? ➤ Will executive members serve on the planning committees? ➤ What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?
	Analysis	<p>The proportion of planning applications to be determined by members will depend on the scale and nature of future planning applications received for determination. However, using the current statistics as a baseline, it will be about 10% of the total. The remaining 90% are delegated to officers. There is one countywide Planning Committee.</p> <p>15 members sit on the Planning Committee. The precedent is that executive members do not sit on the committee, but this is not a constitutional requirement. On months where there is a committee meeting, around 15 hours of member's time will be taken up with site visits, reading papers and attending the decision-making meeting. As meetings are driven by demand, these hours will fluctuate.</p>
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year? ➤ And what will be the time commitment for members? ➤ Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc? ➤ Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?
	Analysis	The Licensing Committee has not met since 2006.
Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require? ➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.
	Analysis	<p>We currently have three regulatory committees and would propose to maintain this as it is an optimal solution for Gloucestershire. They are demand led so meet infrequently but require training which members must do in advance of sitting on the committee.</p> <p>Common and Rights of Way considers and decides on applications for the registration of land as a Town or Village Green and applications made to amend the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way. It has nine members and meets around 4 times a year.</p> <p>Traffic Regulatory Committee responds to consultation upon executive proposals for traffic regulation orders to which valid</p>

		<p>objections have been received and not been resolved or withdrawn. It has nine members but only meets infrequently (the last meeting was December 2019).</p> <p>We also have the Appeals Committee which acts as an umbrella committee for Appeals Panels that hears and determines appeals in respect of refusal to supply home to school transport, together with other areas where the right to appeal exists. Nine members are trained to hear appeals but only three sit at any one time.</p> <p>Like scrutiny, these committees each require nine members. This ensures that there are sufficient numbers to manage the workload, especially as these committees are more ad hoc than scrutiny committees.</p>
External Partnerships		<p>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.</p>
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Currently we have councillors sat on about 34 external bodies (nb, list is currently being updated and some councillors may choose to sit on outside bodies for their own development/ interest but not in their capacity as a formal GCC representative).</p> <p>Current list is available here: https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgListOutsideBodies.aspx?bcr=1</p> <p>Cabinet members represent the council on the vast majority of these external bodies, and all those which involve decision making and policy commitments on behalf of the council. These include, Leadership Gloucestershire, the Local Enterprise Partnership Board and the Western Gateway.</p> <p>The number of external bodies is appropriate to the number of councillors we currently have and we have not declined membership to any external bodies on the basis of insufficient councillor capacity.</p>

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<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>Councillors represent their electors in countywide meetings held in Shire Hall, at local events, Parish and Town council meetings, championing causes on resident's behalf and raising issues with partner organisations including the NHS, police, members of parliament and district councils.</p> <p>Councillors engage with their residents in personal ways that vary according to local community need and councillor preference. This includes surgeries held in visible locations (such as shops and cafes) at regular intervals, keeping residents updated via social media forums as well as newsletters, and attending local meetings. The four rural districts of Gloucestershire are parished and therefore many of our councillors spend their evenings attending their various parish council meetings. The numbers vary greatly: some councillors have none or perhaps just one Parish or Town council while others have a dozen or more. Often the urban councillors attend residents meetings, community</p>

		<p>groups and the like. Though this is not mandatory, there is an expectation within communities that county councillors will be present and visible at such meetings, and many see these meeting as an essential part of the job. The workload in places is very poorly distributed which is why we welcome this boundary review. A modest increase in councillors to create a new total of 55 (increase of 2) would address the variances in councillor workload. A decrease in councillors would not be welcomed as evening meetings are already a significant burden on councillors and can act as a barrier to younger people putting themselves forward to stand for election. Gloucestershire has over 200 Parish and Town councils, so to reduce the number of county councillors would increase the workload by a considerable amount for whichever councillors took on those areas. Due to the fact Gloucestershire has parish structures, we do not operate any Area Committees.</p> <p>There are no formal mechanisms to help councillors interact with residents, however Democratic Services offers advice and signposts to resources from the LGA and CCN where applicable.</p>
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
<p>Casework</p>	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Councillors respond to their casework themselves. Often, they will ask officers or their political assistant for advice and support on complex issues, however the lion's share of response formulation and follow up is carried out by the councillor themselves. Councillors largely have good working relationships with local police constables, members of parliament, GP surgeries and local organisations so can deal with casework directly with relevant partners organisations when it's a local issue.</p> <p>There are, however, significant discrepancies in the numbers of people each councillor represents. The average number of residents per division should be 9795 for Gloucestershire (population divided by number of divisions), but many have significantly more or less than this: 3 divisions in Tewkesbury have over 12,000 residents whilst 3 in the Forest of Dean have less than 8,500. These discrepancies, caused by uneven housing growth, create uneven workloads for councillors. That is why we propose a modest increase in the total number of councillors (2</p>

		<p>additional to make a total of 55) to accommodate the population growth since the last boundary review, thus creating wards of around 9,500 residents. This will even out councillor workload whilst keeping the population sizes they represent manageable without creating an unduly high number of new divisions at the taxpayer's expense.</p>
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Other Issues

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

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

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.

Our proposal is for a modest increase in councillors, from 53 to 55.

Gloucestershire has undergone notable housing growth that need to be accommodated for. However, this has not been uniform across the county and for the most part can be accommodated for by rebalancing the division boundaries rather than creating new divisions entirely. Exceptions to this are Stroud and Tewkesbury districts which have seen particularly significant housing and population growth and do therefore require the creation of an additional division each. That is why we propose an overall increase of 2 division to create a total of 55. This keeps the cost of democracy down by not creating an unjustifiable number for new councillors, whilst ensuring local democracy can thrive within manageably sized divisions.

We have looked at alternatives of both increasing and decreasing the number of county councillors. We do not support a decrease in councillors due to the rural nature of the county. A decrease in councillors would create even larger divisions than we have now (some are already a dozen or more miles across) and increase the number of parish councils a county councillor is responsible for. This would also lead to the merging of communities that do not identify with one another across vast geographical landscapes.

We also looked into increasing the number of councillors by a higher margin, however ultimately, we have concluded that Gloucestershire is not currently underrepresented and therefore does not require a significant change in councillor numbers. Across the district and county councils, we have 293 councillors in Gloucestershire – significantly more than neighbouring Somerset who have unitarized and are on 110 in total. To significantly

increase the numbers of councillors not only seems unnecessary in terms of improving local democracy and accountability, but the additional expense seems reckless during the current financial climate.

That is why we support just a moderate change to the numbers to increase only in the areas that have seen particularly high housing growth, to create a council of 55 members.