Council Size Submission

Rushcliffe Borough Council – February 2021

Contents

How to Make a Submission

1. It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should 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.

2. 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.

About You

3. 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, or an individual.

   This draft Council Size Submission has been drawn up by Rushcliffe Borough Council with cross party consultation via the Group Leaders, and will be presented at the Council meeting on 4 March 2021 for approval.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

4. 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 if its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

   This Review has been triggered by perceived electoral inequalities highlighted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and was not requested by the Council. However, the Council has welcomed the opportunity to review its local arrangements in light of the substantial population growth the Borough is expecting over the coming years, to meet the requirements of its Local Plan housing allocation numbers, and ensure it continues to represent its residents fairly and equitably.

Local Authority Profile

5. Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description may cover all, or some 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?

- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Rushcliffe Borough Council is a non-metropolitan district council operating as part of a 2-tier administrative structure, with Nottinghamshire County Council responsible for social services, education and highways.

Rushcliffe is located in the East Midlands region and is situated immediately to the south of the city of Nottingham. It covers an area of approximately 400 square kilometres. The borough is also in close proximity to Loughborough to the south and Newark on Trent to the north east. Although a large proportion of the Borough's residents work in these larger towns and Nottingham, the Borough is also home to a number of established employers, including the British Geological Survey, British Gypsum and Experian. East Midlands Airport lies just outside the borough boundary in neighbouring North West Leicestershire. A small part of the HS2 line will pass through the borough near to the Ratcliffe on Soar power station, itself scheduled for decommissioning in 2025.

Rushcliffe has a population of around 119,200 people[1]. Currently, 20.6% are aged 0-17, (compared to 21.4% nationally), 58.2% aged 18-64 (compared to 60.2% nationally) and 21.1% aged 65+ (compared to 18.4% nationally). The 2018 based population projections[2] indicate a rise of 20.6% in Rushcliffe's population over the 25 years from 2018 to 2043.

According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Rushcliffe is one of the least deprived local authority areas in England. Based on the overall IMD score, Rushcliffe is ranked as the fourth least deprived in the country[3]. There are, however, pockets of relative deprivation within the borough.

Economic activity rates compare favourably to the East Midlands and national averages. In October 2018, 84.1% of residents aged 16-64 were economically active in Rushcliffe, compared to 79.4% for the East Midlands and 78.9% for Great Britain.

Around one third of the borough's population live in West Bridgford which is a large suburb of the Nottingham conurbation area. The remainder of the Borough is largely rural[4], with the population divided between six larger rural settlements of Bingham, Cotgrave, East Leake, Keyworth,

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[1] Mid year estimate 2019 (ONS)
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthern
ireland
[2] 2018 based subnational population projections (ONS)
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2
[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019
[4] The Rural and Urban Area Classification (2011) classifies Rushcliffe as "largely rural (rural including hub towns 50-79%)"

Radcliffe on Trent and Ruddington (which range in population from around 6,800 to 10,200) and a number of smaller rural settlements. A large part of the borough (around 40%) falls within the Nottingham / Derby Green Belt that encircles Greater Nottingham.

The council's Local Plan sets out that the borough will deliver 13,150 additional homes between 2011 and 2028 (this equates to a 27% increase in the number of homes in the borough from the 2011 base). To date around 4,000 of these have been built. It is estimated that a further 6,360 homes will be built over the next five years. The new houses will be spread across the borough; however, the majority are planned for the area adjacent to the main built up area of West Bridgford on several large strategic sites (Fairham Pastures, Land east of Gamston/north of Tollerton and Melton Road, Edwalton), on a large extension to the north of Bingham, on a former RAF base at Newton, and on a number of other allocated sites adjacent to some of our key villages.

Rushcliffe currently has 44 borough councillors across 25 wards comprising 11 single councillor wards, nine wards with two councillors, and five wards with three councillors. All councillors are elected for a four-year term. The main centre of population is the urban area of West Bridgford with the remaining area of the borough being 59 parishes, 41 of which elect parish councillors.

The Borough electorate as at 1 December 2020 is 90,558. This has grown 5.1% since 2010 (86,169 electors).

The Borough has a high level of electoral turnout as follows:

2016 – PCC Elections 27.47%; EU Referendum 81.56% (national turnout 72.2%)
2017 – County Council 43.03%; Parliamentary 77.16% (national turnout 68.8%)
2019 – Borough Council 42.36%; European 44.95% (national turnout 51%); Parliamentary 78.85% (national turnout 67.3%).

A Periodic Electoral Review of the borough was undertaken by the Local Government Commission for England in 1999/2000. This review reduced the number of councillors from 54 to 50 across 28 wards. A further review was undertaken in 2012 by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. This review reduced the number of borough councillors further to 44 over 25 wards. In both of its previous electoral reviews, Rushcliffe has seen its councillor numbers reduced despite growth in population and electorate within the Borough.

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 years. 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 impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

Current size and effectiveness

Following a Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Review in 2012, Rushcliffe Borough Council has 44 councillors across 25 wards serving an electorate of 90,558.

A councillor workload survey for this Review demonstrates that 89% of councillors responding thought that Rushcliffe had the right number of councillors at the moment to effectively self-govern. A similar proportion of those responding to the survey reported that they felt their workload was about right.

The borough surveys residents every three years to ensure the council is meeting their needs. The last residents' survey was conducted in 2018 and highlighted that 63% of residents responding were happy with the way the borough council is run (compared to 61% nationally). Additionally, 50% believed the council provided good value for money (compared to 45% nationally). Overall, satisfaction with specific services such as bin collections, events and street cleansing was very high.

The council is high performing with a stable financial position. In 2019, the council reported, during its annual budget setting process, that it was financially self sufficient and no longer reliant on the central government award of the revenue support grant (which is being removed). The council has done this through a series of measures designed to capitalise on its assets (making its money work harder), operate in a more business-like fashion (setting up a grounds maintenance company to deliver council services where more can be done outside of the parameters of a local authority), and investing in the borough (building or buying property when others were closely safeguarding what they currently had). In recent years, the borough has won the MJ Management Team of the Year award 2016, the LGC Entrepreneurial Council of the Year award in 2018, the

MJ Commercial Council of the Year award in 2018 and been shortlisted for the MJ Council of the Year award in 2019. Whilst proud of its achievements, the council is not complacent opening its doors to an LGA corporate peer challenge, an LGA planning peer challenge, a CFGS scrutiny review and an LGA communications health check over the last five years.

Rushcliffe believes in continuous improvement and its approach to governance is no different. Rushcliffe has responded to the reduction in overall councillor numbers at the last review by reducing the number of committee seats available and the number of outside bodies the council is represented on to ensure that councillors are not overstretched in dealing with Council business and can still dedicate much of their available time to their community leadership role.

As part of this Review, the council has considered the effect of a potential increase or decrease in councillor numbers on its ability to self-govern and can see no evidence to suggest either move is necessary. However, how the council is run is only one factor under consideration when deciding whether the council has sufficient councillors to represent the community and make decisions on behalf of the electorate. The borough is expecting 18% growth in the electorate between 2020 and 2027. Meeting the Government target of 13,150 new homes in the borough over the life of the current local plan is challenging, both to deliver but also in terms of managing local concerns and expectations. Ward councillors in areas that have already seen a large proportion of growth report a significant difference in the number and complexity of issues raised by new residents on emerging developments than from those in established residential areas; and this is in addition the increased demand on local councillors from existing residents whilst the new development is under construction. It is primarily for this reason that this submission is recommending an increase of 2 councillors from 44 to 46 for Rushcliffe Borough Council. This review document presents evidence to support this recommendation.

Comparison against neighbouring authorities

As part of the evidence gathering to inform this submission, the council has compiled a list of neighbouring authorities highlighting their electoral ratio and how this compares to the electoral ratio in the borough of Rushcliffe. This evidence can be found at appendix one. In summary, within Nottinghamshire, Bassetlaw District Council has the lowest number of electors per councillor with 1,836 electors per councillor (48 councillors for an electorate of 88,146) and Ashfield District Council has the highest number of electors per councillor with 2,686 electors per councillor (35 councillors for 94,024 electors). Out of the seven councils in this group, Rushcliffe is ranked 3rd when ordered on electoral ratio from lowest to highest. In terms of numbers of councillors, Ashfield District Council has the lowest number of councillors at 35, with Bassetlaw District Council having the highest at 48. Taking this evidence into account, it is not felt that Rushcliffe residents are significantly over or under represented by their councillors at the present time.

Comparison against similar authorities

As well as comparing the electoral ratios in neighbouring authorities as part of the evidence gathering for this review, work was also undertaken to establish the electoral ratios in a list of similar authorities to Rushcliffe (roughly based on a previous CIPFA grouping). This evidence can be found

at appendix two. In summary, Ribble Valley Borough Council has the lowest number of electors per councillor with 1,201 electors per councillor (40 councillors for an electorate of 46,792) and Stafford Borough Council has the highest number of electors per councillor with 2,600 electors per councillor (40 councillors for 104,000 electors); closely followed by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council at 2,594 electors per councillor (34 councillors per 88,196 electors). Out of the 15 councils in this group, Rushcliffe is ranked 7th when ordered on electoral ratio from lowest to highest again falling in the middle of this grouping. In terms of numbers of councillors, Maldon District Council has the lowest number of councillors at 31 with Stroud District Council having the highest at 51. This evidence supports the view that Rushcliffe has the appropriate number of councillors for its current electorate.

Electoral Ratios at the Ward Level

This review has been triggered by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as a result of the number of electors represented by councillors in one or more of Rushcliffe's wards varying by more than 10% from the average for the borough. In fact, data analysed for this review shows that a variance of + or – 10% from the Borough average occurs in five different wards:

+10%	-10%
East Bridgford (+13.2%)	Sutton Bonington (-29.1%)
Leake (+12.4%)	Musters (-13.6%)
	Bingham West (-10.4%)

The average number of electors per councillor for within Rushcliffe is 2,058. As demonstrated above, through comparison with other local authorities, this figure overall is not dissimilar to others. However, the electoral inequality can be more clearly seen at a ward level. A full list of the electoral variances by ward can be found at appendix three.

The highest electoral ratio per councillor occurs in the East Bridgford ward at 2,330 electors per councillor (a variance of +13.2%), whilst the lowest electoral ratio per councillor can be seen in Sutton Bonington at 1,459 electors per councillor (a variance of -29.1%). These current variances can be explained as follows:

East Bridgford (variance +13.2%) currently has too many electors per councillor compared to the borough average (2,330 compared to 2,058). This is as a result of growth in the ward (over 380 new electors) that was not predicted at the time of the last electoral review. Further growth of around 700 new homes in this area is expected before 2027.

Leake (variance +12.4%) currently has too many electors per councillor compared to the borough average (2,314 compared to 2,058). This is a result of unplanned growth in the area since the last review in 2016 – 1,250 new electors with a further 550 new homes expected by 2027 (for information, Leake ward is outside the greenbelt and, as a consequence, this ward has been particularly affected by unplanned development, often permitted on appeal).

Bingham West (variance -10.4%) currently has too few electors per councillor compared to the borough average (1,843 compared to 2,058). Growth in this ward has been fairly static in the last six years resulting in an increased variance as it has not kept pace with growth in other areas of the borough. However, an additional 800 new homes are due to be built in this ward by 2027 which brings it back within 10% of the average number of electors per councillor without any additional action being taken.

Musters (variance -13.6%) currently has too few electors per councillor compared to the borough average (1,777 compared to 2,058). This variance is primarily due to the changes in the way in which electors register to vote under Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in comparison to the previous methodology. This ward has a large student population and the council now has limited powers to register students, many remain registered at their family home or simply do not register to vote. As a built-up urban suburb there is limited scope in this ward for growth which would counter the electoral variance in this area.

Sutton Bonington (variance -29.1%) currently has too few electors per councillor compared to the borough average (1,459 compared to 2,058). This ward suffers even more than the Musters ward as a result of a large student population. Less than 100 new homes are expected to be built in this ward by 2027 and the variance is unlikely to resolve itself.

The councillor workload survey conducted as part of this review, highlighted that the majority of councillors responding to the survey estimated that between 20-40% of their time was spent on community leadership activities including representing their residents, resolving issues on their behalf, and attending community events. This equates to a third of their time spent on 'being a councillor' and clearly indicates how importantly Rushcliffe's councillors take their community leadership role.

Growth within Rushcliffe and the impact on electoral equality

Rushcliffe is anticipating electorate growth of 18% in the next seven years – the equivalent of 19,829 additional electors across the borough. This takes the number of electors per councillor to an average of 2,509 (an increase of 451 per councillor). This, in itself, is not considered to be problematic as these figures remain similar to other authorities.

There is, however, no getting away from the fact that housing growth between now and 2027 is not uniform across the borough and that whilst some areas of current electoral inequality will be naturally remedied, variance in other areas increases dramatically. If the predicted electoral growth by 2027 is considered at ward level significant variances can be seen:

+10%	-10%
Gotham (+66.7%)	Sutton Bonington (-32.8%)
East Bridgford (+47.2%)	Musters (-25.6%)
Tollerton (+41.8%)	Lady Bay (-19.3%)

Edwalton (+21.4%)	Gamston North (-18.8%)
Radcliffe-On-Trent (+13.4%)	Gamston South (-17.6%)
	Cramner (-14.9%)
	Lutterell (-11.6%)

The council considers that two additional councillors are required to enable greater electoral equality to be achieved across the borough by 2027 and, in particular, to ensure adequate representation in two areas of considerable growth – Gotham and Tollerton. By 2027, it is expected that there will be 4,148 electors in the Gotham ward – this is comparable to Compton Acres where there are currently 4,242 electors and two councillors; as well as Lady Bay (3,913 electors and two councillors), Abbey (4,252 electors and 2 councillors), and Lutterell (4,292 electors and two councillors). This is expected to rise again in the years following 2027 to around 8,946 by 2034. In addition, by 2027, there will be 3,557 electors in the Tollerton ward – this is comparable to Musters where there are currently 3,553 electors and 2 councillors; as well as Bingham East (3,867 electors and two councillors), and Bingham West (3,687 electors and two councillors). This is expected to rise again in the years following 2027 to around 9,254 by 2034. Given the growth anticipated across the borough and, in particular, in Gotham and Tollerton, an increase of two councillors for the borough is not considered to be unreasonable.

It is clear to councillors at Rushcliffe that adjustments to boundaries will have to be made at stage two of the Review process. A full explanation of the changes within the borough leading to the variances outlined in the table above are presented at appendix four.

Views of councillors regarding their workload

It is recognised that conducting council business only forms part of the councillor role. Therefore, a survey of all councillors was conducted to inform this submission and provide a more complete picture. The survey was conducted electronically in October 2020. 27 of the 44 councillors responded to the survey providing a response rate of 61%. A full copy of the results is provided at appendix five. In summary:

- Councillors were asked whether they felt the number of councillors representing their ward was correct. Of those responding to the survey 19 felt that the correct number of councillors represented their ward and 6 did not.
- Councillors were asked whether they felt that the number of councillors Rushcliffe had was too many, about right or too few. 4% (one councillor) of councillors felt that the council had too many councillors, 89% of councillors felt that the number was about right, whilst 7% (two councillors) felt that the council had too few councillors.
- Councillors were also asked about their views on their councillor workload and whether it was too big, about right, or too small. 89% of councillors felt that their current workload was about right; 7% (two councillors) felt that it was too big and 4% (one councillor) felt that they could manage a larger workload.

Impact of increasing or decreasing councillor numbers on committee positions and as a consequence the ability of the council to self-govern

The 2012 LGBCE Electoral Review reduced the number of councillors at Rushcliffe from 50 to 44 to address electoral inequality in nine wards. As a result of this change, and to ensure councillors can be effective in their roles, a number of internal changes to the way Rushcliffe is governed have been made. These changes streamline the work that councillors do as part of the council allowing them to focus more on community leadership, as well as ensuring councillors find their roles stimulating and satisfying.

These changes include:

- A review of planning which resulted in changes to the planning committee, reducing the number of seats on planning committee by four, and introducing new speaking rights for councillors not on the committee.
- A review of scrutiny, reducing the number of seats available on scrutiny groups by two, refocusing the terms of reference for each scrutiny group, and changing the way the work programmes are created to allow groups to be more focused and responsive to community needs.
- Removing duplication in licensing by removing the need for a separate alcohol and entertainments licensing committee instead sending all business to one over-arching licensing committee – a reduction in five seats.
- A reduction in the number of outside bodies councillors are nominated to each year from 63 to 25 seats.

The council believes it has acted to match workload and resources to the governance of the council. This is supported by the evidence provided in the councillors' workload survey undertaken as part of this review and summarised above.

Consultation and discussion regarding proposals

Between September and December 2020, Rushcliffe Borough Council reviewed its council size, namely how many councillors it needed to effectively carry out the business of the council. This review has been prompted by a current electoral variance of more than 10% from the borough average in five of the borough's 25 wards, and it is expected that 12 wards will hold a variance of more than 10% from the borough average in 2027 if changes are not made to address these variances. The average number of electors represented by each borough councillor will be 2,558 in 2027 if the number of councillors remains at 44, and drops to 2,400 if two additional councillors are elected. It is considered that electoral equality is essential in a democracy and as far as possible each representative elected for an area should represent the same number of voters, meaning that each vote is equal. There is also an optimal number of voters represented by a single councillor, this differs at each level of government.

During this review, the council has considered:

- Strategic leadership including how the Council is governed currently and whether any change is expected in this area that would require the council to alter its governance model; the make-up of the Council and its Cabinet including the portfolios held by members of the cabinet; and how decisions are made and the council's scheme of delegation.
- Accountability including the construction, operation and effectiveness of internal scrutiny, the council's statutory committees and the council's partnership arrangements.
- Community involvement including how councillors engage with the people they represent and deal with casework.

Councillors have been consulted electronically about their workload and invited to submit their views about the number of councillors the council has by email. A short presentation was given to the Cabinet and all Group Leaders presenting the initial findings of the review and seeking views on the effect of increase and decreasing the number of councillors the council has on its ability to self-govern effectively. This full review document was debated at Cabinet in February 2021 and at Council in March 2021.

Council Size

6. The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation 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

7. 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.

Topic		
Governance Model	*Key lines of explanation*	➤ *What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?* ➤ *The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?* ➤ *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.* ➤ *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?*

	Analysis	The council currently has 44 Councillors, elected every four years. The council's previous review of council size was undertaken in 2011-2013 and came into effect at the May 2015 election. In this review, the number of councillors was reduced from 50 to 44. The council has not significantly changed in the last five years in terms of demographics or the way the council is governed, and it is for these reasons that the council is recommending the number of councillors remains appropriate to provide strong strategic leadership and accountability.

All councillors are members of full council which is responsible for appointing the Leader, the committees of the council (excluding cabinet), and for setting its budget and policy framework on the recommendation of the cabinet.

The council has five scheduled meetings per year including annual council (though 2019/20 had an additional meeting) and these are generally well attended by councillors.

An analysis of the meetings of council covering the period May 2018 to April 2020 shows that the average length of a council meeting is one hour 38 minutes, with the longest one lasting just under three hours. Each meeting considered between 1 and 8 substantive reports. Outside of the annual council meeting, at which motions are not encouraged, most, but not all, meetings contain at least one motion; there is also the ability to present amended motions which can substantially increase the time and complexity of the debate. At council, there is the opportunity for councillors to ask questions, and a follow-up supplementary question – these number between 1 per meeting and 8 per meeting in the time frame analysed. Additionally, the council also permits citizens' questions at council – these are infrequent and rarely number more than two in a single meeting – and petitions may be presented.

The councillor workload survey conducted as part of this review, highlighted that the majority of councillors responding to the survey estimated that between 20-40% of their time was spent preparing for, or attending, official Council meetings. This equates to a third of their time spent on 'being a councillor'.

The council operates a Leader and cabinet model. The cabinet comprises the Leader, who is elected by the council for a term of four years, following the local elections, and five other councillors, appointed by the |

Leader. The constitution provides for the cabinet to consist of up to 10 councillors (including the Leader and Deputy Leader). From May 2011, the council has operated the 'Strong Leader Model' in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and to ensure more efficiency and accountability in decision-making.

All cabinet decisions are taken collectively in cabinet meetings which occur monthly. Between May 2018 and April 2020, the cabinet met 16 times (meetings may be cancelled if there are no items to consider). The average length of a cabinet meeting is 25 minutes (with the longest meeting in this time frame taking 35 minutes). Meetings of the cabinet generally consider between two and five substantive reports. There is also the opportunity for citizens to ask questions (there were six questions asked in this time frame) and for opposition leaders to ask questions at cabinet (there have been nine in this time frame).

Individual members of the cabinet have an allocated portfolio (see below) and each Portfolio Holder has regular briefing meetings with the most appropriate Executive Manager. The Leader and Chief Executive meet on a weekly basis.

At this time, the council is not aware of any further major change in legislation that would give the cabinet greater or fewer responsibilities and would justify the need for a review in the size of the cabinet. Given the experience of running a cabinet of six members, it is felt that this number and the division of portfolio responsibilities enables effective and convenient leadership of the authority.

The cabinet can also commission working groups to undertake specific task and finish work when necessary. These groups usually comprise nine members, chaired by a cabinet member and their composition is politically representative. It is important to recognise that the number, frequency and purpose of cabinet-led working groups are determined by cabinet. As such, the number of councillors required to deliver these groups is clearly within the control of cabinet.

An analysis of the working groups commissioned by cabinet covering the period May 2018 to April 2020 shows that only one group was commissioned by cabinet in this time – it has met six times.

All councillors are provided with the Forward Plan which details the proposed decisions to be taken by the cabinet and council. This is circulated to all councillors each month and published on the council's website.

Following each meeting of cabinet, details of the decisions taken are circulated to all councillors the following day and published on the council's website. Key decisions of the cabinet come into effect seven working days (not including the day of the meeting) after the meeting, unless five councillors give notice in writing to the Chief Executive requesting a 'call-in'. If no notice requesting a call-in is received within the seven working day period, the decision will come into effect. No call-ins have been received in the past two years.

Membership on all other council committees and groups (outside of council and cabinet) is determined once a year at annual council. In advance of the meeting, nominations are sought from political groups based on the number of seats awarded to each political group following the last borough council election. These nominations are then approved at annual council and any competition for seats voted upon. An annual schedule of meetings is also approved at the same meeting so that councillors are aware of the commitments placed on their time at the beginning of the year.

Most public meetings of the council are held in the evening, at 7pm, as it is recognised that daytime meetings can limit the availability of councillors and the active participation of residents. Exceptions to this include the planning committee, which starts at 6.30pm to accommodate longer agendas and more complex discussions than other meetings (this decision was based upon investigation and analysis as part of an LGA Planning Review in 2018). On occasion, meetings of member groups or panels such as the civic hospitality panel take place at alternative times in consultation with members.

At the present time, due to Covid-19, all council meetings are taking place virtually to ensure the safety of councillors, officers and members of the public who would like to attend the meeting. This was a significant change for all involved as, prior to March 2020, the council did not even webcast its meetings except on rare occasions eg the adoption of the local plan (though audio recordings were being published). Meetings are held via Zoom or MS Teams and live streamed to You Tube. Over the summer period, the council invested significantly in static video cameras for the council chamber and hope to begin holding hybrid meetings at some point during 2021 as the Covid-19 situation improves. This will enable councillors to join the meeting in person, in the council chamber, or to dial in via MS Teams and be present in the meeting virtually. Whether present in the building or attending remotely, councillors will be able to fully participate in the debate and decision-making process, and the whole meeting will be live streamed to You Tube.

The number and proportionality of committee places per political party is calculated following a borough council election (and reviewed if needed, such as following a by-election for example). This exercise was last undertaken in May 2019.

Currently, Rushcliffe has 44 councillors. If you remove seats on cabinet and those prescribed in the constitution as being held by a member of cabinet (usually the Leader), as well as the chairman of the Civic Hospitality Panel, a position taken up by the Mayor regardless of political party, then 116 seats are available on committees for non-executive councillors (May 2019 data). This results in an average of three committee positions per non-executive councillor (an increase on 2.44 committee positions for each non-executive councillor at the time of the last review).

As part of this review, an increase or decrease in the number of councillors Rushcliffe has was taken into account in terms of the allocation of committee positions. It can be seen that varying the number of councillors by two or four in either direction has very little effect on the number of seats available per councillor.

- Increase by two councillors to 46 (39 non-executive / mayoral positions) = 2.9 committee positions per councillor
- Increase by four councillors to 48 (41 non-executive / mayoral positions) = 2.8 committee positions per councillor

- Decrease by two councillors to 42 (35 non-executive / mayoral positions) = 3 committee positions per councillor (same as current model)
- Decrease by four councillors to 40 (33 non-executive / mayoral positions) = 3.5 committee positions per councillor

Therefore, the council feels that increasing or decreasing the number of councillors the council has will have very little effect, positive or negative, on the workload of councillors attributed to preparing for and attending committee meetings. Since the last review, in order to create additional capacity and make the most effective use of councillor time, the council has made changes to the number and size of its committees and this is now felt to be reflective of the councillor resource available. The council's effectiveness in terms of governance is not affected by either retaining 44 councillors or increasing that number to 46 as is being

		recommended; however, the benefits of increasing the number of councillors by two would be felt in terms of community leadership and representation as explained elsewhere in this submission.
Portfolios	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ How many portfolios will there be? ➢ What will the role of a portfolio holder be? ➢ Will this be a full-time position? ➢ Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?
	Analysis	The current number and remit of portfolio holders was last reviewed in 2019. There are six portfolios each held by a member of Cabinet. They are as follows: • Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership • Community and The Environment • Finance • Business and Economic Growth • Housing and Planning • Neighbourhoods The constitution contains an outline of what each of these roles covers and what individual portfolio holders are responsible for. The Leader of the Council interviews and appoints his Cabinet members and each of these is allocated a portfolio. The exact nature of the portfolios and what they consist of is kept under review to ensure alignment with Council structures. The number of portfolios is considered appropriate at this time. Executive powers have not been granted to individual members of the Cabinet, with the exception of the Portfolio Holder for Resources who has been given delegated authority to approve capital grants in accordance with the approved policy. The constitution also contains a full scheme of delegation laying out in detail who is responsible for which decisions the council takes. The council publishes details of all decisions delegated to senior managers and taken in line with the council's constitution on its website in line with The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014. These can be viewed: Delegated Decisions - Rushcliffe Borough Council.
Delegated Responsibilities	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees? ➢ How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?

	Analysis	Delegations to Portfolio Holders and senior managers are discussed above. The Council has a well-developed and comprehensive Scheme of Delegation to officers which sets out where the responsibility and extent of delegation lies. This Scheme of Delegation was last reviewed in July 2019 as part of the overall annual review of the constitution. The council feels that the scheme accurately reflects the way the council delivers its services and its management structure. The council's monitoring officer has delegated authority to revise the scheme of delegation to comply with legislation when needed. The constitution contains delegation to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to take decisions on an urgent basis. These provisions were used to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. These urgent decisions were later reported to Cabinet for transparency and understanding.

Accountability

8. 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.

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.
Key lines of explanation	➤ *How will decision makers be held to account?* ➤ *How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?* ➤ *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?* ➤ *How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?* ➤ *Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.* ➤ *Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.*
Analysis	The council currently has 44 councillors, six of these form the council's cabinet and are exempt from serving on the council's scrutiny groups; it is also generally accepted that the Mayor does not serve on a scrutiny group. Therefore, 37 councillors are available to sit on scrutiny groups. All scrutiny groups are politically balanced to comply with proportionality and are appointed at annual council on the basis of nominations received from political groups prior to the meeting. Following a review of scrutiny in 2018-19, the council now has an overarching corporate overview group (comprised of seven positions), and three themed scrutiny groups (comprised of nine members each). Therefore, 34 seats on scrutiny groups exist. The council does not feel that an increase of councillors is needed to enable the council to fulfil its scrutiny requirements. In addition, a reduction of councillors would put added pressure on all non-executive councillors who have to attend both scrutiny and regulatory duties. Prior to the review of scrutiny in 2018-19 (which altered the structure, focus and names of our scrutiny groups as well as reducing the overall number of seats by two), the council had four scrutiny groups of nine councillors each. Three scrutiny groups met four times a year, but the corporate governance group had two additional meetings to cover a broader remit. The average meeting lasted one hour and 43 minutes, attendance was generally high with most meetings having all nine members (or their substitutes).

From May 2019 to April 2020, the council's scrutiny structure was slightly different. There are still four scrutiny groups, but the corporate overview group manages the workload for the other three groups. The corporate overview group has an independent chairman, and the rest of its membership consists of the individual chairmen and vice chairmen of the other three scrutiny groups. During 2019/20, the corporate overview group met four times for a total of six hours and 36 minutes (one hour and 39 minutes per meeting on average) and considered 21 items. The governance scrutiny group met four times for a total of four hours and 42 minutes (one hour and 11 minutes per meeting on average) and considered 20 items. Unfortunately, due to the beginning of the Covid19 pandemic, both the communities scrutiny group and the growth and development scrutiny group had meetings postponed from the time period under analysis. As a result, both groups only met twice considering nine items each. The average length of a communities scrutiny group meeting was one hour and 57 minutes and the average length of a growth and development scrutiny group meeting was slightly shorter at one hour and 54 minutes. An average scrutiny meeting during the year 2019/20 lasted one hour and forty minutes, 13 minutes less that the average scrutiny meeting the previous year. Since July 2020, all scrutiny groups have been able to meet virtually and so they will be able to meet the usual number of times each year moving forward.

The terms of reference for the four scrutiny committees are set out in the council's constitution. There is also a job description for the role of scrutiny group chairman which is used by the Leader of the council in appointing the chairmen. This was last done after the May 2019 local elections. Members of the governance scrutiny group must attend a number of mandatory training courses before serving on the group.

The scrutiny groups can commission member panels to undertake in-depth scrutiny of particular service area or topic. These member panels usually consist of nine councillors and are politically balanced. Membership is drawn from all non-executive councillors. Over the period under analysis for this review, no member panels have been convened and the new scrutiny structure means that the need for such panels is expected to remain low. The corporate overview group now has the ability to programme items for the communities, and growth and development scrutiny groups that enable much more in-depth investigation and discussion to take place, sometimes spanning a number of meetings. The council has retained the ability to establish member panels for additional flexibility in terms of scrutiny but does not currently see the need to use this function of the constitution.

		The council's constitution makes provision for the call-in of key decisions made by cabinet. If a call-in is made, and determined to be valid, it is considered by the most appropriate scrutiny group; this meeting is usually additional to the scheduled meetings for the year. No call-ins have been received by the council in the two-year period analysed as part of this review.
Statutory Function		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?
Planning	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *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	Membership of the planning committee is drawn from the 38 non-executive councillors, excluding the Mayor. The committee is politically balanced and appointed at the annual council meeting in May each year. The committee usually meets once a month to determine planning applications; it also occasionally considers tree preservation orders and appeal outcomes. The committee comprises 11 members after a reduction in the number of seats on this committee from 15 in 2017 following an LGA Planning Review. All members of the planning committee (and any substitutes) have to undertake compulsory training prior to sitting on the committee. Between May 2018 and April 2020, the planning committee sat 21 times and considered a total of 93 applications. The majority of meetings were attended by all 11 committee members (or their substitutes). The average meeting lasted two hours and 46 minutes and considered between two and six items. Significant applications (such as those for large scale developments) are scheduled for meetings organised outside of the usual monthly meetings and are considered as single item agendas. Although this adds to the number of meetings overall, it does help to keep agendas focused and meetings running smoothly. At the time of the previous review, development control committees (as they were then known) lasted an average of two hours. The increase in meeting length is primarily down to the introduction of public speaking

		(in 2017) for applicants, agents, objectors and ward councillors. The number of items considered at each meeting has dropped slightly and a larger proportion of applications are decided under delegated powers.
		The scheme of delegation to council officers means that the majority of planning applications are determined without the need for consideration by the committee. Over the last two years, 2,447 applications have been determined by the council, with only 4% of these going before the planning committee (down from 7% at the time of the last review).
		There is no denying the time commitment for councillors with regard to planning is considerable. This does not just apply to members of the planning committee as all councillors are consulted on every application within their ward.
		The Council feels that the membership and size of the planning committee is now commensurate with the decisions needing to be taken by the Planning Committee. Despite the anticipated growth within the borough, the council does not anticipate a significant growth in the business needing to be taken before the planning committee and, therefore, does not believe the committee needs to increase (or decrease) in size at this time.
Licensing	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *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 council currently has one overarching licensing committee which is politically representative and appointed each year at annual council. Members of the committee have to undertake specific licensing training prior to their first meeting. Between May 2018 and April 2019, the council had an alcohol and entertainments licensing committee and a licensing committee. The alcohol and entertainments licensing committee, which comprises of 15 members, met once to consider one item. This meeting lasted two hours and 50 minutes. In the same time frame, no meetings of the licensing committee were held. In May 2019, the council took the opportunity to scale down its licensing scrutiny and only appointed to one overarching licensing committee at annual council. The committee comprises of 15 councillors and met once in 2019/20 to consider two items.

	Key lines of explanation	➢ *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.*
Other Regulatory Bodies	Analysis	**Standards Committee** There is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2000 for each authority to have a Standards Committee. Membership is drawn from a body of 38 non-executive councillors, excluding the Mayor. The Committee is politically balanced and is appointed at Annual Council each year. The Standards Committee comprises nine members (six councillors and three co-opted independent members) and has three meetings scheduled each year. Between May 2018 and April 2020, seven meetings of the Standards Committee were held considering a total of 19 items (between two and four items at each meeting). The average Standards Committee meetings lasts 54 minutes. The demands of this group are not considered to be material to the number of councillors Rushcliffe Borough Council has. **Other Committees and Member Groups (regulatory and non-regulatory)** In addition to the committees and groups detailed above, Rushcliffe has a number of other groups appointed at Annual Council. On the basis that these too have a pull on the time of councillors and contribute to the overall workload of councillors they are felt to be worth taking into account. These Committees do not have set work programmes and scheduled meeting patterns. A brief appraisal of each group is provided below: • Employment Appeals Committee This Committee comprises of five members (including the Leader and Deputy Leader) and is appointed at Annual Council. It is politically representative. It hears and determines appeals in accordance with the Council's procedures in respect of dismissal arising from misconduct and capability only. There were no meetings of this committee between May 2018 and April 2020. • Interviewing Committee This Committee comprises of five members (including the Leader and Deputy Leader) and is appointed at Annual Council. It is politically representative. It makes recommendations for appointment to the post of Chief Executive subject to Council approving the appointment and Executive Managers. The Committee met twice between May 2018 and April 2020.

		• Local Development Framework Group This Group comprises of 15 members and is appointed at Annual Council. It is politically representative. This Group deals with progression of the Core Strategy and it meets as required. It is chaired by the Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Housing and Planning and the vice chairman is also the Chairman of the Planning Committee. There were two meetings of the Group between May 2019 and April 2020. They considered five items over those two meetings each of which lasted around two hours. It is accepted that in the lead up to the publication of a new Local Plan more meetings of this Group will be required. • Member Development Group This Group comprises nine members and is appointed at Annual Council. It is politically representative. The Group is primarily responsible for the development and delivery of the Councillor Induction Programme (every four years following local elections) and the councillors' Annual Training Plan. Both of these programmes are designed with the specific aim of ensuring that councillors have the information and skills they need to undertake their roles. Both programmes are divided between compulsory and discretionary sessions and delivered through a variety of means. It is generally accepted that the demands of the induction programme on councillors' time is high, but this is limited to the first few months after election. The forward-looking training programme also draws upon councillors' time, but officers try to limit events to two or three per month to ensure councillors have time to attend despite other commitments. • Civic Hospitality Panel This Panel comprises of six members and is appointed at Annual Council. It is chaired by the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor is the Vice Chairman. The Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader are also Panel members. The Panel is politically representative. The Panel meets once a year to consider the forthcoming civic arrangements for the mayoral year. • Growth Boards The Council has a Strategic Growth Board and five subsidiary Growth Boards in our larger towns and villages. Each of these Boards is chaired by a member of Cabinet and each meets between two and four times a year depending on demand and workload. They involve both local councillors, business owners, town or parish council representatives and local schools and colleges.
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.

Key lines of explanation	
Analysis	**Partnership Arrangements** The majority of the Council's partnership arrangements are connected to economic growth and the future of the borough. The Leader is currently the Nottinghamshire District Councils' representative on the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership. On this group the Leader is acting on behalf of all district councils in the county. The Leader is also the shareholder representative for the Council for the Interim Vehicle (Company Limited by Guarantee) for the proposed East Midlands Development Corporation where he is representing the interests of the borough as one of the owners of the company and local planning authority and business rates authority for the Ratcliffe on Soar power station site which is within the Development Corporation redline. The Leader is also a member of the N2 Economic Prosperity Committee where he represents the council. **Outside Bodies** At the time of the last Electoral Review in 2012, Rushcliffe appointed to 63 seats on officially recognised outside bodies. Whilst outside the remit of council meetings and community leadership, membership of an outside body is part of a councillor's role and can have a significant draw on their time. However, since that time two reviews of appointments to outside bodies have taken place. Immediately prior to the most recent review in 2018, 38 seats on outside bodies were available. In 2019 and 2020, appointments were made to 25 seats on outside bodies including eight seats on the West Bridgford Local Area Forum (one per ward in the West Bridgford urban area which does not have a parish council). The frequency with which these outside bodies meet, and the time commitment required from their members, is diverse. 50% of the available seats on outside bodies are reserved for the Leader of the Council or a member of his Cabinet; thus, the impact of this activity on the time of all councillors in minimised. The Council believes that it has already acted to match the demands placed upon councillors with the time they have available for this kind of activity and no further adjustments are necessary.

Community Involvement

9. 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?

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	*Key lines of explanation*	➤ *In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?* ➤ *Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?* ➤ *How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?* ➤ *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?* ➤ *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?* ➤ *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?*
	Analysis	For many of Rushcliffe's councillors, serving their community is the main reason they become a councillor. Councillors employ a variety of means to make themselves available to electors; the council does not prescribe how councillors should represent their community. The council's website provides a list of all councillors making it clear to all electors who their councillor is and how to contact them. The council also publishes a Know Your Councillor poster in its residents' magazine following a borough council election. This contains a photo of the councillor, their ward and key contact details. The council makes councillor business cards, and posters advertising ward surgeries or contact details, available on request. Most councillors are active in their local communities, including with the relevant parish councils; they are often stopped in the street or local shop, and many also write for their local community newsletter. Some councillors hold regular surgeries, and some are active on social media. The majority of councillors are contacted by residents via email or on the telephone. If councillors are unable to resolve the query directly then they are able

to contact a link officer at the council or key people in other agencies (the council provides a list of key contacts within partner agencies).

Outside of West Bridgford, Rushcliffe is parished; with 59 parishes (42 elect parish councillors, 17 are parish meetings and do not hold elections). 11 borough councillors are also parish councillors and the majority of borough councillors attend meetings of parish councils in their wards even though they are not parish councillors. Seven councillors are county councillors in addition to being a borough councillor; two borough councillors serve on their local parish council and represent their division at county level.

Within West Bridgford, there are a number of very active community groups which are well attended by ward councillors serving the West Bridgford area. In the absence of a parish council for this area, councillors also provide the only link between the community and the council – the direct demand this places on councillors in this area tends to be underestimated.

To inform this review the council undertook a councillor workload survey. The full results are at appendix five.

Councillors were asked about how they spent their time each month. 61.6% of councillors who responded to the survey spent between 0-5 hours per month meeting with residents; 2 councillors spent between 11-15 hours per month meeting with residents. 53.8% of councillors spent more than 6 hours per week communicating with residents via email or on the phone. 51.8% of councillors spent more than 6 hours per week communicating with the Council or other agencies on behalf of residents.

Councillors were also asked how their time spent on council activities was spent. The majority of councillors indicated that they spend between 20-40% of their time on community leadership activities including representing their residents, resolving issues on their behalf, and attending community events. A similar proportion of councillors reported spending between 20-40% of their time preparing for, or attending, official Council meetings.

Outside of the workload survey, councillors have fed back that there is a significant difference between being a ward councillor for an established community and that of an emerging community. This includes the management of local feeling and concern from existing residents during the planning stages of development, to very practical concerns about the development as it proceeds, and those of the new residents when they are

		able to move to their new homes and need to establish new links with the council and other local amenities, the natural place to turn for assistance is their local councillor. The substantial growth the council is anticipating in some areas of the borough is equal to the creation of entire new villages over the next 10-15 years. This will substantially impact on the local ward representative which in the two areas expecting the largest developments is just one councillor currently. It is for this reason that the council is recommending that the overall councillor numbers for Rushcliffe are increased by two at the next election.
Casework	*Key lines of explanation*	➤ *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?* ➤ *What support do members receive?* ➤ *How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?* ➤ *In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?*
	Analysis	The council does not have a formal casework management system. As mentioned above, if councillors are unable to resolve the query directly then they are able to contact a link officer at the council or key people in other agencies (the council provides a list of key contracts within partner agencies).

Other Issues

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

The council has been able to highlight its proposal above.

Summary

11. 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 number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate any 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.

The Council is recommending an increase of two councillors taking the overall number of councillors for Rushcliffe to 46. The council feels that 46 councillors provides the optimal solution for Rushcliffe in terms of Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and, primarily, Community Leadership.

The council is not aware of any changes in the near future that would affect the way the council self-governs. The obvious caveat to this is Local Government Reform but there are no stable plans in the county at present and the agenda would appear to be on hold at least until the Government publishes its Devolution White Paper in 2021.

In undertaking this Review, the council has undertaken a councillor workload survey to establish councillor opinions on council size. It has also considered the effect of increasing and decreasing the number of councillors by two and four on councillor workload and the ability of the council to self-govern.

The council recognises that the electorate of the borough is expected to grow 18% between 2020 and 2027 in line with the council's Local Plan. This takes the average number of electors per councillor from 2,058 to 2,558 in 2027. The majority of this growth is focused in two or three areas where developments are essentially the creation of entire new villages. The council feels that to provide effective representation and community leadership in these areas, as well as giving the council scope to review ward boundaries to address the recognised electoral variances, two additional councillors should be elected in May 2023.

The council accepts that five of its 25 wards are currently showing an electoral ratio which differs by more than 10% from the borough average. Electoral projections based on housing growth in the borough have been examined. Variances of more than 10% are expected to occur in twelve of the council's wards by 2027 if boundaries are kept the same and growth occurs at the predicted rate. Further growth will occur in two key areas after 2027 until the end of the life of the current Local Plan. These are Barton-in-Fabis where there are an estimated further 1400 properties to be built between 2028-2034, this would see the electorate increase by a further predicted 2631 to 4764; and Tollerton where there is also an estimated further 1400 properties to be built between 2028-2034 seeing the electorate increase by a further predicted 2631 to 5697. Whilst we appreciate these figures cannot be taken into account during this exercise, we feel that the further increases in these two areas are worth noting at this stage. The council suggests that changes to ward boundaries will resolve the variations between wards and actively looks forward to the next part of the Review process.

Neighbouring Authorities – Electoral Ratio

Authority	Electorate	Number of councillors	Electoral ratio (number of electors per councillor)
Ashfield District Council	94,024	35	2686
Bassetlaw District Council	88,146	48	1836
Broxtowe Borough Council	86,509	44	1966
Gedling Borough Council	90,463	41	2206
Mansfield District Council	81,738	36	2271
Newark and Sherwood District Council	92,008	39	2359
Rushcliffe Borough Council	90,496	44	2057

Lowest number of electors per councillor – Bassetlaw with 1,836 electors per councillor (48 councillors for an electorate of 88,146)

Highest number of electors per councillor – Ashfield with 2,686 electors per councillor (35 councillors for 94,024 electors)

Ashfield has the lowest number of councillors at 35 with Bassetlaw having the highest at 48

Out of the 7 councils in this group, Rushcliffe is ranked 3rd when ordered on electoral ratio from lowest to highest

All data correct as of 9 November 2020.

Similar Authorities – Electoral Ratio

	Electorate	Number of district / borough councillors	Electoral ratio (number of electors per councillor)
Babergh District Council	70,131	32	2191
Blaby District Council	77,262	39	1981
East Hampshire District Council	96,952	43	2294
Harborough District Council	71,249	34	2190
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	88,196	34	2594
Lichfield District Council	82,905	47	1763
Maldon District Council	51,682	31	1667
Ribble Valley Borough Council	46,792	40	1201
Rushcliffe Borough Council	90,496	44	2056
Cherwell and South Northamptonshire District Council	106,254	48	2214
South Ribble Borough Council	86,659	50	1733
Stafford Borough Council	104,000	40	2600
Stroud District Council	96,445	51	1891
Test Valley Borough Council	94,399	43	2195
Wychavon District Council	101,202	45	2249

Lowest number of electors per councillor – Ribble Valley with 1,201 electors per councillor (40 councillors for an electorate of 46,792)

Highest number of electors per councillor – Stafford with 2,600 electors per councillor (40 councillors for 104,000 electors); closely followed by Hinckley and Bosworth at 2,594 electors per councillor (34 councillors per 88, 196 electors)

Maldon has the lowest number of councillors at 31 with Stroud having the highest at 51

Out of the 15 councils in this group, Rushcliffe is ranked 7th when ordered on electoral ratio from lowest to highest

All data correct as of 9 November 2020.

Rushcliffe Borough Council – Councillors per ward / electorate per ward councillor 2020

Ward	Number of Cllrs	Electorate as at 1 December 2020	Electorate per Councillor	Variance from the Average (2,058)
Abbey	2	4252	2126	+3.3%
Bingham East	2	3867	1933	-6.0%
Bingham West	2	3687	1843	-10.4%
Bunny	1	2012	2012	-2.2%
Compton Acres	2	4242	2121	+3.1%
Cotgrave	3	6252	2084	+1.3%
Cranmer	1	2026	2026	-1.6%
Cropwell	1	2063	2063	0%
East Bridgford	1	2330	2330	+13.2%
Edwalton	2	3958	1979	-3.8%
Gamston North	1	1936	1936	-5.9%
Gamston South	1	1963	1963	-4.6%
Gotham	1	2022	2022	-1.7%
Keyworth & Wolds	3	6569	2189	+6.4%
Lady Bay	2	3913	1956	-4.9%
Leake	3	6944	2314	+12.4%
Lutterell	2	4292	2146	+4.3%
Musters	2	3553	1777	-13.6%
Nevile & Langar	1	2245	2245	+9.1%
Radcliffe on Trent	3	6524	2175	+5.6%
Ruddington	3	5848	1949	-5.2%
Sutton Bonington	1	1459	1459	-29.1%
Thoroton	1	2105	2105	+2.3%
Tollerton	1	2024	2024	-1.7%
Trent Bridge	2	4472	2236	+8.6%

Highest electoral ratio per councillor – East Bridgford at +13.2% (2,330 electors per councillor)

Lowest Electoral ratio per councillor – Sutton Bonington at -29.1% (1,459 electors per councillor)

Average ratio of electors per councillor for Rushcliffe Borough Council – 2,058

There are five wards where the variance from the average is +/- 10% (the LGBCE trigger for an electoral review)

+10%	-10%
East Bridgford (+13.2%)	Sutton Bonington (-29.1%)
Leake (+12.4%)	Musters (-13.6%)
	Bingham West (-10.4%)

*Figures correct at 1 December 2020

Rushcliffe Borough Council – Councillors per ward / electorate per ward councillor 2027

Ward	Number of Cllrs	Predicted Electorate at 1 December 2027	Electorate per Councillor	Variance from the Average (2509)
Abbey	2	4610	2305	-8.1%
Bingham East	2	4529	2265	-9.7%
Bingham West	2	5087	2544	+1.4%
Bunny	1	2312	2312	-7.9%
Compton Acres	2	4835	2418	-3.6%
Cotgrave	3	7049	2350	-6.3%
Cranmer	1	2136	2136	-14.9%
Cropwell	1	2313	2313	-7.8%
East Bridgford	1	3693	3693	+47.2%
Edwalton	2	6091	3046	+21.4%
Gamston North	1	2037	2037	-18.8%
Gamston South	1	2067	2067	-17.6%
Gotham	1	4182	4182	+66.7%
Keyworth & Wolds	3	8088	2696	+7.5%
Lady Bay	2	4048	2024	-19.3%
Leake	3	8,142	2714	+8.2%
Lutterell	2	4,438	2219	-11.6%
Musters	2	3732	1866	-25.6%
Nevile & Langar	1	2386	2386	-4.9%
Radcliffe on Trent	3	8537	2846	+13.4%
Ruddington	3	7143	2381	-5.1%
Sutton Bonington	1	1685	1685	-32.8%
Thoroton	1	2421	2421	-3.5%
Tollerton	1	3577	3557	+41.8%
Trent Bridge	2	5249	2625	+4.6

Highest electoral ratio per councillor – Gotham at 66.7% (4,182 electors per councillor)

Lowest Electoral ratio per councillor – Sutton Bonington at -32.8% (1,685 electors per councillor)

Average ratio of electors per councillor for Rushcliffe Borough Council – 2,509

There are twelve wards where the variance from the average is +/- 10% (the LGBCE trigger for an electoral review)

+10%	-10%
Gotham (+66.7%)	Sutton Bonington (-32.8%)
East Bridgford (+47.2%)	Musters (-25.6%)
Tollerton (+41.8%)	Lady Bay (-19.3%)
Edwalton (+21.4%)	Gamston North (-18.8%)
Radcliffe-On-Trent (+13.4%)	Gamston South (-17.6%)
	Cramner (-14.9%)
	Lutterell (-11.6%)

* Estimated figures

In the following seven wards, growth is below the Borough average leading to too few electors per councillor if ward boundaries remain the same.

Cranmer
Electorate only expected to grow by 110 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 14.9%.

Gamston North
Electorate only expected to grow by 101 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 18.8%.

Gamston South
Electorate only expected to grow by 131 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 14.9%.

Lady Bay
Electorate only expected to grow by 135 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 19.3%.

Lutterell
Electorate only expected to grow by 146 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 11.6%.

Musters
Electorate only expected to grow by 180 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 25.6%.

Sutton Bonington
Electorate only expected to grow by 226 electors between 2020 and 2027 leading to an electoral variance of 32.8%.

In the following five wards, growth is above the Borough average leading to too many electors per councillor if ward boundaries remain the same.

East Bridgford
The East Bridgford ward (2330 electors in 2020) is expected to grow to around 3690 electors by 2027 due to the building of 680 new homes in this ward. This is expected to lead to an electoral variance of 47.2%.

Edwalton
The Edwalton ward (3958 electors in 2020) is expected to grow to around 6090 electors by 2027 due to the building of 1100 new homes in this ward. This is expected to lead to an electoral variance of 21.4%.

Gotham

The Gotham ward (2022 electors in 2020) is expected to grow to around 4180 electors by 2027 due to the building of 1100 new homes in this ward. This is expected to lead to an electoral variance of 66.7%.

Radcliffe on Trent

The Radcliffe on Trent ward (6524 electors in 2020) is expected to grow to around 8537 electors by 2027 due to the building of 940 new homes in this ward. This is expected to lead to an electoral variance of 13.4%.

Tollerton

The Tollerton ward (2024 electors in 2020) is expected to grow to around 3577 electors by 2027 due to the building of 750 new homes in this ward. This is expected to lead to an electoral variance of 41.8%.

Councillors Survey regarding workload – October 2020

It is recognised that conducting council business only form part of the councillor role. Therefore, a survey of all 44 councillors was conducted to inform this submission and provide a more complete picture. The survey was conducted electronically in October 2020. 27 of the 44 councillors responded to the survey providing a response rate of 61%. The below follows the structure of the survey and presents the findings along with feedback from councillors where this was provided.

Membership

The first group of questions focused on the committee places held by councillors. There are 119 seats on recognised Council committees and groups outside of Full Council and Cabinet. The average number of committee positions held per councillor is three. Councillors were asked how long they spent reading reports and preparing for meetings of the Council. Most councillors spent between 3-5 hours per month preparing for meetings, but 6 councillors spent more than 15 hours per month preparing for meetings. Councillors were also asked how long they spent attending meetings of the Council. Most councillors spent between 3-5 hours per month attending meetings, but 2 councillors spent more than 15 hours per month attending meetings.
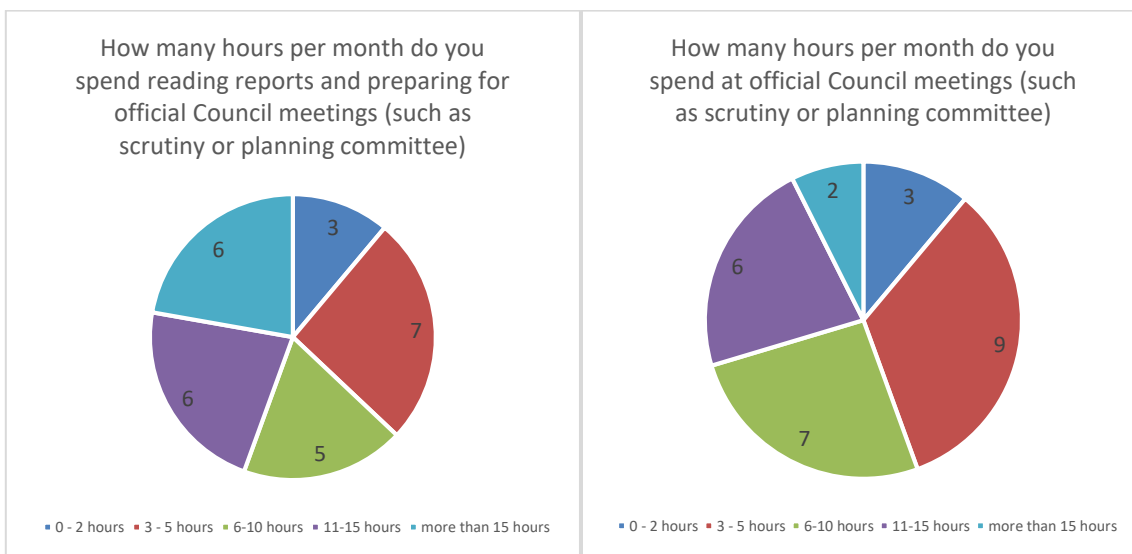
Wards

The second set of questions focused on councillor's wards; asking councillor views on whether there were sufficient councillors to adequately represent their ward as well as enquiring about how they spent their time each month. 61.6% of councillors who responded to the survey spent between 0-5 hours per month meeting with residents; 2 councillors spent between 11-15 hours per month meeting with residents. 53.8% of councillors spent more than 6 hours per week communicating with residents via email or on the phone. 51.8% of councillors spent more than 6 hours per week communicating with the Council or other agencies on behalf of residents.

Rushcliffe has 44 councillors representing 25 wards; 11 are single member wards, nine wards have two members, and the Council has five wards with three members. Councillors were asked whether they felt the number of councillors representing their ward was correct. Of those responding to the survey 19 felt that the correct number of councillors represented their ward and 6 did not. One councillor commented that the expected population growth in their area may warrant an increase from 3 to 4 ward members. Another commented that their ward should be combined with another with one ward member only. One councillor from a very rural area pointed out that if they were to attend all parish council or parish meetings in their ward each year, they would attend a minimum of 54 additional meetings – in some areas the geographical make up of the area should be taken into account as well as the number of electors.

Additional Duties

Councillors were also asked about what other positions they held in addition to being a borough councillor. The results indicated that:

•   26% of respondents were also Parish or Town Councillors (7 of 27 – the actual figure is closer to 11)

•   78% of respondents participated in other Community Groups (21 of 27 respondents)

•   15% of respondents were also County Councillors (4 of 27 – the actual figure is 7)

Rushcliffe's councillors are very active within their communities in addition to their roles as borough councillors. Whilst there is likely to be overlap between activities, this clearly has an impact on their time.

Of the seven borough councillors who were also parish councillors, four spent less than five hours a month on parish council business and three spent over five hours per month. Of the four borough councillors responding to the survey reporting that they were also county councillors, al reported spending over five hours per month on county council business. The majority of borough councillors also participating in other community groups spent less than five hours per week on community group business.

General Views

Councillors were asked whether they felt that the number of councillors Rushcliffe had was too many, about right or too few. The answers were as follows:

A number of very clear views were expressed by councillors. A small number are presented below for illustrative purposes:

Views about the number of councillors at RBC

Too few 7%

Too many 4%

About right 89%
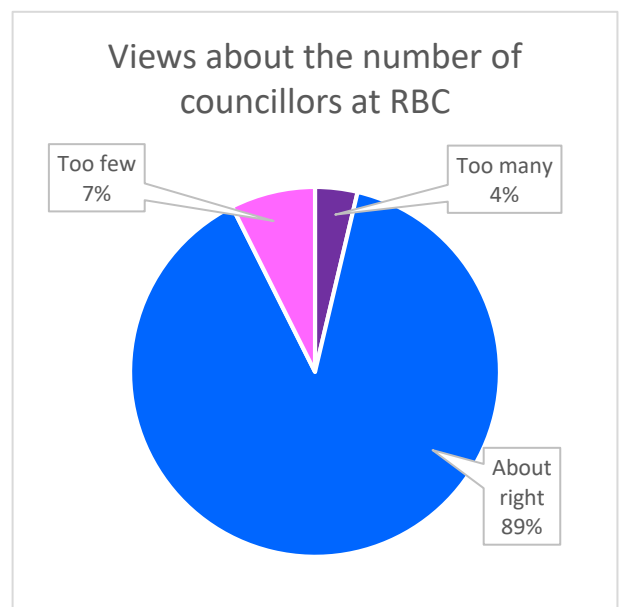
- A single councillor could represent a larger proportion of the local population without facing a large increase in representative workload
- The current workload is not too large to attract and retain councillors who also work full-time – fewer councillors would increase the individual workload and prevent those who work full-time from also being councillors
- Reducing the number of councillors would also reduce accountability and discourage residents from engaging in local democracy
- Some wards have increased in population over the last decade, these would benefit from consideration for more representation
- There was a reduction in the number of councillors a few years ago but the Borough's population is growing
- More councillors could reduce the Council's ability to be swift and effective in terms of decision making and fewer councillors would make it difficult to represent the residents
- At present, with the scrutiny and cabinet system, the workload is distributed fairly
- There are 2 considerations: skills and experience brought and optimum ward size. Having a wide range of councillors of working age, as well as retirement age, and with a broad range of life experiences is important. 44 for this council seems to achieve this. If population growth means a slight increase above 44 then that is appropriate. To be accessible and to know your patch, and to produce information leaflets if necessary, a ward size of around 2,000 properties is the optimum in my view
- It should be recognised that ward members in the very rural wards have numerous parish councils and parish meetings to cover over a large geographical area. The total electorate numbers can be similar to suburban wards where the population is much more condensed. The more controversial planning applications tend to fall into our rural areas and can involve a lot of additional correspondence and attendance at public meetings

Councillors were also asked about their views on their councillor workload and whether it was too big, about right, or too small. 89% of councillors felt that their current workload was about right; 7% (two councillors) felt that it was too big and 4% (one councillor) felt that they could manage a larger workload. The following feedback was received from councillors completing the survey:

- A good councillor will always be busy and engage in both ward and council activities. Within wards with multiple councillors the work load can be shared
- Councillor workload is entirely dependent on how much effort individual councillors are willing to make on behalf of those they represent
- Given the population growth expected in the borough, workload will increase but this is likely to be incrementally so may be absorbed within impacting on the ability of councillors to carry out their roles
- Personal circumstances are a big factor in determining whether the workload is balanced or not. For those with no other commitments, such as employment or a young family, several committees might prove more manageable. I have found the workload since I was elected to be greater than

> I had anticipated and there are pinch points where several committees are meeting in a given week or month

- It all depends on how much work you are willing to put in. Given the amount I do, I feel the ward is possibly too big
- I feel I am able to represent my community adequately without being overloaded
- It keeps me occupied but is not too onerous. I'm not sure I could cope well with the workload if I wasn't retired though, so it might be difficult for people with full time jobs / families / caring responsibilities to get involved
- As someone who works full time, I probably don't do as much as others who have more free time, but it is manageable for me
- It will vary month on month - but also, with the current situation (Covid-19) there are more questions being asked by residents and local businesses and these take up more time. Pre-pandemic, I wasn't receiving as many questions via email or on social media
- The work is manageable, bearing in mind this is not a full-time job. I am on the Cabinet and some months I am extremely busy, but others are a little quieter

Councillors were also asked how their time spent on council activities was spent. The majority of councillors indicated that they spend between 20-40% of their time on community leadership activities including representing their residents, resolving issues on their behalf, and attending community events. A similar proportion of councillors reported spending between 20-40% of their time preparing for, or attending, official Council meetings.

A smaller number of respondents reported spending time working as part of the Council Executive (working closely with senior managers of the Council, at portfolio briefings, and on outside bodies) which is to be expected. Between 10-30% of councillor time was reported as being spent preparing for, or attending, Group meetings and events. This data illustrates that Rushcliffe's councillors split their time roughly equally between their role as a community leader, working within and for their community, and that of a borough councillor, working together to benefit the whole borough.

Personal details

Councillors were asked to indicate which age bracket they fell into:

- 0% of respondents were under 30
- 11% of respondents were aged 31 - 40
- 15% of respondents were aged 41 - 50
- 22% of respondents were aged 51 - 60
- 15% of respondents were aged 61 - 70
- 37% of respondents were aged over 70

Respondents were also asked to indicate their employment status:

- 44% were retired or not working (a decrease of 15% on the last time this question was asked)

- 7% worked part time
- 37% worked full time (an increase of 15% on the last time this question was asked)

Final comments from councillors completing the survey included:

- If the area boundaries are too large, then service levels will fall away. A heavily populated concise ward is often easier to manage, and issues are usually more generic, than a ward that covers multiple villages which have different needs and servicing is much more difficult
- Any redrawing of ward boundaries should try to follow local features such as roads, rivers, etc.....
- I think there are too many councillors for the borough of Rushcliffe
- In looking at the amount of work councillors undertake, any local government reorganisation should be taken into account. It would appear likely there might be a considerable increase in councillor work in the future if the structure of local government is altered by a reorganisation
- Populations in each ward are changing, particularly where there are substantial new developments, and this needs to be taken into consideration when planning for future boundaries and number of councillors
- Perhaps attention should be focused on the number of residents rather than a geographical area
- Parish councils in some rural areas find it difficult to attract a sufficient number of councillors who are able to actively contribute to the work of the parish council, the real workload can fall to just 2 or 3 people. Parish clerks tend to clerk for more than one parish, the average clerk is in the older age group. There needs to be a concerted effort to recruit more parish clerks
- As a "dual hatter", I find a lot of my work crosses over between the different councils anyway. It is unusual that my (smaller) borough ward, is multi member, whereas my county ward (much larger and with more roles and responsibilities), is single member and works OK as a single member county division
- It works well currently. Obviously, there can be unforeseen circumstances, however we should ensure we take a pragmatic approach here
- Sooner than sticking rigidly to population numbers, it would be more sensible to include communities in full rather than splitting them for the wrong reasons.

From the results of the survey it is difficult to establish if an increase or reduction in the number of councillors would increase or decrease councillor workloads. This is because some of the differences in workload and time spent on activities could be related to a councillor's particular role, issues within their ward or the taking on of a new committee position. However, the survey data makes it clear that there is very little to drive a reduction or increase in councillor numbers from councillors themselves. Inevitably, some are busier than others – much of this is down to personal circumstances and their role within the council, as well as their personal investment in representing and working on behalf of their ward. But no councillor has

reported in response to the survey that they are overwhelmed by the workload expected of them.