

Insert Your Organisation Name Here

Council Size Submission

Telford & Wrekin Council

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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 is a submission made by Telford & Wrekin Council and was approved at a meeting of the Council's Boundary Review Committee on 22 April. The Committee has delegated authority for Boundary Reviews.

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

Due to development growth in a number of wards across the Borough over the last 4 years, particularly in the Lawley area, together with significant future planned development, the Council requested an electoral review in early 2020. The Council believed that a review was required to properly reflect and enhance community identities and to improve electoral equality. This would ensure proportionate representation for electors and provide for effective and convenient local government.

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?

Telford & Wrekin council is a unitary council. The Borough of Telford & Wrekin is located in East Shropshire and sits between the urban areas of Birmingham and the Black Country to the east and the rural areas of Shropshire and Wales to the west. The M54 motorway runs through the centre of urban Telford and provides good transport links to the east and west. The Borough covers an area of 112.09 sq. miles with an estimated current population of 179,854 and a projected population by 2031 of 198,000. The area has a varied topography, the River Severn in the south being 40m above sea level and the highest point being the Wrekin hill which is 400m above sea level. Urban Telford is relatively hilly, falling away to the rural north and the North Shropshire plain.

At the time of the last review in 2012 the population was 167,336. When the Unitary council was established with 54 councillors in 1998 the population was 151,285, there has been an increase in population of 18.8% since the current governance arrangements were established whilst councillor numbers have remained static at 54. Population growth is primarily driven by in-migration of families from the West Midlands. As the population has grown it has become more diverse.

The population is 'younger' -Telford & Wrekin has an estimated population of 175,800.

The population is younger than the national picture, with a greater proportion of the population aged under 20 (T&W 25.2%, England 23.7%). The population is growing, changing and ageing:

The proportion of the working age population is decreasing (64.3% in 2012, 62.7% in 2017), whereas the under 20s population has returned to its 2012 rate (26.0%).

The proportion of the population aged over 65 is increasing (15.2% in 2012, 16.9% in 2017), with 29,600 residents now in this age group.

The population of the Borough is projected to grow at a faster rate than the England population (T&W 11.2%, England 6.8%) and is projected to grow to 196,900 by 2031, an increase of some 19,900 people.

The proportion of school age children from a BAME background is increasing (15.3% in 2014, 20.8% in 2018).

Around 92.7% of the population were born in the UK.

[Understanding Telford and Wrekin 2019 - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

The Borough contains a mixture of urban and rural areas alongside contemporary housing developments and traditional market towns. A distinctive characteristic of the area is the good access from urban Telford to open space and the natural environment, one of the reasons people choose to move to the Borough. Telford was created as a New Town in the 1968 and grew rapidly through the 1970s on previously industrial and agricultural land. Telford grew around a number of pre-existing small towns notably the market town of Wellington and the towns of Madeley, Dawley and Oakengates. The market town of Newport is located 6 miles to the north-east of Telford. The area has 27 Parish and Town councils consisting of 56 parish wards.

Approximately 86% of households are resident in the Telford urban area, with 8% in the market town of Newport and 6% in the rural areas. The Borough has a high working age population with a higher than average proportion under the age of 16. There are affluent wards in the east of the Borough, Newport and in the rural area. In contrast in 2019, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) calculated that the Borough had 8 wards containing areas that have neighbourhoods that are in the 10% most deprived nationally.

The Borough has a strong economy, with growth in GVA, prior to Covid, exceeding that of the UK. This growth has been driven by the Council's enabling approach to attracting and securing inward investment as a "business supporting and a business winning Council". Within the borough there are 5,000 companies employing 83,700 people. Key sectors are manufacturing, automotive supplies and food manufacturing. 150 companies from outside the UK have been attracted to the Borough. Household names like Ricoh, Epson, Xerox and Denso Europe are located in the Borough. Many of the area's large employers are located around the industrial estates and business parks of Halesfield, Hortonwood and Stafford Park. The Ministry of Defence has also located its Defence Fulfilment Centre at Donnington. The Borough receives 4.4m visitors per year for business and leisure.

[Introduction - Economy and jobs - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

The Borough is one of the fastest growing local authority areas outside of the South East. The Centre for Cities report has ranked Telford for housing growth within the top 4 key cities over recent years. 6,000 homes have been built since 2014, with a further 6,000 planned between now and 2027 which will include new s and the expansion of existing settlements. [Introduction - Telford & Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031 - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

Telford & Wrekin: Council Vision and Values

Telford & Wrekin Council has a clear vision to "*protect, care and invest to create a better borough*" which shapes all that we do. How we do things is underpinned by the values adopted as a Co-operative Council:

- *Openness and Honesty*
- *Ownership*
- *Fairness and Respect*
- *Involvement*

"Together, our vision and values mean that we work with and for the borough's communities by taking an enabling approach wherever possible to communities. Our Co-operative values underpin all that we do."

- **Openness and Honesty** - *being open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way;*
- **Ownership** - *being accountable for our own actions and empowering others with the skills to help themselves;*

- **Fairness and Respect** - responding to people's needs in a fair and consistent way;
- **Involvement** - working together with our communities, involving people in decisions that affect their lives and being prepared to listen and take on new ideas.

Despite the financial challenges the Council continues to face, the budget strategy has been to sustain essential public services.

The Council Plan identifies how the Council will deliver the vision. [Council Plan - Telford & Wrekin Council](#) At the heart of this is the need to address the significant inequalities that still exist in the borough. The Council works to ensure that everyone, no matter what their background and circumstances, benefits from a strong economy, can fulfil their potential and live well, in a good, safe home.

As a Co-operative Council, the approach is informed by the views and voices of our residents, communities and partners. These must shape and influence what the Council does and how we do it if we are to continue to create a better borough. This means that the Council works closely with its communities, staff, partners and other organisations to deliver the best it can for the borough by giving local people greater influence over the services they use and the issues that affect their lives and encouraging greater involvement in their local community.

Councillors are an essential part of what it is to be a Co-operative Council, they enable the Council's vision through their work in and knowledge of their local communities, influencing how the Council delivers its services and shaping its policies and investments. This can be seen in the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Provided direct support to 1 in 5 households including food and shopping medication, dog walking and crisis payments and made more than 1,000 keep in touch calls to vulnerable residents.
- 52,000 free school meals delivered before the national scheme started.
- Recruited and engaged 1,100+ volunteers who supported keep in touch calls and dog walking.
- Worked in partnership with 80+ community groups to support residents and communities
- Delivered 250,000 pieces of PPE to our residential care sector.
- One of the fastest Council's to distribute the grants to local business including £30m in business rate relief.
- Paying out £28.5m to businesses who qualify for grant support.
- Granting a two month council tax holidays to over 10,000 households
- "Crowdfunded" £20k to provide more than 200 Kindles to ensure that care home residents and local hospital patients could stay in touch with loved ones during the pandemic
- One of the first councils to re-open our recycling centres.
- Through the Laptops for Learning scheme providing 320 laptops to schools to support children who have fallen between the gaps of the national scheme.

The Council was able to respond to the pandemic in this way because of an understanding of the different communities in the Borough. This understanding being developed through ward councillors' knowledge and understanding of their distinct communities and the Council's strong relationship with community organisations and partners. This was recognised by the LGA who undertook a Peer review of our response in July 2020.

This found:

“A strong underlying narrative comes across from the senior leadership of the authority – one of a ‘Co-operative Council’ that is competent, caring and pragmatic; an organisation that is keen to learn and develop; and an authority that has seen a huge amount delivered through its communities as a result of adopting an enabling approach.”

The Councillors' Pride Fund supports all Councillors in Telford and Wrekin and gives them the opportunity to allocate funding towards improvements or projects within their ward that support the delivery of the Council's priorities in communities across the Borough:

Each Councillor has a £2,000 fund to contribute to projects in their ward. Councillors are asked to consider how they can use their funding to support environmental projects in their ward

The Telford and Wrekin Community Panel is a group of local people who volunteer to give their views and ideas on a range of local issues and services. The Council listens to and takes into account the views of the Community Panel when planning and delivering local services. The Council tries to make sure that the panel is representative of the whole community in terms of members' ages, genders, abilities, ethnic origins and where they live.

Despite delivering £126m in savings in our annual budget since 2010, the approach and ethos built on partnership working with communities is successful. Key outcomes include:

- Children's safeguarding services are judged by OFSTED to be outstanding
- In-house adult social care provision is judged by the CQC to be "outstanding"
- Sustaining key services through partnership working with Town & Parish Councils including local market, libraries and community centres and Community Action teams

Constraints/challenges/issues/changes ahead

For the Council to continue to deliver the success that the Co-operative model has driven, it must ensure that as the Borough grows, driven by housing and economic growth, and becomes more diverse, there is an appropriate number of councillors to provide community leadership. This

will allow the continued capacity to build and sustain effective relationships with these communities, local organisations and partners. This needs to be not just for the present time, but looking to the future. In terms of challenges, grant funding is likely to continue to reduce for the foreseeable future, this is likely to mean staffing resources to support councillors will be limited and that the representational role of councillors will become more challenging.

As part of the review the Council has prepared electorate forecasts for the period to 2027, having regard to the location and scale of housing development expected to take place. These forecasts have been developed in accordance with LGBCE guidance.

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?

Telford & Wrekin became a unitary council in 1998 and operates the Strong Leader and Cabinet governance model

The move from a Committee structure to Leader and Cabinet model helped to enable more responsive and timely decision-making and provide clear leadership for the authority. The Leader and Cabinet model works effectively to support service delivery at Telford & Wrekin

No Inspectorate issues have been raised or are currently outstanding, see section 5 regarding recent positive peer review and inspectorate assessments

A Council size of 56 would allow continued effective Strategic Leadership and Accountability in the years ahead. Crucially, a Council size of 56 will allow councillors to continue and further develop their representational role within communities effectively. Ensuring that as the Borough develops, communities retain their identity and are effectively led and represented. The work of elected councillors is crucial to how the Council

goes forward, working closely in partnership with those communities, community organisations and partners. It is important that councillors have the capacity to effectively perform their role in order to provide strong representation and community leadership. This capacity can be optimised with an appropriate number of councillors which will enable the Council to continue to successfully deliver on its priorities and Co-operative values.

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	<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>The Council operates under the 'Strong Leader with Cabinet' model in line with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Leader, Deputy Leader and 8 Cabinet Portfolio Holders form the Executive. A total of 10 positions, ensuring the roles are not too broad to be effective, these are the most demanding roles within the governance structure. The Leader is elected for a 4 year term of office at the Annual Council meeting following all-out elections and, under the strong leader arrangements, determines the make-up of the Cabinet This model is expected to continue.</p>

		10 members – ensuring a range of responsibilities for the ten councillors but portfolios not being too broad to be effective
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>For 2020/21 there is the Leader plus 9 Cabinet members with responsibility for the following portfolios:</p> <p>Leader Enforcement, Community Safety and Customer Services Health & Social Care Leisure, Libraries and Culture Neighbourhood, Commercial Services and Regeneration Council Finance and Governance Visitor Economy, Historic & Natural Environment and Climate Change Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning Cooperative Communities, Engagement and Partnerships Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure</p> <p>Leader’s work area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing political leadership • Appointing to Cabinet • Manage and lead work of Cabinet • Work with officers to lead the Council • Work with Scrutiny • Lead partnership and community work <p>Portfolio holders work areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead on portfolio • Contribute to strategic agenda and work programme for their portfolio • Report and communicate key issues within portfolio • Take an active part in Cabinet meetings and decision-making

- Work with Scrutiny
- Lead partnership and community work in their area

The Cabinet is scheduled to meet on 12 occasions each year and is the main decision-making body of the Council. The constitution allows for decisions to be made by individual portfolio holders but, in practice, this is very rare. Portfolio holders work proactively, leading their portfolio and work closely with Directors and Heads of Service to ensure they are fully briefed on matters affecting their areas.

The functions of the Cabinet are set out in Part 2 of the Council's constitution [Document Constitution - Telford & Wrekin Council](#) and include

- Taking decisions that will implement the policy of the Council within the Budget & Policy Framework including virement limits and the degree of in year changes to the Policy Framework that may be made by the Leader.
- Appointing Cabinet Members and the Deputy Leader.
- Appointing representatives to outside bodies (unless it is a Council appointment or the appointment has been delegated).
- Subject to Urgency Provisions taking decisions that are within the Budget & Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
- Those local choice functions that the Council decides should be undertaken by the Leader/ Cabinet rather than the Council and all other matters, which by law must be reserved to the Leader/ Cabinet and the delegation, as far as the law allows, of these functions.
- Taking decisions that will implement the policy of the Council within the Budget & Policy Framework.

The role of Portfolio holder is not full-time, however the report of the 2019 Independent Remuneration Panel concluded that portfolio holders workloads amounted to 30-35 hours per week. [Councillors allowances - published legal and statutory notices - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

In addition to formal Cabinet meetings, portfolio holders are expected to represent the authority on partnership and regional bodies outside the Council. Cabinet members are, on occasion, required to attend Scrutiny meetings to report on work in their area.

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>The functions of the Cabinet, including delegations, are set out in Part 2 of the Council’s constitution. Document Constitution - Telford & Wrekin Council</p> <p>Cabinet decision-making is made by all 10 portfolio holders including the Leader The requirement for rapid decision-making and effective service delivery means that members of the Council cannot be involved in the detail of every decision. The Council has delegated some actions to officers and these are shown under Officers Delegated Authority in part 2 of the constitution which is reviewed and updated regularly by Constitution Committee.</p>

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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	Telford & Wrekin has 5 broad-ranging Scrutiny Committees with a total of 37 members plus 11 co-optees and a Scrutiny Management Board with 8 members. The Council also has 3 members on the Joint Health

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (jointly with Shropshire County Council). The 10 Members of the Council's Cabinet do not sit on Scrutiny Committees.

Committees are as follows:

Business & Finance Scrutiny – 7 councillors and 2 co-optees

Children & Young People Scrutiny – 9 councillors plus 4 co-optees

Communities Scrutiny – 7 councillors plus 1 co-optee

Environment Scrutiny – 7 councillors

Health Scrutiny – 9 councillors plus 4 co-optees

Scrutiny Management Board – 8 councillors including the 5 Scrutiny Chairs

Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 3 councillors

Scrutiny committees manage their work through an annual work programme which is set by each committee and reported to Council each year. The content of each work programme is selected to ensure that work covered is relevant to the Council's strategic goals and the challenges being faced. Scrutiny receives officer support to ensure that it can function effectively. The work of the Scrutiny committees helps to ensure the Council continues to perform effectively and efficiently and supports the work of Cabinet and Council. The work of the committees ultimately lead to recommendations to Cabinet and Council on policy matters and development of services. The Committees also have a duty to monitor decisions made by the Executive, portfolio holders are requested to attend committees to report on activities. Where required the committees may establish task groups to undertake more detailed work.

Task and Finish Groups

- Task and finish groups are short term groups to support joint working across committees or to allow a sub section of a committee to scrutinise an issue in more detail.
- There is currently one task and finish group, looking at school streets. It is a cross committee working group looking into the school streets initiative to see if this would be beneficial to Telford and Wrekin. The meetings take place approximately once a week, last for around two hours and are expected to last about 8 weeks.
- Another working group that has just completed its work, looking at the Local Plan. This again, was about once a week, for around three hours and lasted 4 weeks as it was time sensitive.

Scrutiny Committees

- There was an increase in the number of committees in 2019/20 by one to five committees (plus the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Shropshire Council, which is a sub-committee of our own Health Scrutiny Committee)

In terms of recommendations, very recently a review of recycling bins went to Cabinet – Item [CAB-60](#) on this link. The recommendations from Scrutiny were agreed by the Cabinet. The Local Plan Scrutiny Review recommendations will be going to Cabinet shortly .We also have the scrutiny report library ([here](#))

Looking forward, there is some good work coming up for the work programme in 2021/22:-

Integrated Transport Strategy – scrutiny undertaking some policy research work so as to feed into the wider integrated transport strategy.

Stronger, Safer Communities – scrutiny influencing the policy decisions around the stronger safer communities funding

Family Safeguarding Model – the Council has recently introduced a new safeguarding model designed to bring about multi-agency, whole family work with the aim of keeping children safely within their families. The model provides drug abuse support, alcohol abuse support, domestic violence support so as to address the issues leading to children being placed in care. Scrutiny will be involved in reviewing and monitoring the efficacy of this new way of working to ensure effectiveness.

The Committees reflect the Council’s co-operative ethos with partners/stakeholders being invited to sit as co-optees on committees. The committees are scheduled to meet six times a year

The volume of work undertaken by the committees is expected to continue and will be determined by the annual work programme

It is critical for effective Scrutiny that the membership of these committees can be drawn from a wide range of councillors, ensuring the skills and strengths of those councillors can be utilised. This area is significant when determining the appropriate size of the Council as it is an essential function in the successful operation of the Council.

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	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Planning Committee is made up of 9 councillors including a Chair and Vice-Chair with a further 9 councillors acting as reserves. The Council operates a 4 weekly cycle for Planning Committee in order to ensure that statutory timescales are met for the determination of planning applications. Ward councillors who are not members of the Committee, Parish council representatives and members of the public can speak at the committee. Public attendance tends to be higher for Planning committee. Cabinet members are not appointed to the committee in line with best practice, this limits the number of councillors available to support the committee. Councillors cannot sit on Planning Committee unless they have received training and membership of the committee carries significant responsibility, lobbying can be intense and volumes of reports can be substantial and detailed. It is important that a sufficient capacity of suitably trained councillors is available to support this committee.</p> <p>On average there are 1100 applications per year, 4% of applications are considered by planning committee</p> <p>The number of applications slightly declined after the scheme of delegation was amended over 5 years ago. It is likely to remain at least the same level of determinations at planning committee. Planning committee will remain the same as a single council wide committee. There is no plan to bring executive members into planning committee</p> <p>There is a need to attend approximately 1 planning committee per month:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Meetings average of 2.5 hours; but have been known to be up to 6 hours though this is rare. Times for virtual meetings have been more condensed over the last year – averaging 1- 2 hours; but with going back to a meeting held in public, with the public audience this will increase to 2-3 hours on average b. Reading of reports and background papers – 4 hours per month

		<p>c. Site visits, approximately 1 hour 3 times a year.</p> <p>d. Chair and Vice chair have pre meetings – 2 hours per month</p> <p>e. Chair will also engage with interested parties as they approach him (with support from an officer) – a further hour per month</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	<p>The Licensing Committee is made up of 10 councillors. The Committee has responsibility for all matters relating to the licensing of taxi and private hire vehicles/drivers/operators in the Borough, as well as for licensed premises within the statutory provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005. Approximately 94% of taxi applications are dealt with under delegation.</p> <p>The Committee undertake the licensing functions of the Council including health and safety at work/fire safety, Health Act 2006. A full list of the functions can be found in the Council's Constitution Document Constitution - Telford & Wrekin Council</p> <p>The Committee consists of 10 Members and is politically balanced. In connection with the consideration and determination of applications or concerning complaints against individual licence-holders under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 the Committee has delegated its powers for hearings to be dealt with by the Council's Licensing Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Each year there are 3 planned Licensing Committee meetings, and in some years there can be an additional special Licensing Committee meeting.</p> <p>Meetings last on average around an hour. There is 1-2 hours time prior to the meeting needed for Members to read through Committee papers.</p> <p>In addition to these meetings there are also ad hoc Licensing Sub Committee meetings which have a quorum of 3 members. These happen as and when needed to hear Licensing Act, Taxi or other licence applications. On average these number between 3 to 6 per year. They can be held on separate dates or occasionally 2 x Licensing Sub Committees can be held in one day. Licensing Sub Committee meetings can last between one and three hours, depending on the application, plus time for reading papers.</p>

		<p>There are core members and regular attendees at the meetings. Generally the Chair and Vice Chair attend all planned and ad hoc meetings.</p> <p>These arrangements are expected to continue.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	<p>No other regulatory committees but we have a number of other politically balanced committees</p> <p>Standards Committee (7) meets 3 times per year</p> <p>Audit Committee (7) meets 4 times a year</p> <p>Health & Well Being Board (6) (plus health reps/voluntary sector reps and officers) meets 5/6 times a year</p> <p>Appeals Committee (pool of 14) meets as required</p> <p>Boundary Review Committee (7) meets 4 times a year, more regularly for reviews</p> <p>Council Constitution Committee (7) As required</p> <p>Personnel Committee (7) 3 times a year or as required</p> <p>Details of all the Council's current committees can be found at Browse Meetings, 2021 - Telford & Wrekin Council</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>
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council currently has 71 councillor appointments to Outside Bodies. 14 appointments are National/Regional, 9 for Shropshire organisations and 48 for Telford & Wrekin based organisations/trusts/charities. Telford & Wrekin Council –</p>

	<p>Information from the councillors' survey also illustrates that many councillors also serve on various organisations supporting their local communities as part of their role within their community which are additional to appointments made by the Council. For example, some councillors serve as school governors and/or work directly with local community groups in their area. The Council has a commitment to working in partnership with its communities, Parish and Town councils and external organisations, this is expected to continue to develop further.</p> <p>Regional</p> <p>Regional and national appointments are mainly filled by portfolio holders.</p> <p>The Marches Local Enterprise partnership sees the Council working with neighbouring authorities to drive economic growth across the area. The Marches Growth Hub offers support to local businesses.</p> <p>The Council has worked with the Police & Crime Commissioner to deliver a £0.5m Safer streets initiative and is due to deliver a £1.5m Safer Communities project.</p> <p>Community Safety Partnership, working with Police, NHS and a range of other other partners</p> <p>West Mercia Energy Board, working with neighbouring authorities on purchasing and supply of energy</p> <p>West Midlands Combined Authority, Housing and Land Delivery Board</p> <p>Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority</p> <p>West Mercia Police and Crime Panel</p> <p>West Midlands Rail Executive</p> <p>Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin sustainability transformation partnership</p> <p>This work is led by portfolio holders but non-Cabinet members play an active role in this work within their own communities. The 2020 response to the Covid pandemic was a good example of partnership working between the Council and local community groups, community centres and Parish and Town Councils.</p>
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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	<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 use a range of methods to engage with electors from face to face meetings, phone, e mail, social media, text message, letters and newsletters with residents. Councillors also have strong links with Parish and Town Councils in their area, and community groups. As part of this submission we surveyed all councillors to find out more about their work and engagement with their communities.</p> <p>37 of the 41 councillors responding to the survey held ward surgeries, 70% devoted 1-5 hours per month, 16% 6-10 hours per month and 8% 11-15 hours.</p> <p>75% of surveys were returned at the time of publication.</p> <p>90% of those responding were currently also Parish or Town councillors. 21% of councillors always attended and 44% sometimes attended Parish/Town council meetings where they were not a member of that council. 50% of councillors spent 6-10 hours per month attending Parish/Town council meetings. 69% of councillors spent 1-5 hours per month attending resident/community meetings.</p> <p>The Council works in partnership with Local Town and Parish councils to provide Community Action teams supporting environmental maintenance teams, enforcement officers and cctv to local areas.</p> <p>The Council's community focus means it works closely with Local Community Centres and groups, Voluntary Sector organisations and with local colleges.</p> <p>There are no area committees</p>

		<p>Councillors provide considerable time and effort in this area. Councillors at Telford & Wrekin are actively involved in their communities, working with and supporting communities and organisation, reflecting the ethos of a community focussed Council. The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel published in 2019 found that Cabinet members typically averaged 30-35 hours per week on council business, with councillors without Cabinet responsibilities averaging 20- 25 hours per week.</p> <p>Councillors allowances - published legal and statutory notices - Telford & Wrekin Council</p> <p>The Council provides a Ward councillor fund of £2k per councillor– which can be spent in local communities and is often match funded by parish/town councils, allowing councillors to directly support and improve their local communities.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <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>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<p>Councillors receive officer support on technical matters and detailed enquiries, although available officer resource has been reduced considerably over the last 10 years.</p> <p>The Council promotes response to public enquiries using the ‘My Telford’ app, this enables many enquiries to be dealt with electronically. The Council’s overall customer strategy can be seen here. Customer Strategy, Improving the Customer Experience – Our Journey to excellence by 2025. One of the ambitions in this strategy is to ensure that the option to do business online exists for every service or enquiry type in the council and that digital services are easy to use and reliable In October 2020 a Webchat function was launched, which is now available across 14 services including Benefits, Council Tax, Highways, Housing and Libraries. This service means that customers can now get an instant answer to their enquiries without the need to make a call.</p> <p>In the same way technology has increased access to councillors via e mail and social media, this has increased their associated workloads. The Councillor survey indicates that almost all councillors use some form of electronic communication. The survey comments received also noted that social media accessibility also</p>

		<p>increased pressure for quicker responses to issues raised by residents. Covid restrictions had increased electronic communication for a number of councillors during the last year.</p> <p>The Council's Member Support Strategy states that the Council 'believes is essential that all elected members are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they need to carry out their roles and to act as leaders for their communities'. The Council has a comprehensive member development programme that is designed to induct new councillors and to maintain the required skills and knowledge for existing councillors. There is also a Member Development group of councillors and officers which meets to monitor the development programme.</p> <p>The Councillor survey produced the following information on casework and workloads 49% spent 6-10 hours per month, 22% spent 11-20 hours per month, 17% spent 1-5 hours per month and 12% spent over 20 hours per month 55% believed their current workload was just about right, with 26% believing it was too high</p>
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Other Issues

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

The Council has earned a reputation for strong financial management in the face of budget reductions of £126.4m over the last ten years. The management structure has been heavily streamlined and the workforce has reduced by 1600 over the last 10 years. However, the Council has generated income from the creation of NuPlace, the Council's wholly owned housing company, the Council's solar farm and the Telford Growth Fund.

Since 1998 when it became a unitary authority, Council has operated with 54 councillors, those councillors are currently elected to 30 wards. The electorate on the December 2020 published register is 133,197 electors at a ratio of 2,467 electors per councillor.

All councillors were invited to complete a survey to give their views. 55% of councillors responding to the councillor survey believed their current workload was just right, a further 26% believing it was too high.

The CIPFA nearest neighbours group for similar authorities shows an expected range of 50-60 councillors, with a median of 55.5 councillors, slightly above the current number at Telford & Wrekin.

The projected electorate to 2027 is 141,954 increasing the ratio to 2,628 electors per councillor if the council size remained at 54. 73% of councillors believed that the increased electorate would increase their workload. In particular, some areas of deprivation within the Borough have low registration rates, the numbers of registered electors not necessarily reflecting workloads and complexity for councillors representing those wards. 70% of councillors responding favoured a council size of 56, 26% favoured retaining 54 and 4% a Council size of 55.

Since the last Boundary review in 2012 the Council has undergone significant structural and organisational change, resulting in reductions in officer resource available to support councillors in their role. Changes in the use of technology have also increased councillor accessibility and this has led to greater communication with residents and an associated effect on workloads and expectations. Electorate forecasts indicate significant growth beyond 2027 and this is likely to contribute to an associated impact on councillor workloads, this point is reflected in a number of responses to the councillor questionnaire. The size of the Council needs to be appropriate not just for now but for the future. The way the Council functions and its vision and aspirations rely heavily on councillors providing effective representation and strong community leadership. Having an appropriate Council size will be a key factor in the longer-term effectiveness of the Council, this is reflected in the councillor survey response below showing % of their time devoted to Community leadership.

% of time spent on Community Leadership	0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	More than 30%
	10%	23%	33%	35%

In terms of caseloads the survey response showed the following:

Number of Cases/Issues dealt with per month	
Up to 10	29%
10-19	24%
20-29	24%
30-39	10%
40-49	2%
Over 50	7%

Considerations:

Reducing Council Size – There would be financial saving on councillor allowances but an increase in workload for councillors on governance and engagement and casework, placing more demands on fewer councillors and potentially reducing the effectiveness of the Council. With the projected future development creating new communities and expanding existing ones a reduction would potentially weaken the strong connection councillors have with their communities. 55% of councillors responding to the survey believed their current workloads were about right and 26% believed they were too high. Fewer councillors may also lead to an increase in demand on staffing resources to support the reduced numbers of councillors.

Retaining Council Size – A no change solution would allow the Council to continue to provide good strategic leadership and accountability as it does at the moment. However, this solution would lead to increased pressure on councillor workloads as the number of electors to councillors increases. This area is very important to the way this Council functions and councillors work with communities. It is crucial that councillors have manageable workloads which will enable them to provide strong representation and community leadership in the longer term. The commission's guidance indicates that Councils undertaking reviews should look further ahead and provide a council size that is appropriate for that Council and that will work effectively over a longer period.

Slight increase in Council Size – An increase in size would mean an increase in the councillor allowances budget and an impact on staff support and resources. An increase would reduce the councillor to elector ratio and maintain manageable councillor workloads both now and for the future, allowing effective representation for electors and communities. Maintaining manageable workloads will mean that there is a better chance of attracting a diverse range of people to stand as new councillors in the future.

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 has carefully considered its future size and concluded that a Council size of 56 councillors would be appropriate. Telford & Wrekin is a high performing council with a reputation for strong financial management and delivering services despite unprecedented grant reductions over the last decade. The Council is focussed on working in partnership with local communities and organisations, the representational and community leadership role of councillor role is of key importance in the Council delivering its priorities.

The Council's politically balanced Boundary Review Committee has responsibility and delegated powers to act on behalf of the Council in respect of Boundary Reviews.

Initial discussions on council size considered various options: a reduction, no change and an increase in numbers. Councillors were in agreement that they did not believe a reduction in numbers was appropriate as they felt that a reduction would have a detrimental effect on councillor workloads and their ability to fulfil their role effectively in the medium to longer term. The councillors' representational role, and its continuing effectiveness was important to how Telford & Wrekin functioned as a Council. The Council works closely with its communities, staff, partners and other organisations to deliver the best it can for the borough by giving local people greater influence over the services they use and the issues that affect their lives and encouraging greater involvement in their local community.

The numbers of councillors would need to be appropriate for the next ten to fifteen years to ensure the Council could deliver strong community leadership and allow councillors to work effectively as community representatives.

Councillors agreed to consider options of 54, 55 and 56 councillors. The Council's Boundary Review Committee considered carefully the question of the Council's future size. Councillors were mindful of the rapid development taking place in the Borough and the development of new communities and expansion of existing communities. At its meeting of 22 April the Committee concluded that the Council would be best served by 56 councillors, an increase of 2 councillors. This would represent a ratio of 2,535 electors per councillor with a projected 2027 electorate of 141,954. A majority of 5 councillors were in favour of an increase of 2 councillors to 56 with 2 members of the Committee abstaining.

The proposal for an increase from 54 to 56 councillors provides the best fit for how this Council operates, taking a balanced approach across the 3 key areas in determining an appropriate Council size for the now and crucially for how the Council operates in the years ahead. Those areas being Strategic leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership. A Council size of 56 councillors provides sufficient capacity to allow the Council to effectively operate its current governance and decision-making arrangements with sufficient representation on committees to ensure debate is informed by a wide range of opinions. A membership of 56 allows capacity to ensure absences can be accommodated but most crucially, allows elected councillors to perform their representational role, giving effective representation to new and existing communities within the Borough. The latter being vital to how the Council currently works co-operatively, engaging with and working with its local communities, partners and organisations.