

Kirklees Conservative Group

Council Size Submission: Template

Kirklees Council

Contents

How to Make a Submission	2
About You.....	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)	2
Local Authority Profile	3
Council Size.....	4
Other Issues	18

How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

[This submission is being made by Councillor David Hall, Leader of the Kirklees Conservatives, on behalf of the Kirklees Conservative Group.](#)

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

[Not required.](#)

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and

determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

The Conservative Group recommends that the council size is reduced from 69 to 63 members, comprising 21 wards (rather than 23) of three members each.

No governance or capacity issues have been raised by any Inspectorate or similar.

Please see details of a recent governance review set out under the 'Governance Model' section.

Residents are now much more frequently contacted through email or social media, and face-to-face surgeries are much less frequent. Surgeries now, unfortunately, present their own personal safety issues which again lends itself to greater online activity and communication. Larger electorates, therefore, are no longer as disadvantageous.

The average ward electorate for our proposed 21-ward council would be nearer the size of the largest wards currently – Lindley, Mirfield or Holme Valley South. The ward councillors in these areas carry out their work well, and do not struggle because of the size of the electorate.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

The borough was formed on 1 April 1974 by the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 as part of a reform of local government in England. Eleven former local government districts were merged: the county boroughs of Huddersfield and Dewsbury, the municipal boroughs of Batley and Spenborough and the urban districts of Colne Valley, Denby Dale, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth, Kirkburton, Meltham and Mirfield.

Kirklees sits in quite a central position to all the other surrounding unitary boroughs of West Yorkshire, with people living in the northern parts commuting to Leeds and York for work and education. People living in the western parts commute to Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield for education and work. People living in the southern and eastern parts also commute to Leeds, along with Wakefield, Barnsley, Sheffield and Manchester for work and education. The largest towns and principal districts in the borough are Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Batley, Heckmondwike, Cleckheaton and Holmfirth.

The principal settlements of Kirklees are mill towns in the Colne Valley, Holme Valley, Calder Valley and Spen Valley. Those areas of the district with a more urban character bound Calderdale to the west, Bradford to the north-west, Leeds to the north-east and Wakefield to the east.

The estimated population of Kirklees in 2021 was 433,216 and it is projected to grow to 464,224 by 2043.

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
<p>Governance Model</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep</i>

		<p><i>the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Council uses the ‘Cabinet Strong Leader Model’ of governance. The Cabinet currently operates with nine cabinet members, and we do not expect this to change. It would certainly remain within the 6 to 10 number.</p> <p>In late 2021 Kirklees Council approved the appointment of a Local Government Advisor (LGA), to advise and work with Councillors on a governance review process. Council further approved that the Corporate Governance and Audit (CG&A) committee be tasked with determining the next steps of the proposal for a committee system arrangement.</p> <p>The Decisions was taken to adopt the recommendation of CG&A Committee as follows:</p> <p>The Council continues to adopt the retention of the current model of governance (Cabinet Strong Leader Model) with the suggested improvements set out below: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council recognises the key role of the scrutiny function, including key strategy formation in engaging non cabinet members in the decision-making process, which can be further developed through the following suggested enhancements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Improvements to enhance and improve pre-decision scrutiny to include reviewing the current scrutiny panels (ii) Clear guidance as far as reasonably practicable in defining pre-decision scrutiny and associated timelines (iii) Annual training and work programme briefings provided to all Members of the Council’s Scrutiny Panels. (iv) Providing clear information to Members and officers on the benefits of pre decision scrutiny and to ensure there is an understanding of the requirements to engage in early pre-decision scrutiny to enhance good decision making • The Council recognises that good scrutiny and decision making relies on the provision of transparent, accessible information in a timely

		<p>manner and supports the development of sharing information to raise awareness, increase understanding of and ensure clarity for Members and Officers around scrutiny, Access to Information Rules and the sharing of information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Cabinet be requested to increase dialogue on key strategic issues with Members to increase transparency and develop both formal and informal engagement with Members. • That consultation be undertaken with Group Business Managers and Members, to identify any potential barriers preventing some Members being appointed to Committees/Panels such as timing, frequency, location, format of meetings and any actions appropriately co-ordinated. • That information be communicated to all Members (across different roles) in relation to engagement with the decision-making process, including access to information rules, scrutiny, raising a notice of concern, speaking and questioning rights at committees. • That work is considered to explore enhancing training and development for Councillors to help understand and carry out their roles. • To note and thank Mark Edgell and the Local Government Association for the advice, report and recommendations which has provided the panel with an independent starting point for the review by the Commission. • To note and thank the Local Authorities and stakeholders who gave their time and shared their experiences with the Commission. • That the Democracy Commission undertake a review of the implementation of the recommendations and report back to the Corporate Governance an Audit Committee by March 2024. • That authority be delegated to the Head of Governance to scope and implement the recommendations in consultation with the Chair of Democracy Commission and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny.
--	--	---

		<p>The proposed adjustment to 63 Councillors will not impact the current governance structure or impact on the process put in place as part of the recent review and recommendations associated with governance.</p>
<p>Portfolios</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Cabinet currently has the following member portfolios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Democracy • Learning, Aspiration and Communities • Regeneration • Children • Environment • Culture and Greener Kirklees • Health and Social Care • Corporate • Transport <p>The Cabinet is the executive decision-making body of the Council. The Council has appointed a Leader who is responsible for Cabinet, the executive decision-making body of the council. The Leader has appointed Cabinet members, who have responsibility for work on a particular portfolio area and lead on policy development. The cabinet takes decisions collectively in public and cabinet members are jointly accountable for its decisions.</p> <p>The duties of a cabinet member are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have the responsibility for, and provide a lead on, the initiation of policy. • To decide the executive action to be taken in implementing those matters of Council policy allocated to them within their portfolio, seeking advice from the Executive Management Group and Service Directors where appropriate. • To take personal responsibility, and to be held accountable, for any decisions taken, and to share with the appropriate service managers responsibility for the performance of services within their portfolio. • To respond to or deal with any issues arising at council meetings relating to their portfolio.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To act as spokesperson within and outside the authority on those services and functions within their portfolio. • To be a member of, and attend, Cabinet Committees and to share the collective • responsibility for decisions taken by the Cabinet. • To act as an advocate for the council within the Authority and outside. • To provide regular reports on progress and to undertake consultation on decisions as required. • To attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels to discuss • decisions taken or support the policy formulation process. • To attend relevant Cabinet Committees and Executive Briefing Sub Groups Revised July 2023 • To develop partnership working with other agencies and contribute as a key player to delivering a partnership agenda through the Local Public Service Boards. • To represent the council on outside bodies. • To represent the council and contribute the Kirklees perspective on national, • regional and sub-regional bodies. • To consult interested parties, ward councillors and citizens as part of the • development and review of policy. • As part of the Cabinet to be involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing support to all councillors to help them develop constructive roles as Ward Members - leading the community planning process for the council the consultation on, and drawing up of, the revenue and capital budgets - leading the search for continuous improvement taking decisions on resources and priorities to deliver the strategies and budget approved by full council - promoting and participating in Member development
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 Executive may arrange for the discharge of any of their executive functions by a committee of the Executive, an individual member of the Executive or an</p>

Officer of the authority. Any arrangements made for the discharge of executive functions by a committee of the Executive, an individual member of the Executive or an Officer do not prevent the Executive from exercising those functions.

The Executive may also arrange for the discharge of any of their executive functions by a joint committee (pursuant to s.20 Local Government Act 2000 and s.101(5) Local Government Act 1972) or by the executive of another local authority (pursuant to s.19 Local Government Act 2000 and s.101(1) Local Government Act 1972).

The Executive have established the committees referred to below.

Membership of the committees shall be as set out below. In addition, all members of the Executive shall constitute a panel of substitute members to be available to replace members of Cabinet committees at any meeting during the municipal year as and when required.

Once a Cabinet committee meeting has started with a substitute member in attendance, the member who has been substituted will be entitled to attend the meeting only as an observer.

Only members of the Executive may be members of Cabinet committees, however each committee may arrange for non-executive councillors or other individuals to attend meetings of the committee. Those people have all the same rights as to notification, attendance and speaking etc, as members of the committee other than the right to participate in a vote.

Local Issues – Cabinet Committee

Membership: Two Cabinet members with responsibility for the Place Portfolio and one Cabinet member with responsibility for the Corporate Services Portfolio. Ward councillors will be invited to attend and make representations, as appropriate, in relation to any matters affecting their wards.

Terms of Reference: To consider and ultimately determine whether to uphold or overrule objections to the establishment of pedestrian crossings, the installation of road humps and other traffic calming measures, the making of speed limit orders, traffic regulation orders or on-street or off-street parking places orders;

- i. To consider all highways petitions including those referred for consideration and/or decision from Council following a Council debate,
- ii. To consider reports on disposals of Council assets, with a capital value not exceeding £1,000,000, that have previously been approved by officers,
- iii. To consider and determine requests for the ally gating of footpaths under section 129A to 129G of the Highways Act 1980,
- iv. To consider and determine all matters relating to the use of 20mph zones and 20mph speed limits in accordance with the approved criteria,
- v. v. To consider and determine all matters in relation to local ward councillor objections to proposed highway improvements on the districts strategic network.

Asset Committee – Cabinet Committee

Terms of Reference: Delegated authority to consider and determine the following matters in circumstances that fall outside the current Officer Delegation Scheme1:

- i. Disposal of land and buildings up to the value of £1 million,
- ii. All formal Councillor objections to proposals for Officers to take decisions on assets in accordance with the Officer Delegation Scheme,
- iii. Asset transfers in accordance with the Council's Asset Advancement Policy2,
- iv. The future use of public buildings, including town halls and other buildings that provide services to the public,
- v. The allocation of resources in the Corporate Landlord Managed section of the Capital Plan,
- vi. Changes to the terms of leases and/or covenants,
- vii. Petitions on building issues referred for consideration and/or decision from the Council following a Council debate.

Delegations to Officers

Officers may discharge any executive function delegated to them by the Executive and included in the Officer Scheme of Delegation set out in Section F of The Council Constitution.

A Scheme of Delegation has been introduced that is founded on the principle of delegation “by exception”. That means that the delegating body delegates everything that can lawfully be delegated (both non-executive and executive functions) to a Strategic Director or, in appropriate circumstances, to the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning, the Service Director – Finance, or the Director for Public Health, save for exceptions which are listed in the constitution. Therefore, the listing is of what is not delegated, as opposed to a listing of what is.

Delegations to District Committees

The terms of reference of District Committees include or may from time to time include delegated responsibility for certain executive functions.

Delegations to Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing

Housing Management functions are delegated under Section 27 of the Housing Act 1985 to the council’s arms-length company Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, to the extent specified in the agreement with that company.

Delegations to Joint Committees

The Executive may establish joint committees with one or more local authorities to exercise functions which are executive functions. Any joint committee appointed in accordance with those arrangements may, subject to the terms of those arrangements, discharge those executive functions on behalf of the Executive. The following joint committees have been established to discharge certain executive functions:

- West Yorkshire Joint Services Committee dealing with trading standards, archives, archaeology and grants to voluntary organisations
- Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation originally established under an agreement dated 3 December 1976
- Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Broadband Consortium established under an agreement dated 22 June 2001
- Leeds City Region Leaders’ Board
- The Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee
- West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel
- One Adoption West Yorkshire

Delegations to other local authorities

		<p>The Executive may arrange for the discharge of any of their executive functions by the executive of another local authority. The Council has agreed the following arrangements for the exercise of certain executive functions by other local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discharge by Birmingham City Council of the Council's function relating to the enforcement of Part III of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (illegal money lending investigations and prosecutions) – approved by Cabinet on 15 October 2008). - Discharge by the Executive of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council of the Council's functions for making payments of loans approved under the "Breathing Space" scheme (the regional mortgage assistance loan scheme) – approved by Cabinet on 13 October 2009. - Delegation to Sheffield City Council of the Council's functions relating to the administration and payment of Home Appreciation Loans under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 – approved by Cabinet on 13 September 2006. - Discharge by Leeds City Council, Wakefield Council, Bradford Metropolitan Council, Calderdale Council and City of York Council of the Council's functions relating to the enforcement of Hackney and Private Hire matters under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 <p>Where joint arrangements with one or more other local authorities in respect of the discharge of an executive function cease to have effect, the Leader shall have power to make new joint arrangements to discharge those functions jointly with other local authorities and/or the executives of other local authorities as Appropriate.</p>
--	--	---

Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and

	<p>others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>
<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<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>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>We do not anticipate the proposed change to 21 wards impacting the current setup of committees which are as follows:</p> <p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Council • Council • Extraordinary Council <p>Executive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Cabinet Committee - Local Issues <p>Scrutiny</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calderdale and Kirklees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee • Children's Scrutiny Panel • Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel • Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel • Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel • North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (vascular services) • Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee • West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee <p>Planning Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Sub-Committee (Heavy Woollen Area) • Planning Sub-Committee (Huddersfield Area) • Strategic Planning Committee <p>Please note that there has been a proposal via Corporate Governance and Audit Committee to reduce the number of planning committees to two. This is currently working through</p>

		<p>the decision flight path with an intention to implement the changes at the next Annual Council in May 2024.</p> <p>Other Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals Panel • Corporate Governance and Audit Committee • Corporate Parenting Board • Dewsbury Town Board • Health and Wellbeing Board • Kirklees Schools Forum • Licensing and Safety Committee • Licensing Panel • Personnel Committee • Regulatory Panel • Standards Committee • Statutory Officer Dismissal Committee <p>As many of our committees, such as Scrutiny Panels, Corporate Governance & Audit Committee and Strategic Planning Committee work very well with seven members, we believe that other committees with a greater membership could be reduced to seven members. This would reduce the demand on members to sit on committees.</p>
Statutory Function		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>
Planning	Key lines of explanation	<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 Council has three committees associate with planning as follows:</p> <p>The Planning Sub Committee (Heavy Woolen District) has delegated powers to determine Planning, Development Management and Highways functions for the electoral areas of Batley, Birstall and Birkenshaw, Cleckheaton, Denby Dale, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike, Kirkburton, Liversedge and Gomersal, and Mirfield, except those matters which are applicable to the Terms of Reference of Strategic Planning Committee. This committee has 12 members.</p>

		<p>The Planning Sub Committee (Huddersfield) has delegated powers to determine Planning, Development Management and Highways functions for the electoral areas of Almondbury, Ashbrow, Colne Valley, Crosland Moor and Netherton, Dalton, Golcar, Greenhead, Holme Valley, Lindley, and Newsome, except those matters which are applicable to the Terms of Reference of Strategic Planning Committee. This committee has 13 members.</p> <p>The Strategic Planning Committee has delegated authority in respect of all Planning, Development Management and Highways functions, except those matters which are applicable to the Terms of Reference of the Planning Sub Committees. The Committee's powers include the determination of applications which straddle the boundaries of the Planning Sub Committees, and also those which straddle administrative boundaries of other Local Authorities. The committee has seven members.</p>
Licensing	<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<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?
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Licensing and Safety Committee comprises of 15 Councillors and has delegated responsibility in respect of all the Council's functions under the Licensing Act 2003, the Gambling Act 2005, and the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013. The Committee meets on an ad-hoc basis and considers policy matters under the terms of the 2003, 2005 and 2013 Acts.</p> <p>Licensing and Safety Committee tends to be held on a quarterly basis lasting around one hour.</p> <p>The Licensing Panel is a Sub Committee of the Licensing and Safety Committee and considers applications under the Licensing Act 2003, the Gambling Act 2005, and the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, including applications for licences, certificates, temporary event notices and all variations, transfers, withdrawals and reviews of such matters. This panel has 3 Councillors and meets on an ad hoc basis, normally every one or two months.</p> <p>We believe that the Licensing Committee could operate just as well with fewer members, reducing the work demand on councillors.</p>

Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require? ➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.
	Analysis	Not required.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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? ➤ 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? ➤ What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?
Analysis		<p>Most Kirklees councillors sit on outside bodies, such as local charities, and regional partner bodies such as the WYMCA committees. The workload for this is not onerous and would usually involve a maximum of four meetings per year. Many of these positions are held by backbench members, although some are required to be cabinet members due to the nature of the body.</p> <p>The council also nominates four members to the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority and three to the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel. These members would be expected to attend eight to twelve meetings per year and receive an extra allowance.</p> <p>Please find attached the 'Outside Bodies' list as an appendix to this document.</p>

Community Leadership

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

Topic	Description	
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	➤ In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>Councillors communicate with their residents face-to-face, by phone, email and, increasingly, via social media. It is very much the decision of the councillor how much and how they interact with their communities, and the use of social media and email has made keeping in touch with the electors easier.</p> <p>Surgeries are becoming less and less favoured as a means of engaging with residents, due to the cost of venues and safety concerns. The pandemic also saw some community groups discontinue resulting in fewer community meetings to attend. Some community groups have transferred their meetings online, which saves travel time.</p> <p>Some of our councillors are also elected to parish and town councils, but only a small proportion of the borough is parished.</p> <p>The council currently does not operate area committees. Each ward receives funds for local projects or to award as grants, and the councillors are expected to work together in the ward to decide how this money is spent. They are assisted by an officer who carries out the administrative and procedural tasks.</p>
<p>Casework</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i>

		<p>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Each councillor operates their own preferred way of dealing with casework. More recently the council introduced a Councillor Enquiries function as an interface between councillors and services to help with casework, and this is being continually adapted and improved.</p> <p>Each councillor is offered a laptop, printer, internet connection and mobile phone, although some choose to use their own equipment.</p> <p>Most contact with residents is now digital, in contrast to fifteen years ago when most contact was by phone, by letter or in person. This means that councillors have greater opportunity to carry out their ward work away from home or in and amongst other commitments such as work.</p> <p>Another very important aspect of a councillor's work is receiving briefings from officers, at a ward- or strategic-level. These are almost all done now online, resulting in much less travelling to council buildings at central venues.</p>

Other Issues

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

Nothing further.

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

Recommendation

The Conservative Group recommends that the council size is reduced from 69 to 63 members, comprising 21 wards (rather than 23) of three members each.

Reasons:

- The average ward electorate for a 21-ward council would be nearer the size of the largest wards currently – Lindley, Mirfield or Holme Valley South. The ward councillors in these areas carry out their work well, and do not struggle because of the size of the electorate.

- Residents are now much more frequently contacted through email or social media, and face-to-face surgeries are much less frequent. Surgeries now, unfortunately, present their own personal safety issues which again lends itself to greater online activity and communication. Larger electorates, therefore, are no longer as disadvantageous.
- There would be a commensurate saving to the council on councillor allowances, councillor officer support and the cost of equipping councillors with the necessary IT etc.
- Because of the large size of some of the Kirklees polling districts (>2,500 voters), we do not believe it would be possible to sensibly re-ward without splitting polling districts, unless the size of the wards was increased as per our proposal.
- We believe it is possible to re-ward with 21 wards and keep communities together without splitting polling districts.
- The average ward electorate, although high in comparison with most metropolitan councils, would still be substantially below that of our neighbour, Leeds City Council.