

North West Leicestershire District Council

Council Size Submission

On behalf of North West Leicestershire District Council

Contents

How to Make a Submission	2
About You	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)	2
Local Authority Profile	4
Council Size	8
Other Issues	19

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 made by Full Council and Officers of North West Leicestershire District Council.](#)

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.*

[At the request of the commission, due to electoral representation inequality in a number of wards.](#)

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?

In March 2011 the council requested that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) undertook a review of its wards and in doing so asked that the LGBCE give consideration to the creation of single member wards. The LGBCE commenced that review in December 2012 and its recommendations and full report were published on 25 February 2014. The North West Leicestershire (Electoral Changes) Order 2014 was made on 5 November 2014 and the new arrangements came into effect at the May 2015 elections.

At the time of the last review, the council had 38 councillors representing 20 wards. The recommendations of the LGBCE supported that the council size should remain the same, however, in line with the submissions it received, it recommended that the number of wards be increased to 38 with a pattern of single-member wards. Consequently, there are currently 38 councillors who represent 38 wards in the district with elections held every four years. The Cabinet Executive is made up of seven members from the Alliance administration, and the Leader of the council appoints the Deputy Leader plus five members to sit on this Committee.

The council's [Constitution](#) is subject to a continuous review process and a delegation by exception scheme forms an integral part of the arrangements. The Constitution underwent a major revision and the new version, which was actively reviewed by Members, was approved by Council on 23 February 2023. Amendments to the Constitution are brought before Council as part of the continuous review process.

Since the last boundary review the council has undertaken both a [Planning Peer Review](#) (February 2018) and a [Corporate Peer Review](#) (June 2019). Both reviews were carried out by the LGA. The Corporate Peer Review stated that "there was a positive feel to North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC). Staff were enthusiastic and optimistic about the future, and councillors were keen to look forward and do their best for their communities. The council had large scale developments within its borders, for example East Midlands Gateway and partnership working was strong".

A new Chief Executive was appointed in August 2022 and the last district elections were held in May 2023 and as a result the council has an Alliance administration made up of Conservative, Liberal Democrat and two independent councillors. Regular Corporate Leadership Team meetings and Cabinet meetings take place to agree the strategic direction and long-term planning of the council.

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?

North West Leicestershire District is situated at the centre of England, to the north west of the County of Leicestershire and covers an area of 279km. The population is 104,705¹ living within approximately 44,971 households. North West Leicestershire is one of seven Leicestershire district authorities, and is bordered by Charnwood, Erewash, Hinckley and Bosworth, Lichfield, North Warwickshire, Rushcliffe and South Derbyshire. The district of North West Leicestershire is a mixture of urban and rural settlements with 58%² of the population living in areas classed as ‘largely rural’, with a diverse set of needs. The district contains 56 settlements with Coalville, Ashby de la Zouch, Castle Donington, Measham, Kegworth and Ibstock are the most significant settlements in terms of population.

Major transport links run through it such as the M1, A42(M), A50 joining to thoroughfares to the neighbouring conurbations of Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Birmingham. Travel-to-work patterns indicate a strong functional relationship between neighbouring districts, the cities of Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Birmingham and many settlements in the district. The district has no railway station so there is a high dependence on motor vehicles. The nearest railway stations are at East Midlands Parkway, Loughborough, Burton upon Trent and Tamworth. The district is home to East Midlands Airport and within easy travelling distance of Birmingham International Airport.

The district makes a desirable place to live being at the centre of the National Forest, with plenty of green spaces and leisure activities to hand, such as walking and cycling. The district has a strong sense of heritage and attracts many tourists to enjoy the attractions such as Conkers, Ashby Castle, Moira Furnace, the Ashby Canal and Snibston Colliery Park. Donington Park – home to the Download Festival, which attracts over 130,000 visitors and a major motor sports venue is in the north of the district. There are important routes to employment in conurbations such as Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Birmingham but

¹ .ONS 2021 Census

² Source: 2011 Local Authority Rural Urban Classification, DEFRA, 2014

additionally there are a wealth of major employers with their headquarters within the district such as Barratt Developments plc, Ibstock Brick, Bloors and Ceva Logistics to name but a few. North West Leicestershire District is ranked as the 216th least deprived district in England³. The district has seen not only some of the highest population growth in the country in recent years but also a large increase in the number of employees in employment.

Council Delivery Plan 2023-2028

Our vision is that we support a clean, green and prosperous place where people want to live, work and visit.

Our plan period is for 2023-2028 and our four priorities are:

- Planning and regeneration - This priority is about economic growth and physical development of the district.
- Clean, green and Zero Carbon - This priority is about looking after the environment we live in.
- Communities and housing - This priority is about looking after our tenants and keeping our communities safe.
- A well-run council - This priority is about making sure our services are provided in a positive and friendly way, that we provide good value for money and that our finances are in good order.

The plan links the council's priorities directly to departmental business plans and the work of each service through their service plans. Performance is monitored throughout the year against the objectives.

Key Statistics:

- The current population of the district is 104,705.
- The population is forecast to be 118,400 by 2028⁴, which is a 15.9% increase from 2018. This is within the third highest percentage group of all UK Local Authorities.
- The registered electorate as at December 2020 is 77,412 which means that approximately 3.2% of the adult population are not registered to vote. The council has a high level of uptake on the Electoral Register with approximately 96.8% of the adult population currently registered to vote.
- The age profile as at 2019 shows that those aged 17 and under made up 20% of the population, 18-64 years were 62% and those aged 65 and over make up 18%. Like nationally, the district will see rising numbers of the population being over 65 and particularly, those aged over 80s can see issues with accessing services, especially those living in rural areas with little or no public transport.
- Between 2011 and 2021 there has been an increase of 30.0% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 9.1% in people aged 15 to 64 years and an increase of 5.2% in children aged under 15 years.
- 4.1% of residents identify as from a Minority Ethnic Group⁵ in the district.
- North West Leicestershire secured 109.0 (2020) in the index of health – above the average England 100.0

³ IMD 2019

⁴ ONS Population forecast (2018) NOMIS

⁵ 2021 Census

- There are 2 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) that are within the 10% most deprived LSOAs nationally and 4 LSOAs that are within the least deprived LSOAs nationally.
- On the whole, employment is high with 82% of the working age population being economically active.⁶
- 57% of those aged 16+ are employed within management and professional occupations.⁶
- North West Leicestershire experiences the second highest earnings in Leicestershire. The gross annual earnings for NWL residents in 2022 was £28,733, the average for Leicestershire is £28,031 and England is £28,000. However, earnings were higher for male employees than female employees (as is the case in the County and nationally due to more females working part-time).⁷
- Generally, unemployment is lower than average, being currently 2.1% in the district versus 3.3% for the East Midlands and 3.7% for Great Britain. (October 2023)⁸
- Unemployment in the 18 to 24 year age group is higher at 3.6% when compared to the general population but is below both the East Midlands as a whole at 4.6% and Great Britain at 5.0%.⁸
- The district receives 8.16% of the council tax collected. This is £5.6m out of a total of £69.2m. A band D property was £1,960.24, which is the total for the district, county, police and fire.
- The council manages a housing stock of 4,095 homes.
- Since Covid, the council has seen a rise in enquires relating to homelessness as shown in the table below.

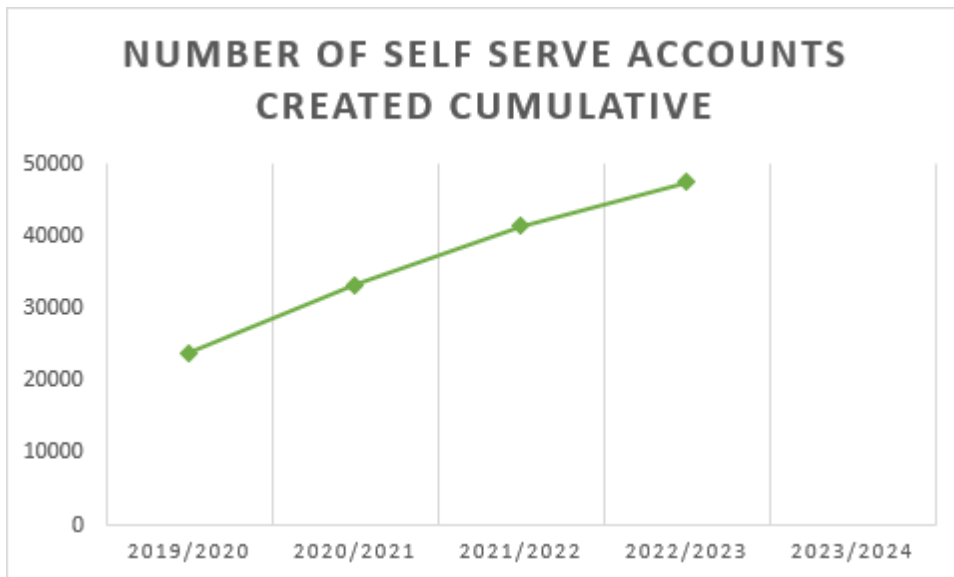
Year	Total Cases	Change
2019	370	N/A
2020	346	6.5%
2021	368	6.4%
2022	410	11.4%

- The use of the council's website to access information and services, including the submission of online forms, continues to grow. There are a total of 50,572 people signed up to 'My Account'. Many services, such as finding out the day of local bin collections, moving in notifications for council tax and Licensing applications are now available online, with 154 customer-facing forms available.

⁶ Source: Nomis ONS Annual Population Survey 2022-23

⁷ Source: Nomis Annual Survey of Earnings and Incomes 2022

⁸ Source: ONS Claimant Count October 2023



Forecast Growth:

- The district’s growth is planned to ensure that housing is directed to the most sustainable locations[1]. The total number of households at the time of the 2021 Census was **44,974**.
- Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023, a total of **1,692** new homes were built in North West Leicestershire. As at 1 April 2023, we project a further **5,375** new homes will be built at committed sites[2] by the end of the current Local Plan period (i.e. between 2023 to 2031). A further **1,388** dwellings are forecasted to be built at committed sites between 2031 and 2040.
- Of the **6,763** dwellings projected to be built up to 2040:
 - **2,826** dwellings are at South East Coalville, a sustainable urban extension comprising a total of 3,496 dwellings (net).
 - A further **1,888** dwellings are forecast at Money Hill in Ashby de la Zouch.
 - A total of **677** dwellings are at sites previously stalled by HS2 (426 in Measham and 251 in Kegworth).
- We are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, which will cover the 2020 to 2040 period. The Local Plan is based upon a housing need of **686 dwellings per annum (13,720** over the total plan period).
- Taking into account completions since 2020 plus our committed housing growth, the council needs to plan for a further **5,693** dwellings by 2040. Officers have identified their preferred sites and anticipate these will go out to consultation in January 2024 (subject to members agreement at Local Plan Committee on 17 January). This includes a projected 1,900 dwellings by 2040 at a new settlement (Isley Woodhouse), which is a site that is anticipated to deliver 4,500 dwellings in total.

Key Future Challenges and Priorities:

These are set out in the [Council Delivery Plan 2023-2028](#) and include:

- To adopt a new Local Plan.

- To deliver the Coalville Regeneration Framework.
- To develop a regeneration framework and be on the way to supporting thriving towns, villages and communities across the district
- To balance budget every year and reduce forecasted funding gap to zero.
- To deliver the zero-carbon programme, reduce energy use, reduce impact on the environment, and reduce carbon emissions from all council operations by 2030.
- To provide a high-quality housing service to council tenants and ensure private rental tenants across the district are able to live safely in their homes.

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		
Governance Model	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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 has adopted a Leader and Cabinet structure.</p> <p>The Cabinet comprises the Leader of the council together with at least two, but no more than nine other councillors, one of whom will be the Deputy Leader, all appointed by the Leader. Therefore, the council would</p>

		<p>need between three and ten councillors on the Cabinet including the Leader.</p> <p>Cabinet members have specific responsibilities for particular services, however, the Cabinet takes collective decisions within the budget and policies agreed by the Full Council. There is no provision for individual Portfolio Holder decisions.</p> <p>The composition and functions of the Council, Cabinet and non-executive committees are set out in the council's Constitution which provides a comprehensive framework for the management of the council's business. In addition, the constitution sets out how joint arrangements will operate and where functions have been delegated to other authorities. The constitution contains a Scheme of Delegation to delegate functions to officers, including specific delegations to 'designated officers'.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committees hold the Cabinet Executive to account. Policies setting out how services will be delivered to customers are decided by councillors. Both Scrutiny and the Portfolio Holders are actively involved in policy development and approval will be made by Council or in certain cases delegated to Cabinet Executive.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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>There are currently seven Portfolios which broadly reflect the service groups within the council. Each Member has an area of special responsibility covering numerous service areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leader 2. Community and Climate Change 3. Housing and Property 4. Planning 5. Corporate 6. Business and Regeneration 7. Infrastructure <p>The Roles and Responsibilities of councillors are set out in the Constitution This includes the role of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders and what is required of them.</p>

		<p>Portfolio Holder roles are intensive with a broad range of responsibilities, some are also appointed to other appropriate committees including the Appointments Committee. Portfolio Holders can also be appointed to Community Bodies and represent the council on external partnerships. Cabinet Members cannot be Members of the Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee, however they are required to attend meetings. They are supported by the Corporate Leadership Team. The role is not a full-time position and Portfolio Holders currently combine their role with employment and other commitments.</p> <p>There are no delegated powers to individual Portfolio Holders but Cabinet may delegate authority to officers in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.</p>
<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Part 2 of the council’s Constitution details the responsibility for functions for Council, Cabinet and officers. This also includes the roles and responsibilities of the Cabinet members, Scrutiny Committees, other regulatory committees and the Corporate Leadership Team.</p> <p>Day-to-day decision-making is carried out by the appropriate officers in accordance with the officer Scheme of Delegation at section G of Part 2.</p> <p>Section C of Part 2 sets out the functions carried out by Full Council. All 38 councillors are members of Full Council and take part in the decision-making at the meetings.</p> <p>Section E of Part 2 sets out the Scheme of Delegation and terms of reference for Cabinet. Cabinet consists of seven members.</p> <p>The Constitution is reviewed annually and any changes are reported to and agreed by Council. A full review of the Constitution was carried out in 2022 and was adopted by Council in February 2023.</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 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	<p>Since the last boundary review the council reviewed its scrutiny function in February 2019. It was agreed that the existing Policy Development Group was becoming increasingly engaged and proactive, resulting in very long agendas being produced for meetings, which required a significant management in terms of content and time and therefore not allowing proper scrutiny of the items before the members.</p> <p>The Policy Development Group was decommissioned and two scrutiny committees, Community Scrutiny and Corporate Scrutiny, were established with equal standing and functions but each with focus on certain policy areas. Each committee is supported by a director.</p> <p>The Corporate Peer Review in June 2019 identified that the council needed to continue to improve the scrutiny function. It noted that it needed to be more robust and be seen to be more robust. Exploring good practice regarding scrutiny, such as training and make better use of working groups, establishing a forward-looking work programme and involve scrutiny early in the decision-making progress.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committees support and challenge the work of the Cabinet and the council as a whole. They may be supported by sub-committees or task and finish groups.</p>

	<p>Each committee is made up of 10 members and cannot be the same members as the Audit and Governance Committee. Cabinet Members cannot sit on the Scrutiny Committees or any of their sub-committees.</p> <p>The Committees may hold inquiries into matters of local concern in which the public may take part and may invite external bodies to provide evidence or appear before it. This sometimes leads to reports and recommendations, which advise the Cabinet, the council as a whole, and, in some cases, outside agencies, on policies, budgets, and service delivery. An annual report is provided to Council on the work of the Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>A scrutiny work programming group has been established, which includes the Chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees, directors and other political party members. It considers requests for inclusion on the work programmes of each committee, reviews any follow up work required after previous scrutiny and considers the delivery plan and the Executive Decision Notice to identify any key issues/topics for investigation or inquiry. All items are considered alongside a set of criteria and principles.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committees also monitor the decisions of the Cabinet and of Key Decisions that have been taken but not yet implemented. Non-Cabinet councillors can 'Call-in' these decisions to enable the relevant Scrutiny Committee to consider whether the decision is appropriate. The relevant Scrutiny Committee may recommend that the decision is reconsidered by Cabinet.</p> <p>The Corporate Scrutiny Committee supports and informs Cabinet's monitoring of the budget and Treasury Management functions throughout the year. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee will exercise the council's budget scrutiny function and will hold the Cabinet and others to account in scrutinising the preparation and development of the council's Budget.</p> <p>The Community Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee may also be consulted by the Cabinet or the Council on forthcoming decisions and the development of policy.</p> <p>Since 2020, four task and finish groups have been held.</p>
<p>Statutory Function</p>	<p>This includes planning, licencing, and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How</p>

		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>Currently 2% of planning applications are considered by Planning Committee and 98% are delegated to officers. Section D4 of Part 2 of the Constitution sets out the matters reserved for Planning Committee. The Chairman of the Committee, in consultation with the Strategic Director, has the authority to approve or sanction call-in requests from ward members.</p> <p>The authority undertook a LGA Planning Peer Review in 2018 and the following changes were made to the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in membership size from 17 to 11; • Seating in alphabetical order rather than in political parties; • Committee briefings to be held the week before the committee rather than on the committee day itself; • More comprehensive training for the committee members and appointed substitutes. <p>The council has a single District wide Planning Committee and comprises of 11 members. The Portfolio Holder is not eligible for membership of the Committee and other executive members will not normally be members of the Committee, however, they can be appointed as substitutes, if required.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Committee has agenda briefings prior to committees to consider items that are coming forward and to consider any call-in requests.</p> <p>The Committee meets every month, which requires time from the members to read the agenda and reports, along with any background papers or information that can be found on the planning portal, via the website. Additional meetings may be called to determine bigger applications. Members of the Committee are invited to attend remote technical briefings, which are held a few days prior to the committee meeting. The session allows members to ask any technical questions of, or request further information from, officers to assist the</p>

		<p>committee with the decision making at the committee meeting. There are no planned site visits, unless requested, but some members of the committee do take the opportunity to view the site (from the public footpath) themselves.</p> <p>Members are required to attend a mandatory training session following their appointment at Annual Council.</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 consists of 15 members and meetings are scheduled four times a year. Licensing Committee is also able to convene sub-committees for the following:</p> <p>Licensing sub-committees – To hear and determine licensing applications, reviews of premises licenses and consider opposed temporary event notices when such matters arise.</p> <p>Taxi and Private Hire sub-committees - To hear and determine applications for taxi and private hire drivers' licences and reviews of licences when such matters arise.</p> <p>When convened, the sub-committees are made up of three members plus a reserve member selected from the appointed membership of the Licensing committee. In the civic year 2022/23 there were no Taxi and Private Hire sub-committees and five Licensing sub-committees convened.</p> <p>Members of the Licensing Committee are required to attend training before sitting on the Committee and any sub-committees. The training is refreshed annually following reappointments at Annual Council meetings each year in May. Prior to committee and sub-committee meetings, members will have significant information to read and consider.</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	<p>Audit & Governance Committee</p> <p>Audit and Governance Committee is made up of 10 members in political balance and these cannot be members of Cabinet or Scrutiny Committees. The council agreed during the last review of the Constitution to co-opt two independent persons</p>

		<p>to the Committee to advise on finance matters or to sit on a sub-committee of the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to standards matters and The council is in the process of recruiting to these roles. Such independent persons are not entitled to vote at meetings. The scope of the committee is to provide independent assurance to those charged with governance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment, provide an independent review of the council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversee the financial reporting and annual governance process and oversee internal audit and external audit arrangements, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance mechanisms are in place.</p> <p>The Committee has five meetings a year and all members are required to attend mandatory training following their appointment by Annual Council. Further training sessions are held throughout the year for members of the Committee to attend.</p> <p>Sub-committees of the Audit and Governance Committee are formed on an ad hoc basis to deal with local assessment of councillor conduct complaints as required by the Monitoring Officer. The sub-committees are made up of three members drawn from the main committee membership. In the Civic year 2022/23 one assessment sub-committee was held and there were no determination sub-committees</p> <p>Employment Committees</p> <p>The Council also appoints to the following committees to advise on employment matters:</p> <p>Appointments Committee – four members plus the relevant Portfolio Holder.</p> <p>Investigatory Committee – five members.</p> <p>Employee Joint Consultative Committee – six members who sit alongside six representatives from recognised trade unions.</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> 	

	<p>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></p>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>A number of councillors are appointed to external bodies at the Annual Council meeting. The external bodies range from national appointments such as the LGA, regional bodies such as East Midlands Councils and local and consultative groups and community organisations. These appointments vary in nature and workload, dependent on the Terms of Reference of the body they are appointed to. Some of the appointments are allocated to Cabinet members based on their portfolio responsibilities and others being allocated to ward councillors where the body operates within their ward. A full list of the Community Bodies can be found here</p> <p>The council currently participates in the following joint arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council has entered a joint arrangement with neighbouring district councils and the county council for the enforcement of decriminalised parking. • The council has entered a joint arrangement with neighbouring councils for the administration of Revenues and Benefits. • The council has entered a joint arrangement with the local authorities in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland for the establishment of a Police and Crime Panel. • The council has entered a joint arrangement with neighbouring district councils under which Blaby district council discharges the council's functions in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants. • The council has entered a joint arrangement with Charnwood Borough council under which Charnwood Borough council discharges the council's functions in relation to Building Control.

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
	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors? ➤ Does the council have area committees and what are their powers? ➤ How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs? ➤ Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies? ➤ Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play? ➤ Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?
Community Leadership	Analysis	<p>Councillors are actively involved within their Wards and most consider themselves to play a pro-active part in the communities they represent. The approach taken varies from councillor to councillor but all are involved in some or all of the following as part of their engagement with constituents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casework/Constituency matters • Town and Parish council meetings • Community/resident meetings <p>Out of the 38 members 16 are “twin-hatted” representing Town and Parish councils in North West Leicestershire, one member is “twin-hatted” representing Leicestershire County council and two members are triple-hatted representing both Parish and County councils. The council does not have any area committees in the district. There is a Special Expense budget for the nine unparished areas, which is considered by a working party, whose membership is made up of the Ward Members of those areas. The minutes of the working party and any recommendations are then considered by Cabinet.</p> <p>A survey was carried out with Members in October 2023 from which 23 responses were received. The survey shows</p>

		<p>that a variety of methods are used to communicate with constituents. The top three methods of communication were council email 95%, face to face 87% and telephone 83% Other methods of communicating with residents included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media/website • Newsletters • Parish/Village magazine articles • Surgeries • Letters <p>The Members survey indicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78% of the members, who have them in their ward, attend Parish/Town council meetings on a monthly basis. Those that are twin-hatted attend in their Parish capacity only. • Members indicated they spend an average of between five to 40 hours per week on district council business, spending most time reading reports and attending council or Parish/Town council meetings. • All but one of the members stated that they consider this amount of time to be proportionate. • Including attendance at Full Council, each member is appointed, on average, to 2.4 committees. • Data collected for the review indicated that there were 60 Council and committee meetings in 2022/23 and out of these, 11 were cancelled. This figure does not include Working Groups or briefings.
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>
	Analysis	<p>The council provides Members with a casework management system to report casework through. Members are encouraged to log the issues themselves or email the enquiry to the Member Services Team to log for them. The system provides each member with a unique case number which allows members to monitor the progress of the enquiry and logs the outcome to each case. The system also records if a case falls under the area of another member and allows the relevant ward member to also be kept up-to-date.</p> <p>The Member Services Team provides a first point of contact for member enquiries and signposting on any other issue. The team consists of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 2.3</p>

		<p>Officers with additional support from the Democratic Services Team Manager and the Head of Legal and Support Services who is also the Monitoring Officer. The team administers a Member's Hub via a Teams page that provides Members with vital information, councillors and committees webpage, which includes all the committee dates, agendas and paperwork. The hub also has a council news section and access to online reporting forms such as councillor enquiries and planning call-in requests.</p> <p>Due to Covid, technology became an integral part of allowing members to carry out their roles and it has continued to play an important role. Each member is provided with a council email address following their election and provided with either a laptop or surface pro to enable them to carry out council business. All committee meetings are face-to-face, however, officer meetings, briefings and some working parties offer a hybrid option for members to attend.</p>
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Other Issues

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

Attendance at meetings:

Since the May elections current meeting attendance is 88%. In the civic year 2022/23 it was 82.7%

Financial Considerations:

The total paid out in Members Allowances for 2022/23 was £303,656.19. This amount includes both the basic allowance and any special responsibility allowances.

Local Government Nearest Neighbour Group Comparisons:

Key council size data has been compared for statistically similar councils based on the groupings given by CIPFA's Nearest Neighbour Model for English authorities. The average Elector / Member Ratio of our Nearest Neighbours is 2059:1.

- The adult population is forecast to rise to approximately 89,606.
- Currently there are an average of 2,132 registered electors per Member of the council. This is higher than with Nearest Neighbour Authorities who have a mean of 2,059 per Member. This means if the number of Members remains at 38, by 2030, this would result in a ratio of 2,358.
- There is significant new housing developments being built across the district. The population forecast takes account of these increase in homes. This will be key when considering the next stage of the boundary review and potential changes to ward boundaries.

The table below shows the breakdown at council level.

Area	Number of electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of members :electors=
Newark and Sherwood	92,993	39	2384
Selby (former authority)	71,250	31	2298
Hinckley and Bosworth	87,897	34	2585
Bassetlaw	88,634	48	1846
North Warwickshire	49,266	35	1407
East Staffordshire	89,787	39	2302
Melton	41,914	28	1496
Ashford	97,371	47	2071
Tewkesbury	71,171	38	1872
Mendip (former authority)	89,755	47	1909
High Peak	73,170	43	1701
South Derbyshire	81,461	36	2262
Breckland	109,393	49	2232
Blaby	77,622	39	1990
Braintree	114,970	49	2346
North West Leicestershire	81,167	38	2135
Areas mean	82,364	40	2059

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.

During the process of preparing the submission, the Electoral Review Working Party convened to consider the options for the future size of the Council. The following Council size options were considered:

Retain the current number of 38:

Based on current forecast population for 2030 the ratio of number of electors to each councillor would be 2,358, which would be an increase of 226 on current numbers. This appears to be in line with other authorities that have undergone recent reviews.

In terms of workloads for members, the current model of governance, with 38 members, has been well established for a number of years. It has proven to work well, whilst being reviewed to ensure that it remains effective. Retaining 38 members would mean members would continue to serve on the same number of committees that they currently do.

Following a recent survey that was carried out with members it was acknowledged, that on the whole, members felt that their workload was proportionate and manageable. With the

ongoing development of digital technology, residents are better able to access information and services directly via the Council website but the Council does recognise that there are residents who do not have access to the internet or choose not to use it and prefer to contact their ward member for support. This was evidenced in the survey results with the top three methods of communication being email, face-to-face and telephone.

Remaining at the current number of 38 would not see any additional budget pressures to fund in relation to allowances and support to members during a time when the Council is facing ongoing financial pressures.

Reduction in numbers

Consideration was given to reducing the number of Councillors and although it could result in potential financial savings for the authority, it was felt that this could not be justified with the ongoing population growth, which is set to continue and therefore increasing the casework of the Councillors. As stated above. The current model of governance has been in place for a number of years and is well established. Reducing the number of Councillors could potentially mean that the governance and committee structures would need to be reviewed and amended and the Council does not see any justification for that.

Increase in numbers

Consideration was given to increasing the size of the Council, which was not felt to be necessary, despite the forecast growth in the population and therefore the electorate. A figure of 39 was investigated further, for which the ratio would be 2,297 electors to each councillor. An increase in numbers would see additional budget pressures to fund an increase in allowances and additional support required.

Recommendation:

Taking into account all relevant data and analysis, North West Leicestershire District Council proposes that its number of councillors remains at 38 to effectively operate and represent the electorate.