

Council Size Submission

North Kesteven District 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.
2. This template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses are should 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.

By law, the LGBCE have to take account of three main considerations when conducting an electoral review as set out in Schedule 2 of the Act:

- Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
- Reflect community identity
- Provide for effective and convenient local government

Electoral reviews are initiated primarily to improve electoral equality. This means ensuring as far as is reasonable, that for any principal authority the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral ward or division is approximately the same. Under the criteria adopted by the LGBCE, there are two conditions considered to warrant a review, if the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period:

- Any local authority with an electoral division or ward that has an electoral variance of 30% or over. This means a division or ward having 30% more or fewer electors per councillor than in average for the council as a whole, and;
- Any local authority where more than 30% of divisions or wards have an electoral variance of over 10% from the average for that authority.

North Kesteven District Council:

This is a submission made by North Kesteven District Council and was approved at a full meeting of the Council on 3 October 2019. The proposal received unanimous support from all NKDC Councillors present at the meeting.

North Kesteven – Current Imbalance:

The last Electoral review of NKDC was completed in 2005. This review has been triggered because nine of the Council's current 26 wards (34.6%) have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average. Two wards have a variance outside 20% with North Hykeham Memorial having 28% and Skellingthorpe having -30.3%. The Council recognises the importance of electoral equality for a fair democratic process by ensuring that each vote carries the same value as close as possible, whilst at the same time it must ensure that governance of the Council is maintained at a level which can best serve the electorate.

The aim of the preliminary stage of the electoral review is to determine the total number of councillors to be elected to the Council from the next elections in 2023. The figure will be determined after considering the governance arrangements of the Council, its scrutiny function, and the representational role of councillors in the local community, and consideration of the total number of councillors needed to most effectively take decisions, hold decision makers to account, discharge responsibilities and effectively represent local groups and people.

1. The Commission sets out that Council's should neither follow a strict mathematical formula nor simply adopt the size of comparable authorities in recommending a council size. It is worth noting at this point, that the overall trend is that local authorities are reducing the number of councillors or maintaining the status quo with only a few examples where numbers have been increased as part of strong evidence.
2. At this stage, the council size is a 'minded to' intention because the final number of councillors may be adjusted slightly (generally ± 1) where this would achieve a pattern that best reflects the three statutory criteria. The ultimate decision on council size cannot be taken until the Final Recommendations are presented to the Commission. These recommendations will bring together all the proposed electoral arrangements for formal approval.

North Kesteven Approach and Summary Conclusion:

The Council's submission has been developed and unanimously approved by a cross party working group consisting of two executive and three non-executive Members. The Council's submission addresses the key points raised in the LGBCE's technical guidance which emphasises the importance of submitting 'well-reasoned proposals that are based on the individual characteristics and needs of each local authority area and its communities'. All Members were invited to complete a questionnaire which resulted in 39 responses.

In developing this submission, the Council considered the existing number of Councillors as the starting basis and then considered whether or not there was evidence to support a variation of that number. The analysis, summarised in this submission, concludes that the status quo of 43 Councillors for North Kesteven District Council should be maintained. In arriving at that conclusion a number of factors have been taken into account that include: future potential changes in governance arrangements; local policy developments; and the representational role of elected members, with evidence gathered concerning the time commitments in discharging the functions of the elected member role. Consideration has also been given to population trends, any potential increase in electoral numbers through housing and other forms of growth and development.

The ultimate aim has been to reach a considered view as to what would deliver the most effective and efficient local administration system for the benefit of residents and communities within the District, in line with the Council's projected budget position. Retention of the current number of Members recognises that the councillor to elector ratio will increase alongside development growth in certain areas of the district by 2025, but is confident that efficiencies within existing activities can be achieved to minimise any potential impact on Councillors. The Council further believes that the number of 43 Councillors will ensure that the governance, decision making and scrutiny functions will not be compromised and will remain effective, whilst still ensuring Councillors are able to fulfil their representational role within their communities.

Local Authority Profile

4. 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 constraint 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 transitional populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
 - Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

The North Kesteven district covers an area of 356 square miles, has a current population of 115,900¹ and is located in the centre of the county of Lincolnshire. The District is mainly rural in nature and is characterised by small settlements and large areas of arable farmland. There are many small villages and several larger service villages. The main concentration of residents are located, however, in the two towns of Sleaford in the south and North Hykeham in the north, which adjoins the neighbouring City of Lincoln. 'LN6' is the name and brand for a significant employment area located in the local area of North and South Hykeham and south-west quadrant of the City of Lincoln. Whilst it has developed over time it is located largely within the District of North Kesteven and is the principal employment location for the District. The District has 60 parish and town councils (resulting in 75 wards) and 11 parish meetings.

An ambitious and forward thinking authority with five corporate priorities – Our Economy, Our Homes, Our Communities, Our Environment and Our Council, the Council's NK Plan sets out a ten year vision to deliver a range of services, making a difference for people and local communities in the District. North Kesteven is also a key player working closely alongside other Lincolnshire local authorities and partners to realise broader benefits that includes investment and infrastructure projects as part of the Greater Lincolnshire approach.

¹ All population figures from Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimates and forecasts using mid-year population projections for local authorities [ONS local authority population figures and projections](#)

North Kesteven has long been a desirable place to live, work and visit. Feedback from residents shows a high level of satisfaction with the way the Council runs things (94%) while 87% of residents believe the Council offers value for money and 73% feel the Council provides good quality services². It is consistently rated as one of the safest places in the country to live³.

The Council continues to own and manage its housing stock with 200 new homes recently built and has processes in place to support and guide tenants. It has also formed a wholly owned company 'Lafford Homes Ltd' that operates as a sustainable and flexible housing company and exemplar landlord focused on helping to meet the housing demands of local people. Members of the Executive Board are directors of the company, holding the company to account and monitoring performance against the Business Plan. The Council is also directly involved in the development of a new enterprise site to support business and employment growth alongside measures to forward further opportunities for start-up and growing businesses in Sleaford, North Hykeham and within the wider LN6 area. Although North Kesteven does not have a university, a small number of students may live within the district boundary to attend the nearby University of Lincoln, located within Lincoln City Council area. This number remains very small and the District is not subject to significant changing populations of students for electoral purposes.

The District is home to three armed forces bases and is a signatory to the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Covenant which outlines obligations to the Armed Forces at a local level. Service voters and spouses can register as an ordinary voter or as a service voter for a 5 year period - there are currently 413 service voters registered in the District. The Council is aware of recent announcements by the Ministry of Defence concerning an expansion of services at RAF Cranwell which will result in increased number of services personnel stationed at the camp and an increased need for housing provision within the RAF Cranwell site and off base. These developments are at an early stage and the expected level of impact on the number of electors in this area are as yet unknown (timescales could be 2025). This will be taken into account in the population projection figures for the appropriate polling district if figures are available and may need to be considered as part of the warding pattern process commencing in 2020. Currently options for RAF Waddington are being explored by the Ministry of Defence, to further develop its role as a specialist operating base, which would also mean some personnel increase. There are no expected personnel changes for RAF Digby.

The District experienced a 14.6% population growth between the 2001 and 2011 Census with a further 6.8% growth occurring from 2011 to 2018. The majority of this population increase has come from internal migration with a total net internal migration of 6,020 people between 2011 and 2017, which accounts for 81% of all population growth throughout the district. Within the same time period, international migration accounted for an increase of 655 people, only 9% of the total growth⁴. The remaining 11% comes primarily from "Special Category" migration which encompasses Members of the armed forces, which can be attributed to the cluster of RAF bases within the North Kesteven district. At the last Census in 2011, 98.4% of residents stated that they spoke English.

² NKDC Consultation on the NK Plan in October 2018

³ ONS national crime statistics 2011 - 2018

⁴ Office of National statistics (ONS) population and migration datasets at local authority level [ONS local authority population and migration datasets](#)

Given the consistency in population migration trends between 2011 and 2017 it is anticipated that population growth in North Kesteven will primarily come from internal migration over the coming years with a population forecast of 120,100 people by 2025 representing a further growth of 3.62% in the next 6 years⁵. North Kesteven has a distinctively high proportion of the population aged over 60 (28%), with 9.5% over 75. There is also a low proportion of young people aged 16-24 years of age (8.6%), but the largest age group recorded in the 2011 Census was 0-17 years of age and a proportion of these will now be of an age to register to vote in elections over the coming years.

The rate of housing development since 2010/11 to end of March 2019 has seen approximately 4,200 properties built across the District with the largest developments in the two towns of Sleaford and North Hykeham and a variety of large and medium sized villages in North Kesteven. The projected level of residential property development within North Kesteven up to 2025 is approximately 3,500 – 4,000 properties. This is based on data gathered as part of the 2018/19 five year housing land supply report. This data is not yet finalised and final checks regarding delivery are being carried out. This figure is regarded as providing the most accurate level of intended property growth within the District. Following the release of the Planning Practice Guidance update on 13 September 2018, there is far more emphasis on evidencing the deliverability of housing sites. Further to this, much more robust evidence from developers/landowners of major sites (10+ dwellings or sites of 0.5ha minimum) on the deliverability has been collected. This in turn provides justification for inclusion within the five year housing land supply. It is worth noting that more or less development could come forward during this time period, however, projections are based upon applicants or their agents supplying their delivery timescales at this time.

An increase in new housing developments does not directly correlate with population growth or result in an increased number of electors at a ward and district level. The population movement triggered by new developments is often local and within the existing housing stock rather than solely new gains into the local housing market. The predicted rate of electors per dwelling, vacancy rate and migration patterns all contribute to the anticipated impact on the number of electors registering to vote up to 2025.

It is recognised the rate of housing development will happen differentially across the District with varying timescales over the next five years. There are known hot spots of significant housing developments such as the Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs), which will come to fruition during the period of the review. Specific details of the expected housing developments over the next five years are required to be provided to the LG BCE by the Council alongside electorate forecast figures up to 2025. This information and data will be used as part of the LG BCE Warding Pattern Process, commencing in 2020, to ensure equal electoral representation across all wards in the District.

NK Councillors

Elections are held every four years. The Council does not play an overly active role in attracting new Councillors but does offer information and a guide on becoming an NK Councillor. Local elections have had the following uncontested Wards/Seats: 2007 saw three uncontested Wards returning 4 Members, in 2011 this number increased to seven Wards with 12 Members elected unopposed, reducing to two Wards in 2015 with

⁵ ONS mid-year population estimates – figures track trends and analysis of demographics including fertility, mortality and migration rates [ONS local authority population and migration datasets](#)

three Members elected unopposed and two Wards in 2019 with three Members elected unopposed. There have been no instances where the Council has been unable to discharge its duties due to a lack of Councillors.

The Council has a strong culture of learning and development to support Councillors in their roles and to ensure efficient and effective systems across the council. The Council continues to ensure that the principles and ethos contained within the Councillor Development Charter are applied to the North Kesteven Learning and Development support for Members. The Council has a cross party Member Development Panel that oversee the development of a continuous Councillor Learning and Development Programme, evaluate feedback from training events, review the Member Role Guide and input on other resources to support elected Members.

Council Size

5. 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

6. 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.

In relation to Governance, it is assumed that North Kesteven District Council will continue to operate with most of the existing governance structure. However, it is expected that Members would explore and review option's for committee and meeting structures as part of the normal Council processes as required.

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 have represents is most appropriate for the authority.</i>
	Analysis	The Executive Board was created in 2001 as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. In October 2010, the Council resolved to adopt the Stronger Leader and Executive model. With effect from May 2011, the Leader of the Council is elected for a four year term and appoints two or more Members (up to a maximum of 10 including the Leader) to the Executive Board.

Since 2011, the Executive Board has comprised of six Members and chaired by the Leader of the Council. The Membership of the Executive Board is not required to be politically balanced. The Executive Board is responsible for making all key decisions* and other policy/decisions except those that are the responsibility of the Council; the responsibility of the Planning, Licensing and Standards Committees; or decisions that are delegated to officers.

*Key Decision is one likely to:

- (a) result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or involves the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

Significant expenditure or savings mean:

- (i) Revenue: any contract or proposal with an annual payment of more than £50,000 of the appropriate and established revenue budget previously agreed by Council.
- (ii) Capital: any capital project with a value of more than £100,000 of the relevant and agreed capital budget previously approved by Council.

The Executive Board meet regularly with 11 meetings held in 2016/17, 10 in 2017/18 and 11 in 2018/19. The Board is collectively responsible for all of its decisions and actions taken with each Executive Board Member given an area of special responsibility. Each Executive Board Member works closely with the directors and heads of services and develop an in-depth knowledge of their special responsibility area. This knowledge and ongoing oversight is shared with the other Board Members and supports the decision making process for developments and decisions required by the Board in their areas of special responsibility.

The Council considers six Members to be the appropriate number for the Executive Board to effectively cover the breadth of service areas and deliver the leadership role required. The Board structure, having been in place for a number of years has shown six Members to work well permitting diverse opinions whilst small enough to not dilute opinions and reach consensus. The current Executive Board Members consider the structure appropriate and work load to be manageable. There has been no incidence of an Executive Board meeting having insufficient Members to hold a meeting.

		<p>There is sufficient evidence to show that the current structure is both efficient and effective, and should be maintained and so the model of governance is expected to continue. Although no increase in the size of the Executive Board has been deemed necessary, the Leader determines the make-up and should circumstances require a change, it is considered that there would be sufficient capacity within the existing 43 Councillors to incorporate any change. In the event of any increase to the size of the Board, all Councillor responsibilities and commitments would be reviewed to ensure a fair balance.</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>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<p>As stated above, the six Members of the Executive Board are collectively responsible for all decisions the Board make and actions taken. Each Member has an area of special responsibility covering numerous service areas. To view a breakdown of the service areas for each Executive Board member please see the NKDC website.</p> <p>The full terms of reference for the Council's Executive Board are available to view in the Council's Constitution on the NKDC website.</p> <p>The role of an Executive Board Councillor is not considered to be a full time position but the role demands considerable time. Councillors on the Executive Board are also Members of a planning committee and some Board Members are also appointed to other appropriate committees including the Appointments and Appeals Panel and Chief Executive Appraisal Panel. Board Members can also be Members of external partnerships, outside bodies and informal meetings representing the Council. Councillors on the Executive Board cannot be Members of any of the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels but are sometimes required to attend meetings. The Leader also attends quarterly meetings with other Lincolnshire Leaders and Chief Executives to facilitate and drive county matters and those comprising Greater Lincolnshire to shape and deliver the emerging shared ambition and vision for the Greater Lincolnshire area.</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>

	Analysis	Article 5 of the Council’s Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the Executive Board and Article 4 sets out the responsibilities of Council which includes receiving recommendations from the Executive Board on specific matters such as setting Council Tax levels, rent levels, treasury management strategy. Article 9 of the Council’s constitution outlines the delegated decision making powers allocated within the political structure and to officers in the Scheme of Delegation. The Constitution was last updated in May 2019.
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Accountability

7. 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	Key lines of explanation	<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 2001, the Council has three politically balanced Overview and Scrutiny Panels (OSP) with current Panels covering: Performance and Resources; Environment; and Communities and Economy. Each Panel has a Membership of 13 Councillors resulting in more places (39) than non-executive Members (37) and so two Members are required to sit on more than one panel.</p> <p>The quorum for an Overview and Scrutiny Panel is 5 Members attending and entitled to vote. The Council has not had any incidence of insufficient Members being in attendance for the meeting to be cancelled. However, in reviewing the attendance at all three Panels since 2016/17, attendance at the Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel is slightly lower than the other two Panels.</p> <p>Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel will undertake its role in accordance with the provisions in the Council’s Constitution, in addition to any legislative requirements and in conjunction with guidance set out in the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Guide. The functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Review or scrutinise or request a ‘call in’ decisions made by the Executive Board or Officer Decision Panel;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Make reports of recommendations to the Council or Executive Board; · Consider any matter affecting the inhabitants of North Kesteven; · Assist the Council and Executive Board with development of future policies and strategies; · Establish task and finish groups to carry out specific exercises and; · To consider Councillor Call for Actions. <p>Task and Finish groups are established as and when deemed necessary to undertake detailed investigations on behalf of their OSP. These will be stipulated within the work programme and new ones incorporated where necessary throughout the year. Up to five Task & Finish Groups are established across all three Panels each year – this number can vary. A Task and Finish group requires a minimum of 3 Members, with no maximum stipulated, but it is for the Panel to select as many as it is considered appropriate to enable sufficient ownership of the task, and enable the Group to proceed efficiently.</p> <p>The scrutiny function within North Kesteven has not changed significantly. However, there is currently a review of the scrutiny function taking place which may result in changes to the structure/approach, particularly as the number of seats supporting the three existing Panels requires two Members to sit on two Overview and Scrutiny Panels i.e. 39 seats with 37 non-executive Members available.</p> <p>The results from the questionnaire to Councillors show there is support for the current membership of 13 Councillors on each of the three Overview and Scrutiny panels. For Performance and Resources OSP 83% (30) of Councillors said ‘yes’ that 13 was the right number to be on the Panel, 81% (30) for Environment OSP and 83% (29) for the Communities and Economy OSP.</p>
Statutory Function		This includes planning, licensing 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

The vast majority of planning applications are determined by officers and helps to ensure that the Council meets performance standards to determine planning applications within 8 or 13 weeks, depending on application type, or other time period as agreed between the Council and the applicant.

The Council has two planning sub-committees; Lafford Planning Sub-Committee with 22 Members and Eastgate Planning Sub-Committee with 23 Members. Both consider planning applications or enforcement matters referred to committee for determination. Every Member including the Executive Board, currently sits on a sub-committee with the same Chairman and Vice-Chairman appointed to both sub-committees.

A Sub-Committee meeting is held at three weekly intervals and alternates between the two Sub-Committees. Each Sub-Committee therefore meets every 6 weeks and both committees will consider approximately 3 applications at each meeting. This current level of activity is not expected to diminish over the next few years. Prior to planning meetings Members must review documentation and undertake site visits, with Planning Officers, as appropriate.

The Planning Committee comprising all 43 Members of the Council considers matters of strategic importance as set out in the Council’s Constitution and meets approximately two/three times per year (as required).

An application can be referred to one of the two planning sub-committees by a local Ward Member where they have a material planning reason. The number of applications determined by Councillors has remained relatively consistent over the last three years and is shown in the table below. The level of delegation is not expected to change in order to deliver an effective decision making process.

Year	Number of planning applications	Proportion determined by Officers	Proportion determined by Members
2019/20 to date	556	97% (539)	3% (17)
2018/19	967	96% (928)	4% (39)
2017/18	1099	95% (1045)	5% (54)
2016/17	1075	96% (1027)	4% (48)

The Councillor questionnaire evidences there is strong support from a large percentage of Councillors (79%) for the membership of the planning committees to continue to include all 43 NKDC Councillors.

Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for Members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core Members and regular attendees, or will different Members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has a General Licensing Committee and an Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Committee with both comprised of the same Membership of 15 Councillors with the same Chairman and Vice-Chairman for both committees responsible for a wide variety of licence related and regulatory applications. Membership is politically balanced.</p> <p>Delegated powers are allocated to officers for licensing application decisions in the majority of cases with 99% of licensing decisions authorised by officers (1160 in 2018/19). The level of delegation is not expected to change in order to deliver an effective decision making process.</p> <p>The main committees each have a standing meeting with 3 or 4 held per year for all 15 Members to attend. The sub committees are organised on an ad hoc basis, as and when relevant applications are received. In 2018/19, there were 6 meetings of the Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Sub Committee and 6 meetings of the General Licensing Sub Committee. They comprise three Members appointed from the main Committee including the Chairman.</p> <p>Licensing activity is typical of a predominantly rural area and an important function of elected representatives. The level of licensing activity is not expected to significantly increase in the future.</p> <p>The Councillor questionnaire results show very high levels of support for the two licensing committees being comprised of 15 Councillors each, with 91% answering ‘yes’ that 15 Councillors is the appropriate Membership for the General Licensing Committee and 85% for the Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Committee and so the structure is considered appropriate for this function.</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>The Council has several other Committees including the Audit Committee, the Standards Committee, Members IT Reference Group and Member Development Panel that meet approximately on a quarterly basis or as required. The Appointments and Appeals Committee meets as required. Taking account of results of</p>

		<p>the Member questionnaire around the workload associated with the current number of committees, outside body appointments and partnerships appointed by the District Council, 71% concluded that this workload was 'just right'; thus it is considered to provide effective arrangements.</p> <p>North Kesteven is one of four local authorities that form the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee to deliver a Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and has three Members plus one named substitute serving on the Committee which has approximately four formal meetings per year. The Joint Committee is also required to attend several briefings and the Leader of each partner authority meets separately.</p> <p>The Council is also part of a Shared Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee with City of Lincoln Council that comprises two Members with two substitute Members that meets approximately four times per year.</p>													
External Partnerships	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will executive Members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies?</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>North Kesteven works with a range of partners to deliver some services. However, the number of requests to serve on Outside Body organisations has steadily reduced in recent years. In 2011, the Council made 77 appointments to 49 Outside Body organisations. In 2015, the Council had 39 Outside Body appointments with 59 total representatives appointed. In comparison 2019 sees the Council currently with 26 Outside Body appointments requiring 39 total representatives plus two reserves. The current list of 26 local organisations with the respective number of Member appointments to each is set out below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="591 1027 1861 1407"> <tr> <td>Active Lincolnshire</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Campaign for the Protection of Rural England - Lincolnshire Branch (CPRE)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Citizens Advice Mid Lincolnshire</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>East Midlands Councils (Leader of the Council + Deputy Leader as reserve)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 + 1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee (1 Non-Executive Member + reserve)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 + 1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Active Lincolnshire	1	Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board	1	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England - Lincolnshire Branch (CPRE)	1	Citizens Advice Mid Lincolnshire	2	East Midlands Councils (Leader of the Council + Deputy Leader as reserve)	1 + 1	Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee (1 Non-Executive Member + reserve)	1 + 1	Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Active Lincolnshire	1														
Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board	1														
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England - Lincolnshire Branch (CPRE)	1														
Citizens Advice Mid Lincolnshire	2														
East Midlands Councils (Leader of the Council + Deputy Leader as reserve)	1 + 1														
Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee (1 Non-Executive Member + reserve)	1 + 1														
Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership	1														

	Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire	1	
	Hill Holt Wood Ltd	1	
	LEADER – Kesteven Local Action Group	1	
	LGA - General Assembly (National) (Leader of the Council)	1	
	Lincoln Area Dial-A-Ride Management Committee	1	
	Lincolnshire Supported Housing Commissioning Partnership	1	
	Lincs Waste Management Partnership (Executive Member)	1	
	ONE NK Stakeholder Panel	3	
	Partnership NK	1	
	PATROL (Parking & Traffic Regulations outside London)	1	
	Sleaford Hospital Trustees Committee	1	
	Sleaford United Charity	1	
	Sleaford Regeneration Group	2	
	SPARSE Rural and Rural Services Network	1	
	Tenant Liaison Panel	5	
	Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board	1	
	Upper Witham Internal Draining Board	4	
	Whisby Nature Park Steering Board	3	
	Witham First District Internal Drainage Board	1	
	TOTAL	39 (2 reserves)	
	<p>In relation to the time spent on Outside Body related matters the majority of Councillors have indicated they spend less than 3 hours per week for each of the activities of reading papers (92%), attending meetings (91%) and other activities (96%). In a separate question 71% (27) of Councillors said the associated workload for committees, outside body organisations and partnerships appointed by the District Council was 'just right'.</p>		

Community Involvement

8. 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	
	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>
Community Leadership	Analysis	<p>NKDC 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"> • Holding surgeries – dealing with queries, providing advice and engaging with constituents face-to-face: • Constituency matters – emails, written, telephone responses • Community / Resident meetings • Working with and / or offering support to community groups and local organisations: • Attending Town and Parish Council meetings • Contact with parish/town councils. • Articles for parish/village magazines and newsletters, blogs and/or websites and social media <p>The Council does not have any area committees in the District and there is no Ward Member delegated budget. Through the Corporate Information team, Ward Members will have improved information and access to data relating to their area; the performance of the Council and other public services in their wards.</p> <p>The Council organises a series of dedicated events throughout the year focussing on engagement with young people and Councillors including Local Democracy Week events with students ranging from 15 – 18 years, NK Youth Council and a Question Time event for young people to meet and ask Councillors questions on their role. There are numerous other community events hosted by NKDC which Councillors are invited to attend throughout the year such as the NK Community Champions Awards in addition to other events hosted by</p>

		<p>external partners. The Council has a high level of uptake on the Electoral Register with approximately 95% of the population currently registered to vote.</p> <p>In the recent councillor questionnaire 82% (31) Councillors indicated they attend parish/town council meetings on a monthly basis. Where Councillors do attend meetings it is advised they have a District Council update on the agenda to ensure they have a distinguishable opportunity to provide updates and respond to enquiries in a District Councillor capacity. NKDC does not require or expect Councillors to attend all parish and town council meetings within their ward area. They are encouraged to ensure regular engagement and include updates on District matters through a variety of means available. Some Councillors for example have asked their parish or town councils to raise questions as they arise so they can be responded to promptly rather than waiting for issues to be raised at the next standard meeting while other Councillors host one meeting for all the parish chairs to attend on a regular basis.</p> <p>Approximately 50% of Councillors indicated they spend on average 1-5 hours per week on each of the following three activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading papers in preparation for a parish/town council meeting;• Attending a parish/town council meeting; and• Dealing with issues raised by parishes or constituents in the parish. <p>92% (35) Councillors stated that they consider this amount of time to be manageable. In the recent councillor questionnaire 21 NKDC councillors indicated they are additionally elected as a parish/town councillor. Where this is the case Councillors are advised to distinguish where they are acting in a District Council capacity for different agenda items.</p> <p>There has been steady interest in developing Neighbourhood Plans with seven successful Referenda held to date resulting in Neighbourhood Plans for nine parishes (of which there are two joint Plans). The Council continues to support a number of parishes who wish to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Including attendance at full Council, each Councillor is appointed, on average, to 5.6 committees as a full member. Data collected for the review indicated Councillors were expected to attend an average of 100 formal committee meetings per year.</p>
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		The current councillor electorate ratio is considered manageable with the existing 43 councillors. This ratio has increased from the average ratio of 1:1954 stated in the Boundary Commission 2004/05 Final Review to 1:2070 in 2019. The projected councillor electorate ratio for 2025 is 1:2134. This increase is considered manageable with the current number of 43 councillors.
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>Analysis</i>	<p>Councillors take accountability for their casework and manage their work load appropriately. The overwhelming majority of Councillors (92%) stated that they 'Very frequently' and 'Frequently' fully deal and respond to a request themselves and 73% said they would infrequently or never pass on a request for an NK officer to respond to on their behalf. Officer support is available to assist Councillors as and when requested to give information, technical and professional advice and guidance. Councillors are keen to ensure the residents issue is satisfactorily resolved and promote their community role. Continuing improvements to the Council's website have increased the amount of information and number of transactions with the Council that customers can access directly without necessarily needing to involve a councillor in the first instance. The Council has plans to take this further within the context of its medium term financial strategy.</p> <p>In May 2019, 20 new District Councillors were elected to NKDC. An induction training programme was provided to all Councillors in the months following the election. There is an ongoing Councillor Learning and Development programme in place available to support all Councillors in their various roles. The Democratic Services Team provides a first point of contact for Member enquiries, signposting guidance on the Member constituency role and offer a Buddy system, particularly aimed at new Members. Technical and professional support is available from specific officers. In the two tier local authority system within Lincolnshire there are a proportion of enquiries that are not district council related and will require a parish/town council or county council response. Officers provide support on directing the public to the appropriate authority for investigation and response.</p> <p>Technology, primarily in the form of iPads, has been incorporated into the Councillor role to enable a more mobile, responsive and interactive service as well as reduce unnecessary paper consumption. All Councillors are issued an NKDC iPad to use for district council business. All meeting agendas, minutes and communications are sent electronically. Wherever possible all information and documentation from Officers is</p>

		<p>sent to Councillors electronically. The iPads also allow more flexibility in timing for Members when conducting councillor related matters.</p> <p>A weekly e-newsletter 'Members Link' is emailed to all Councillors every Friday keeping them up-to-date on current news, issues and events going on throughout the Council and the District.</p> <p>Analysis from the Councillor survey indicates 71% (27) of Councillors consider the associated workload is just right for the number of committees, outside body organisations and partnerships they are appointed to by the District Council. However, 71% (17) of returning Councillors commented that the workload had increased over the past 12 months. Although the number of formal NK meetings decreased slightly to 100 for 2018/19 when compared with 104 (2017/18) and 98 in 2016/17, it can be concluded that numbers have not significantly changed. These meetings include Task and Finish Groups and licensing and taxi related Hearings, which are ad-hoc because of the nature of these meetings. In terms of supporting the governance structure including quasi-judicial, the Council with 43 Members can continue to provide for activity at these levels.</p>
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Other Issues

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

Other issues to note:

The number of directly elected representatives has an impact on the Council's budgets for Councillor allowances and elections. The financial impact, of both an increase or decrease in Councillor numbers, has been considered and assessed in the broader context of the resulting impact on governance arrangements, workload of Councillors, community engagement and demands on officer time.

Financial forecast

The Council has an excellent record of financial management and is proud to have effectively maintained the high levels of service provision despite an environment of challenging financial circumstances for all local authorities.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy provides the funding framework within which the Council will achieve its aspirations. As a consequence of the constraints on resources, a balance has to be struck between the pace of improvement and the affordability of proposals that deliver the desired outcomes and fulfil the Council's community leadership responsibilities. Over the past 18 months the Council has put in place an ambitious and innovative programme of activity designed to ensure that the Council maintains its already robust financial position and proactively meets the challenges the

Council faces. The Council has embraced the modernisation agenda and is committed to achieving continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery. It is also committed to working with partners to improve the quality of life for residents and businesses in North Kesteven.

Changing electoral ratio

The current average ratio of councillors to electorate for NKDC is 1:2070 electors. By 2025, it is estimated this will be 1:2134 electors per Councillor. This increase is considered to be manageable with the existing number of 43 Councillors and would not introduce an unacceptable burden on Councillor workload. The proportion of the eligible adult population registered on the Electoral Register impacts on the variation of the councillor electoral ratio across different local authorities. NKDC has a high rate of 95% of eligible adult population currently registered on the Electoral Register.

In comparison with councils in the LGBCE 2018 CIPFA comparison group, the Councillor count of 43 for NKDC, places it in the median of the 15 comparator local authorities within the group between values of 39 and 47 Councillors.

All Members were invited to complete an online survey to give their views on what size the Council should be in the future. The majority of Members at 65% (20) consider that having 43 Councillors is the appropriate size for the Council while 35% (11) consider there are not enough Members. 8 councillors did not answer this question.

Considerations if reduced council size:

- A reduction in Councillor numbers would result in a financial saving of Councillor allowances and expenses. However, it was acknowledged there would be a likely increase in expenses claimed by the fewer remaining Councillors due to attending more meetings;
- Any reduction in number would result in an unacceptable increased workload for Councillors across both governance arrangements and constituency engagement and casework. With continued population growth the level of constituency casework is expected to remain the same or increase placing a significantly higher demand on a fewer number of Councillors;
- All governance arrangements would be required to be reviewed with a higher number of committee appointments for Councillors. In the Councillor survey 71% (27) Councillors felt the associated workload was 'Just right' for the number of committees, outside body organisations and partnerships they are appointed to by the District Council. There were 24% (9) who felt it was too high and 5% (2) said too low;
- Fewer Councillors with higher volume of casework could also result in increased demand on officer time with more assistance required; and
- Fewer Councillors would be required to cover a larger geographical area making them less accessible in a largely rural District.

Considerations if increased council size:

- Increasing Councillor numbers would place additional demands upon the Council's limited budgetary resources for allowances and expenses;
- Increasing Councillor numbers would place additional demands on the officer support available particularly on resources in Democratic Services and many other teams within the authority such as housing, planning, environmental services;
- Increased number would reduce the electoral ratio and potentially lower casework demand on Councillors. Results from the Councillor survey show 87% (34) Councillors receive less than 15 constituent requests per month with 59% (23) receiving 0 – 5 requests;
- Increased number of councillors would result in more councillors available to fill the governance posts. An increase is not deemed to be necessary to deliver the existing governance arrangements. Survey results showed strong support for the current number of Councillors appointed to panels and committees. There are sufficient numbers to effectively deliver all arrangements, notwithstanding the importance to continue to ensure that effective and efficient arrangements are in place. In the Councillor survey 71% (27) Councillors felt the associated workload was 'Just right' for the number of committees, outside body organisations and partnerships they are appointed to by the District Council. There were 24% (9) who felt it was too high and 5% (2) said too low; and
- Separate to the Electoral Review the current governance arrangements and committee structures can be reviewed to potentially reduce Councillors workload as oppose to increasing the overall number of Councillors.

Summary

10. 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 considered carefully the question of the Council's future size and concluded that the current number of 43 Councillors would be appropriate.

Since 2007, North Kesteven District Council has operated with 43 Councillors elected to 26 wards across North Kesteven. In the last 12 years the Council has evidenced it is a high performing council with a strong reputation for quality service provision and financial management. There has been a consistently high standard of service from NKDC Councillors in delivering effective strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership. There are no significant changes to the Council's regulatory Committees.

During the course of the deliberations the implications of reducing or increasing the number of Councillors were considered. A reduction of any number of Councillors was not considered acceptable and would not allow the Council to continue to provide the present level of representation and service to residents. An increase in Councillors was not felt to be appropriate or necessary with the Council's current membership effectively and consistently delivering a high level of services and Councillor workload to be manageable.

Given the Council's responsibilities it is considered that a continuation of 43 Councillors will give the Council sufficient capacity to effectively operate its current governance and decision-making arrangements. This number allows sufficient Member numbers to ensure the proper and timely consideration and making of decisions as well as guarantee sufficient representation on Committees and Sub-Committees to ensure that any debate is informed by a range of views and opinions. The membership of 43 Councillors also ensures there is sufficient capacity to ensure that absences or unavailability could reasonably be accommodated without significant detrimental impact.