

Council Size Submission

Central Bedfordshire Council (2019)

A great place to live and work.

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Summary

1. Central Bedfordshire Council believes that a council size of **63 Members** is the most appropriate to enable Central Bedfordshire Council to continue to provide effective and convenient local government. This increase of four Members takes into account the significant growth underway within the area; the ambitions of the Council to continue to make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work; and the significant increases in workload during the period 2009 to 2019 that are visible throughout this submission in relation to accountability, the delivery of statutory functions and community leadership. A Council size of 63 will permit the Council to continue to engage proactively with its partners and local, regional and national bodies.
2. The evidence presented in this submission demonstrates that the Council is ambitious in its plans for the future. It wants Central Bedfordshire to be a great place to live and work and that is set alongside considerable housing growth in the area that makes Central Bedfordshire the fastest growing area outside of London.
3. The Council has clear ambitions to deliver growth in an efficient and effective fashion and to continue to support local and regional partnerships proactively. These relationships have been fostered over more than the previous 10 years and the Council feels it is vital we continue to be able to represent the interests of our residents in these settings effectively.
4. This submission demonstrates there has been a significant increase in the requirements of Executive Members meaning that this role is now considered to be full-time in the majority of cases. Whilst historically Executive Members have been able to be appointed to multiple committees, supporting the previous council size in 2009, going forward there will be less flexibility for Executive Members to be on more than one formal committee, they will not continue to be able to commit to the average of 2.8 positions per Member. Given the current number of Executive portfolios there will continue to be a minimum requirement of 10 elected Members to deliver the Executive governance model and a greater reliance on non-Executive Members to fulfil the remaining committee positions. This will require a higher number of committee positions to be filled by each Member than the present 2.8 average, something the Council does not deem to be acceptable given the concurrent increase in casework.
5. With regard to statutory functions the evidence highlights the significant increase in the commitment for Members on DMC up to 15.5 hours per month on this meeting alone, in light of which it is not appropriate for the majority of DMC Members to be on more than one formal committee at a time. Given the significant commitment for these Members it would not be appropriate to expect each of the Members of DMC to fulfill the same number of Committee meetings as all other elected Members. The average number of committee positions for those on DMC ought therefore to typically be lower than the average across the Council, placing greater pressure on those not on the Executive or on DMC. A minimum commitment of at least a further 10 Members is therefore required by the Council to deliver the planning element of its statutory functions.
6. Given the increasing complexity of these meetings it would not be appropriate to reduce the Council size, the proposed increase allows an equitable share of committee responsibilities that would allow those on DMC to focus on a smaller number of Council commitments.

7. In light of the changing nature of internal accountability and the Council's aspirations to enhance the value provided by the overview and scrutiny process it is felt necessary for all non-Executive Members to be involved in the process and the current number of at least 49 non-Executive Members will continue to need to be involved to facilitate these ambitions alongside the other commitments that they have in the Councils governance process.
8. Applying the national average of 3.2 committee positions to the remaining committee positions (144) suggests a further minimum of 45 elected Members, leading to a proposed Council size of 65. However, when considering the impact of a Council size of 65 on the elector ratio (see appendix) this would lead to a reduction in the average number of electors per Member. Whilst the governance framework suggests that more Members might be necessary the working group did not feel that a council size of more than 63 was necessary.
9. Given the forecast growth in the electorate of approximately 17,000 electors (8% growth) and the council's ambition to further enhance its member development offer between 2019 and 2031 the Council has considered a range of options for changing the council size of between 55 and 63 based on this electorate growth and the ongoing commitment to the Council's existing governance model and the effective delivery of community leadership.
10. The increased number of hours spent on casework during the period 2009 to 2019 is evidence of a particular increase in those areas where the growth is more significant, demonstrated by the disparity in the size of some wards. Some Members have advised that in particular they spend a greater amount of time supporting new residents who move into the area. In light of the growth of Central Bedfordshire and the increased use of social media the existing 20% increase in casework since 2009, will only increase further.
11. Whilst it is not yet included in the data in this report the recent introduction of the community grant scheme will also have a significant impact on the workload of Councillors within their community. This additional time commitment will necessitate the further involvement of Councillors in their community and therefore any reduction in Council size would be wholly inappropriate given this increase in workload.
12. Furthermore, whilst the development of a formal area board structure, through the use of joint committees is in a pilot phase (although there are five existing joint committees) the proposals to roll out a further eight joint committees in future years will significantly increase the number of committee positions and meetings to be facilitated. In light of the requirements to reduce the commitment on some Executive and DMC members this further commitment enhances the view that an increase in Council size is necessary.
13. In considering the most suitable council size it was felt particularly important to ensure that this size was sustainable for at least a further 2 council cycles beyond 2023. The current average number of electors per Member (3,575) is appropriate for all Members to engage fully in the work of the authority and the average figure should not vary significantly.
14. Therefore, whilst the proposal is based on electorate growth up to 2025, Members have proposed a figure of 63 as they felt this would maintain a sufficient council size up to at least 2031 and that in comparison to other authorities would maintain a suitable number of electors per Member based on the data available at the time (see table below).

15. A proposal of 63 Members retains an average number of electors per Member of 3,603 and given the significant levels of growth expected up to 2023 and then up to 2031 the Council does not feel it would be appropriate to propose a figure of less than 63, which would be unsustainable in the long-term.

Average electors per Member	Members	Electorate ¹	Per Member
Cheshire West & Chester	70	272,229	3,889
Wiltshire	98	367,686	3,752
Cheshire East	82	299,422	3,651
Central Bedfordshire Council	63	227,000	3,603
Stockport	63	220,605	3,502
South Gloucestershire	61	200,587	3,288
Shropshire	74	240,220	3,246
Bedford	40	129,657	3,241
North Somerset	50	161,464	3,229
Solihull	51	159884	3135
Calderdale	51	149005	2922
Swindon	57	162942	2859
West Berkshire	43	121277	2820
Warrington	58	158488	2733
Herefordshire	53	141294	2666
Bath & North East Somerset	59	132930	2253

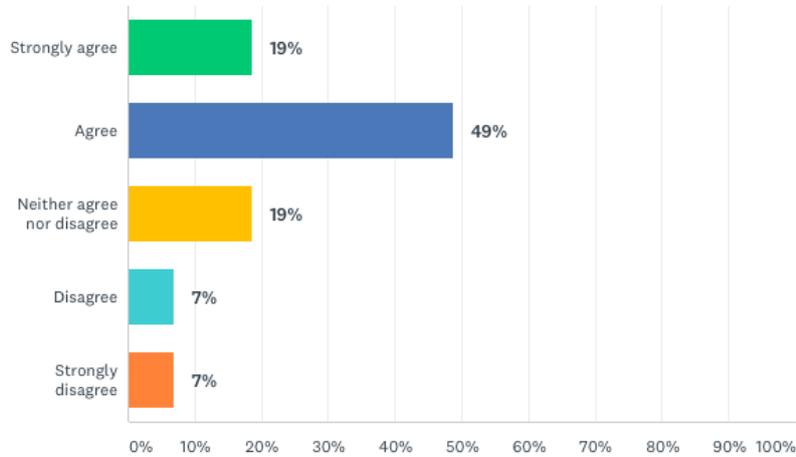
16. The Council feels that given this growth in the electorate it would not be possible to maintain the principles of effective strategic leadership, accountability, delivery of statutory functions or community leadership without the number of Members being increased to 63 to reflect the increase in the size of the electorate over that period.

17. In reaching a conclusion the Council surveyed Members on the proposal to increase the number of Members to 63 and received the below response, which further substantiates the view that this is the most appropriate council size.

¹ Electorate figures for each of these authorities are based on the 2018 actuals, for CBC the electorate figure is the projection for 2024, if the data for CBC was also based on the current actual information the number of electors (210,228) per Member is 3,575

To what extent do you feel the proposal to increase the number of Members to 63 is appropriate?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 0



18. Given the levels of commitment laid out in this report the Council felt that it would not be appropriate to propose any reduction in the Council size otherwise this would have a significant impact on our ability to continue to support the existing governance process in an effective fashion. As there are currently no proposals to reduce the size of the governance model it has been assumed that the commitment to supporting this model will continue at its existing level.
19. In light of the changing nature of internal accountability and the Council's aspirations to enhance the value provided by the overview and scrutiny process it is felt necessary for all non-Executive Members to be involved in the process and the current number of at least 49 non-Executive Members will continue to need to be involved to facilitate these ambitions alongside the other commitments that they have in the Councils governance process.

Introduction

20. In 2018 the LGBCE informed the Council of its intention to carry out an electoral review due to the electorate in some wards being significantly different from the average for the area. The last review of the Council by the Commission was in 2009-10 at which point the council size reduced from 66 to 59 elected Members having previously been represented by 136 Members under the former mid-Bedfordshire and south-Bedfordshire authorities prior to 2009.
21. To undertake this review of council size the Council formed a cross-party working group of five Members to review evidence and develop proposals to be presented to the Council's General Purposes Committee. This report was approved by the General Purposes Committee in September 2019 [TBC] and was subsequently approved by Full Council in September 2019 [TBC].
22. Additionally, a number of surveys of all elected Members were undertaken to provide further evidence to support the proposals and to formulate the recommendation that is included in this submission.
23. The remainder of the report is structured around the LGBCE's template for responses and provides the rationale for the Council size submission to ensure that the Council can continue to provide the following in an efficient and effective fashion: -
 - Strategic leadership;
 - Accountability;
 - Support for statutory functions; and
 - Community Leadership.

Local Authority Profile

24. Central Bedfordshire is a unitary authority serving a growing population of around 280,000. It is a largely rural area with over half the population living in the countryside and the rest in a number of market towns. The largest of these are Leighton Linlade, Dunstable, Biggleswade, Houghton Regis, Flitwick and Sandy.
25. The area is generally prosperous, with above average levels of employment although there are some areas of deprivation and greater need.
26. The area has excellent transport links with the A1 and M1 running through it, three main rail lines and two international airports, Luton and Stansted, on the doorstep. It is in the centre of an academic 'golden triangle' between Oxford, Cambridge and London Universities and also benefits from its own academic institutions at Cranfield University, the University of Bedfordshire and other further education colleges.
27. It is a great place to live and work. It is a relatively safe, green and affluent area which attracts major investment. People living in Central Bedfordshire earn more than the national average; this is in part influenced by some residents commuting out of the area – primarily to Hertfordshire, Luton, London, Milton Keynes and Bedford.

Population growth in Central Bedfordshire

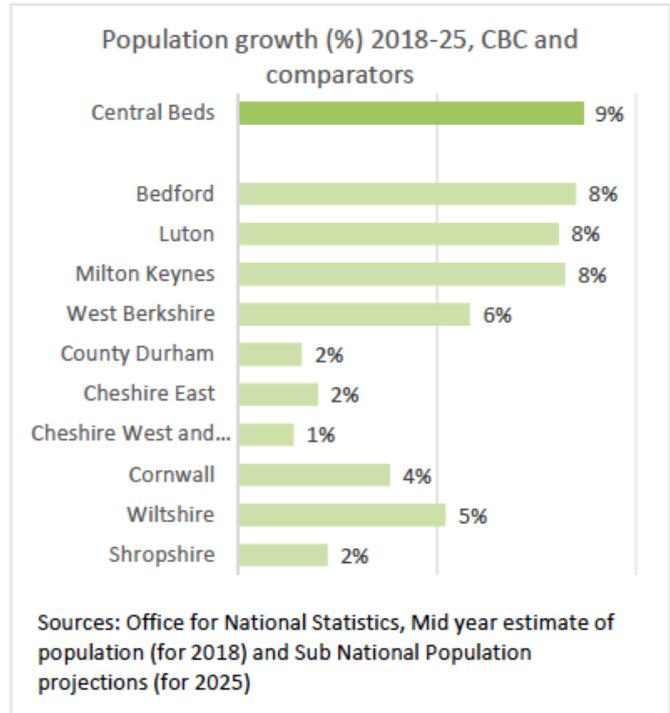
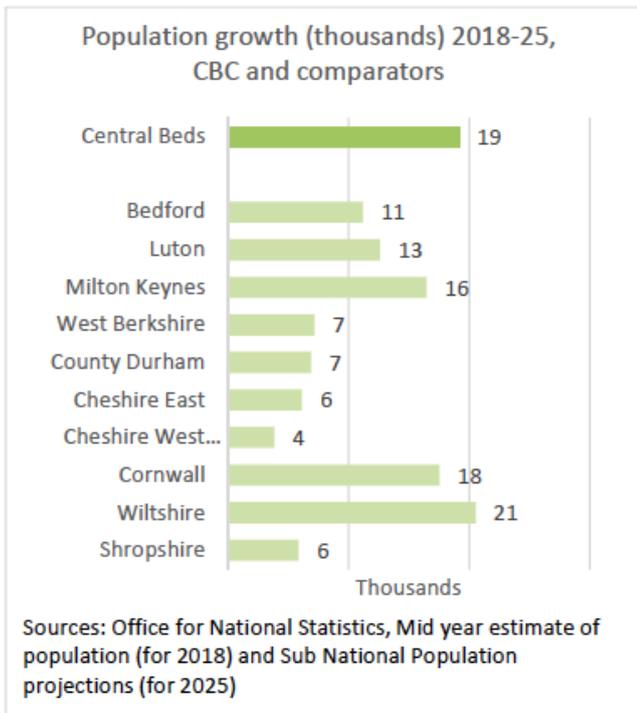
28. In 2017 the population of Central Bedfordshire was 280,000². This is an increase of 27,600 people since 2011, a 10% increase over the six-year period. This was much higher than the overall growth rate of 5% in England and Wales over the same period. It is also a faster rate of increase than the previous ten years. Between 2001 and 2011, the population of Central Bedfordshire increased by a total of 21,600, a 9% increase, compared with 7% growth in England and Wales overall.
29. The rate of growth for the 18+ population was fairly similar, with 12% growth between 2001 and 2011, and 10% between 2011 and 2017. This compares with growth in in England and Wales of 9% between 2001 and 2011 and 5% between 2011 and 2017.

Ward	2019 population	2025 population	Additional people aged 18+, 2019-25	% increase, 2019-25
Central Bedfordshire total	224,590	240,220	15,630	7%

Table 2: forecasts showing ward population, age 18+, in 2019 and 2025

30. The tables below also demonstrate that Central Bedfordshire is forecast to grow significantly faster compared to our comparator local authorities.

² Source: Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimate of Population 2017



31. Wards vary in the size of their population, from 2,810 people in Houghton Conquest and Haynes, to 16,100 in Arlesey³. Between 2011 and 2017, the wards with the biggest population increases are those that have seen major development in the last few years.
32. The Central Bedfordshire population increased by 9% between 2011 and 2017. However, ward growth ranged from 0% in Barton-le-Clay and Dunstable Watling to 33% in Silsoe and Shillington. The wards with the biggest population growth correspond to the areas with the biggest housing developments.
33. In all wards, at least 85% of the population were living in that ward one year ago. The proportion of people who had lived elsewhere one year ago ranged from 6% in Barton-le-Clay, Northill and Flitwick wards, to 11% in Dunstable Central and 15% in Cranfield and Marston Moretaine. Cranfield and Marston Moretaine had a particularly high proportion of residents who lived outside the UK one year ago. This is likely to be linked to the university.

Migration

34. The majority of the increase in our population is the result of people moving to Central Bedfordshire from outside the area.
35. Population growth is measured using births and deaths (known as 'natural growth') and migration. Between 2011 and 2017 natural growth resulted in an additional 7,750 people in Central Bedfordshire⁴. Over the same period, migration within the UK accounted for an additional 12,300 people and international migration (outside the UK) for an additional 4,340 people. Migration accounts for more

³ Source: Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimate of Population, 2017

⁴ Source: Office for National Statistics, Components of change, Mid-Year Estimates, 2011-2017

than two thirds of the growth experienced between 2011 and 2017, with the majority of people moving from other parts of the UK.

Electorate forecast

36. The forecasts produced for the electoral review have made use of the methodology set out by the LGBCE in their guidance for the Polling District Forecasting Tool. However, they have also incorporated local intelligence about housing completions, trends in growth rates and data on the reasons for population changes.
37. As suggested by the Electoral Commission, we have used the ONS, Sub National Population Projections for Central Bedfordshire as our starting point. These suggest a total population of 306,100 by 2024, with 237,700 of these aged 18 or over.
38. We have then taken the average ratio of electors for 2016-2018 (0.95) and applied this to the 18+ population in 2024. This give a total number of electors of 226,952 in 2024. This is an increase in the electorate of 16,724 (8%) compared with the 2018 figure. This increase if down to two key elements, population increase (32%) and net migration (68%).
39. The Councils figure also takes account of housing completions, incorporating where houses will be built, when they will be complete and when they will be occupied. The Council has used completions as identified in the Central Bedfordshire Housing Trajectory, April 2019. It should be noted that the housing trajectory is a snapshot of expected completions at a point in time. To try and ensure that we only use those dwellings that have been occupied by 2024, we have only included planned completions up to 2023.

Deprivation

40. In general, levels of deprivation in Central Bedfordshire are relatively low. However, there are a small number of areas where it is higher. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 combines 37 indicators to produce a single overall deprivation score for every Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in England. Central Bedfordshire is divided into 157 LSOAs, each containing around 1,600 people.
41. In 2015, five LSOAs in Central Bedfordshire were in the 10 to 20% most deprived in England, and eight were in the 20 to 30% most deprived. These were in parts of Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Leighton Linlade, Sandy and Flitwick.

Strategic Leadership

Governance Model

42. The Council has adopted the ‘Strong Leader’ Executive model. The Leader is responsible for appointing Members to the Executive, for allocating portfolio responsibilities and for approving Executive delegations. The Leader has been appointed for a four-year term of office until the next election in 2023.
43. The Council maintains a list in Part 3B of the Constitution⁵ setting out the delegations to regulatory and other committees for the Council’s functions (other than those matters expressly reserved to Council). With the exception of quasi-judicial decisions and those taken under delegated powers the majority of decisions are taken collectively by the Council’s Executive. For that reason, it is proposed that in many cases the role of the Executive Member is a full-time one.
44. The Council has each of those committees that it is compelled to establish as set out below: -
- Full Council
 - Executive
 - Licensing committee
 - Planning Committee (DMC)
 - At least one Overview & Scrutiny Committee
 - Health and Well-Being Board
 - Schools Forum
45. In addition, whilst it is not a statutory requirement the Council has established an Audit committee, General Purposes committee, Appointment committee and a Standards committee in line with the majority of other local authorities. Whilst these are not statutory, they are critical to the efficient organisation of Council business.
46. In providing a general picture of the changing nature of the Council’s governance the table below sets out the level of commitment currently undertaken by Members in relation to the Council’s formal governance arrangements since the previous review in 2009.

Governance	2009	2019
Total Committee meetings (per year)	154	119
Total Committee positions	194	164
Average Committee positions per Member	2.9	2.8
National average committee and sub-committee places	3.3	3.2

47. Whilst several of the committees that were appointed by the Council in 2009 are no longer in existence, they have typically been replaced by other statutory committees such as the Schools Forum or the Health and Wellbeing Board. Both the total number of meetings and the total committee

⁵ Part 3B of the Constitution - <https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/fm6ws4z6o72giu1igf6s53xvqf2hwsq5>

positions has fallen between 2009 and 2019 but as the Council size was reduced during that period the average number of committee positions per Member has remained similar.

48. The figures outlined above for committee positions does not include numbers of substitutes, either for 2009 or 2019. If this were included it would significantly impact on the numbers of positions held by Members. As Members will on occasion need to take a place on the Committee for which they are a substitute the above represents the minimum time commitment to deliver the governance model.
49. In providing an assumption of the time commitment required for Members the working group felt that an average of 2-3 hours per meeting was appropriate. The working group also felt that Members would typically spend 2-3 hours preparing for each of these meetings. On average there are 6 meetings of a committee on an annual basis providing a monthly commitment for each Member of between approximately 3 to 4 hours per month to support the Council’s formal governance processes.

Executive Portfolios

50. The Council has the maximum number of Executive Members permissible (10) and each Member has a different portfolio⁶ covering a wide range of service areas. These roles necessitate attendance at a greater number of committee meetings, a total of 10% of the committee positions on the Council must be filled by one of the 10 Executive Members. However, the role of the Executive Member also necessitates undertaking significant work in partnership with other local authorities and external organisations.
51. The number of Executive Members has fluctuated between seven and 10 during the period 2010 -2019 as a result of the changing responsibilities of the Council. The table below reflects the significant number of new areas of responsibility referenced within the roles of the Executive Members that were not previously referenced in 2009, those roles that were included in 2009 are still present in the responsibilities of the Executive highlighting the significant expansion in the role and responsibilities of this group of Members over that period of time: -

Portfolio	New Responsibilities
Leader	External Relations
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources:-	No specific new areas of responsibility set out in the Constitution
Executive Member for Health and Well-being and Communities (new Post 2019)	Public Health Services; Improving Health and Wellbeing of Central Bedfordshire; Health and Wellbeing Board; Town and Parish Councils; Community Resilience; Community Engagement; and Stronger Communities
Executive Member for Families, Education and Children	School Organisation; Understanding Businesses Skills requirements ; Adult Skills and Learning; Leaving Care; SEND Education Delivery

⁶ Detailed portfolios of the Executive Members <https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/85g6fkowifg09r4nnoie0p233m43tx57>

Portfolio	New Responsibilities
Executive Member for Adults Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA)	Housing Operations (HRA); Empty Homes; Private Sector Housing ; Housing Solutions (front line/Homelessness); Volunteering; Ageing Population including Learning Disabilities; Housing List
Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration	Building Control
Executive Member for Community Services	Tourism
Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery	Delivering Homes; Independent Living; Learning Disability; Accommodation; other HRA and Council Delivered Housing; and Housing Company delivery
Executive Member for Transformation and External Relations	Transformation Agenda; Advisory role in Property and Assets Management; and Portfolio Management
Executive Member for Highways Delivery and Innovation	Highways Reactive Maintenance Delivery Strategy; Parking Strategy and Enforcement; Rural Match Funding; Highways Innovation; Cycling/Walking strategy and Missing Links Programme; and Reporting Systems development

52. In addition to the Executive Members there are also 4 Deputy Executive Members who have no decision-making powers but support the Executive Member in undertaking their role, their role is not considered to be full-time but it does impact on their ability to undertake the average number of committee positions.

53. Due to the commitment of these Members to their responsibilities it is not proposed to reduce the number of Executive portfolios nor does it suggest that the Council size should be reduced.

Delegated Responsibilities

54. There is an extensive scheme of delegation to Directors laid out in the Constitution at Part 3E⁷ that permits officers to take delegated decisions, many of them in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

55. Whereas the vast majority of decisions within the Council, with the exception of planning and licensing matters, are taken by the Executive in formal meetings there is an ongoing responsibility outside of those meetings to be consulted on and to support delegated decision-making with officers.

⁷ Part 3E of the Constitution - <https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/pg1vxt80yxwn04d5a98faan1ktlrcxs1>

56. In addition, the Executive has delegated a small number of matters to specific Executive Members as follows:-

- Decisions that relate to traffic management, which are taken by the Executive Member for Community Services in a formal meeting organised to provide residents with an opportunity to attend and speak. In 2018/19 there were eight such meetings chaired by the Executive Member to make decisions on 61 matters.
- Decisions relating to schools age range changes, taken by the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children. In 2018/19 there were 2 such decisions taken by the Executive Member.
- Decisions that are the responsibility of the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, in 2018/19 there were 2 such decisions.

Accountability

Internal Scrutiny

57. The principal means of accountability within the authority is delivered through the Council's overview and scrutiny process. Since 2009 the number of overview and scrutiny committees (OSCs) has reduced from five to four and covers the following four broad areas of responsibility (the detailed functions are set out in Part 3C of the Constitution⁸): -
- Corporate Resources
 - Children's Services
 - Social Care, Health and Housing
 - Sustainable Communities
58. There is also a Co-ordination Panel (OSCP) consisting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the OSCs, which co-ordinates the function and matters that are relevant to more than one OSC and meets at least four times a year.
59. Whilst providing the opportunity for elected Members to hold the Executive to account it also provides a forum for residents to seek answers to questions from Executive Members and in some cases external organisations, and to challenge proposals. Over the previous three years the number of residents or partners attending OSC meetings or task and finish groups has increased by 67%.
60. These committees have a dual role in that they support the Council's Executive in developing policy (overview), whilst they also hold the Executive to account (scrutiny). In recent years Members have encouraged a shift in the emphasis of the work of these committees towards a greater share of the agenda relating to policy development, from 15% (during 2016-17) to 41% (during 2018/19).
61. The Council also has a call-in process that allows elected Members to request the call-in of decisions that have been taken by the Executive. However, as the majority of controversial items or those on which there might be a public interest are considered by the OSCs before a decision is taken by the Executive is remarkably small. Over the previous four-year council cycle (2015-2019) two call-ins were considered by the OSCs. Both of these were referred back to the original decision maker to be reconsidered.
62. Due to the cross-cutting nature of the items received by these committees Members will often attend meetings of committees on which they are not a committee Member. For example, children's health matters are typically received by the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC. In addition, the performance and budget monitoring functions are centralised in the Corporate Resources OSC and typically Members of each of the other OSCs will attend on a quarterly basis for those meetings in addition to the committees on which they are a Member.
63. Detailed task and finish reviews are also set-up as required and the appointment of Members varies depending on the topic and areas of interest. Appointment to task and finish groups is not restricted to members of the OSCs only in order to maximise the use of the knowledge and skills of all Members.

⁸ Part 3C of the Constitution - <https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/hapg4zap9wmhbboypxk48ia5s22o89gi4>

64. These task forces are a significant time commitment for Members. For example, a recent review on the integration of health and social care was formed of seven Members and undertaken in two phases over a period of 14 months. In addition to attending 17 individual task force meetings, of between 2 and 3 hours in duration, and attending 6 site visits to other local authority areas. Members of the task force also spent considerable hours reviewing research and evidence as part of this review. Whilst this commitment on this review is not typical of the current approach to all reviews the Council has an aspiration to undertake more reviews of this nature in the future, which will require sufficient Members to support the process and the number of reviews that might be undertaken concurrently.
65. In addition to the above the Council is also a Member of the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care System Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which meets on a roughly quarterly basis but is envisaged to meet more regularly as plans for substantial changes to health services in the area start to be considered.
66. Each non-Executive Member of the authority is permitted to be appointed to an OSC and in addition is able to serve on any detailed task force reviews that might be established by the authority to review any specific topics. It is reasonable for each Member to be appointed as a Member or a substitute to no more than two OSCs or task forces concurrently. On the basis the Council has four OSCs, a long-term Joint OSC, and is currently encouraging two task force reviews to run concurrently the function currently requires a minimum of 38 Members.
67. At present there is a working group formally constituted to produce recommendations on the future shape of the OSCs before the end of the 2019/20 municipal year, which may lead to a change in the structure of these committees but all non-Executive Members will continue to be involved.

Statutory Functions

Planning

68. The Council has a Development Management Committee (DMC) that exercises decision-making powers with regards to planning matters. These meetings are roughly every four weeks or as necessary. There are no area planning committees at present.
69. Executive Members are also appointed to the DMC committee, there are presently three Executive Members and one Deputy Executive Member on the DMC committee (23% of the Membership).
70. The proportion of planning applications considered by DMC has remained stable over the previous four years at approximately 90 applications (approximately 2% of the total applications determined by the authority).
71. Although Central Bedfordshire is experiencing significant housing growth it is not envisaged that the number of planning applications considered by DMC will increase significantly. However, whilst the number of applications received by DMC has been consistent these have become more complex in their nature as they typically relate to much bigger development schemes, reflecting the nature of growth in the area.
72. In addition, the average duration of these meetings has increased significantly as a reflection of the complexity of the matters being considered. In 2010 the average DMC meeting was less than 3.5 hours in duration. In 2018 the average meeting was more than 4.5 hours in duration with at least one meeting lasting more than 7 hours. Members of DMC also attend site visits prior to DMC meetings, to assist in understanding of the applications to be determined. These can also last up to 6 hours. Assuming that Members spend approximately 10 hours reading papers and attending site visits for each meeting the typical monthly time commitment for DMC Members who attended 100% of the meetings during 2018/19 was 15.5 hours.

Licensing

73. The Council has a standing Licensing Committee (of 12 Members) and also arranges Licensing Sub-Committee hearings as necessary, constituting three of the 12 Members of the Licensing Committee. Meetings of the Licensing Committee are arranged on a quarterly basis but only one took place during 2018/9. The number of Licensing Sub-Committee meetings has increased from four meetings per year in 2009 to eight meetings per year in 2018, doubling the workload for those Members involved. Any Member of the Licensing Committee can serve on the Sub-Committees and training is provided on a two-yearly basis for Members.

Other Regulatory Bodies

74. The Council has appointed a number of other Committees to assist with the discharge of its functions as set out in Part 3B⁹ or Part 3D¹⁰ of the Council's Constitution. The cycles of the meetings vary but generally they are programmed to meet between four and six times per year. These committees are: -

⁹ Part 3B of the Constitution - <https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/fm6ws4z6o72gju1igf6s53xvqf2hwsq5>

¹⁰ Part 3D of the Constitution - <https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/41x79c7yl6wcz04w1xbd72x9dne9s5sr>

- Adoption Panel
- Appeals Panel
- Appointments Sub-Committee
- Audit
- Biggleswade Joint Committee
- Corporate Parenting Panel
- Dunstable Joint Committee
- Fostering and Permanence Panel
- General Purposes Committee
- Houghton Regis Town Centre Management
- Leighton Linlade Partnership Committee
- SACRE
- Schools Forum
- Standards Sub-Committee
- Wixams Joint Development Control Committee

75. The number of meetings and positions involved in these other bodies has been included in the governance section earlier in this report, but the number is largely in line with the other Council committees within the governance structure.

External Partnerships

76. The Council is involved in numerous bodies at a regional, sub-regional and national level with a range of partners, many of which have decision-making powers that includes the following: -

- County Council Network
- Fire authority
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Local Government Association
- Police and Crime Panel
- South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP)

77. Appointments to these bodies are normally held by Executive Members but that is not a requirement, particularly in relation to the appointments to the Fire Authority, many of which are held by non-Executive Members.

78. In addition, the Council is also involved in a wide range of strategic, general and ward-based outside bodies¹¹ all of which impact on the time commitment of Members. These bodies are approved by Full Council on a four-yearly basis and the representation is drawn from all Members of the Council, although some of the appointments are required to be Executive Members or local Ward Members. A total of 11% of these appointments must be filled by an Executive Member. For all others any Member could take part, these are not politically proportionate appointments. The majority of appointments to

¹¹ List of CBC appointed outside bodies -

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/27/about_your_council/238/how_to_get_involved_in_council_decisions_-_make_your_voice_heard/9

outside bodies are non-Executive Members. The commitment for these outside bodies is set out below:-

External partnerships	2009	2019
External partnerships and outside bodies:	84	61
Total appointments:	144	103
Total meetings:	324	190
Average appointments per Member:	2.2	1.7
Average meetings per Member (per year):	4.9	3.2

79. In addition to the above Members are also appointed to school governing bodies, whilst the number of Member appointments as governors of maintained schools in the area has fallen from 92 to 11 this reflects the general movement towards academies, which now make up 40% of schools in Central Bedfordshire. This is a further commitment for all Members, which will continue in the future.

80. Given the significant growth of the area and the Council's desire to work in a collaborative way with its partners it has been assumed that the number of external partnerships and outside bodies on which the Council has Members appointed will increase over the next 4-12 years, increasing the level of commitment for all Members.

Community Involvement

Community Leadership

81. The Council has a number of joint committees who influence decisions, support local place-shaping and encourage local participation. Whilst these are not called area boards they fulfill the same functions in that they support local governance and engagement to resolve matters locally and meet quarterly. These joint committees are supported by the Council's community engagement team as a reflection of the community-focused nature of their business. They also have their own clearly defined terms of reference.
82. In addition to these joint committees a pilot scheme for community governance is due to commence in Autumn 2019 covering the areas of Sandy, Moggerhanger, Northill, Southill, Blunham and Old Warden. These schemes encourage the use of area boards following the existing approach to joint committees to promote local community governance. Should this pilot scheme prove successful it will lead to changes in other areas and an increased commitment from Members to support up to seven additional joint committees throughout the area. This would represent an increase in workload of up to a further 35 positions (five Members on each area board) and 28 meetings per year (based on quarterly meetings).
83. The increase in local governance and community development models in which local Members have a role is a reflection of the reductions in Council funding and the requirement for community resilience. The increase in community resilience further impacts on the roles of Councillors who have a role in supporting and leading their communities in these models.
84. In those areas where joint committee or area boards do not currently exist Members are free to undertake their representational roles in whatever way they consider to be most appropriate. In those areas where growth has been highest Members have advised that they spend more time than previously with third parties and developers, engaging in the design and development of infrastructure projects. Given the significant growth in the area in recent years this was not a prevalent challenge for most Members in 2009.
85. There is a mix of approaches across the Council that includes use of social media and surgeries although the majority of ward Councillors hold surgeries on a periodical basis. Some Members are also town and parish councillors but there is no minimum requirement in relation to this. The increase in the use of social media has a significant impact on the role of elected Members with regard to expectations and changing the nature of the conversation that Members have with their residents. Social media provides a platform for Members to engage with residents; gather knowledge and feedback; canvas opinion; and publicise local campaigns. All of this is an additional commitment for elected Members and given there is almost an expectation from residents that Members will engage in social media this commitment is consistent across the Council.
86. To provide an accurate reflection of the time commitment for elected Members with regard to their community leadership role the working group undertook a survey of elected Members to ascertain feedback. A total of 54% of Members responded to the survey, although several Members responded to say that as they had only been elected for a couple of months, they felt it would skew the figures to provide a response. To provide an accurate reflection of the current position the data below reflects responses between the 10th and 90th percentile: -

Question	No.
On average approximately how many items of correspondence do you receive on a weekly basis	50 items
On average how many hours of representation and support to your community do you undertake on a weekly basis	5.2 hours
On average how many hours do you spend in attendance at Town or Parish Council meetings on a weekly basis	1.8 hours

87. In addition to the above in August 2019 the Executive approved two Community Grant Schemes throughout Central Bedfordshire. These schemes are designed to enable Councillors to support local community action.

88. Under the first scheme each Member will be allocated a balance of £2,000 capital funding to deliver ambitions in the local community. This scheme will require Members to carry out engagement in the local community to determine and assess the feasibility of projects and to consult on the nature and purpose of these schemes and award funding.

89. Under the second scheme asset-based community projects will be able to bid into a pot of up to £25,000 for each scheme based in local wards. This scheme will place an additional responsibility on Members to work with local groups prior to endorsing and negotiating for funding to be allocated under this scheme.

90. Given the Member role as community leaders and likelihood for disagreement and negotiation in the ward it is likely this will lead to a significant time commitment in the local ward for Members.

Casework

91. There is no mandatory scheme for responding to casework neither is there guidance provided to Members, it is a matter of individual preference how Members undertake their casework. Officer support is provided to the Leader and Executive and Deputy Executive Members to support them in their role, which sometimes includes minor support on casework. However, no officer support is provided to non-Executive Councillors.

92. The survey of Members undertaken by the working group asked members to provide an indication of the number of items of correspondence received on a weekly basis and the number of hours on average spent on a weekly basis carrying out their casework (see below). In comparison to the data provided in 2009 this demonstrates an average increase of 1.9 hours per Members per week.

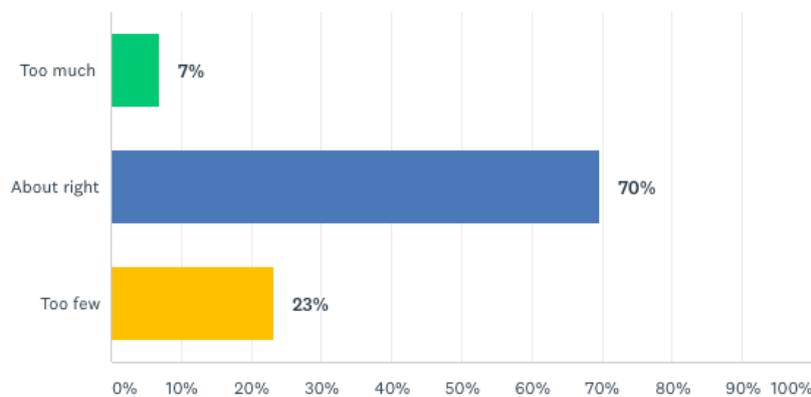
Question	2009	2019
On average how many hours a week do you spend on casework on a weekly basis	9 hours	10.9 hours

93. The survey indicates that the total weekly commitment for Members on their Community Leadership role was a total of 17.9 hours. This compares to the figure provided by the national census in 2018¹² of 13.9 hours.

94. To verify this figure, we subsequently asked Members to what extent they felt an average of approximately 16 hours per week carrying out their community leadership role, responding to casework, attending meetings in the community (including town and parish council meetings) and supporting residents was an accurate reflection of their experience (see below), we received responses from 73% of Members as follows: -

To what extent is 16 hours an accurate reflection of your experience of this role?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 0



¹² <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Councillors%27%20Census%202018%20-%20report%20FINAL.pdf>

Other Issues

Member development

95. In January 2019 the Council achieved Charter Status for its Member Development Programme (MDP). There is an ongoing commitment to support and enhance this programme up to 2023 by which time the Council hopes to achieve Charter Plus status. The development of this scheme is supported by a cross-party Member Development Forum of six elected Members, which meets up to four times per year. The Council is also rolling out personal development plans to Councillors (on a self-selection basis) to support the delivery of Charter Plus status. The Council hopes to achieve Charter Plus status before the end of 2020.
96. The programme commences with a significant induction programme that is delivered to all Members and for which new Members are encouraged to attend. Following the local elections in May 2019 a total of 16 sessions were delivered during a period of seven weeks to all Members to support their introduction to the Council.
97. The programme represents a serious commitment to Members to deliver this scheme that requires attendance at training events organised across the four-year council cycle in addition to monthly briefing sessions. These modules aim to enhance community leadership and professional development as follows: -
- Scrutiny and Challenge
 - Communications Skills
 - Community Leadership
 - Partnership Working
98. There are also *compulsory* learning events that are organised for Members as part of the induction programme, some of which are e-learning and cover the following topics: -
- Development Management Committee (Planning) for Members of the Committee
 - Licensing for Members of the Committee
 - Being a corporate parent
 - Ethical Governance (e-learning)
99. In addition to the formal learning events there are monthly briefings and information sharing sessions arranged for Members under the Member development scheme covering a wide range of topics. There were 11 Member Development events and briefings delivered during April 2018 and March 2019.
100. This additional commitment of Members to be involved in and to support the Councils bid for Charter Plus status is further demonstration of the increased commitment required from Members to attend meetings organised by the Council. This focus on personal development has increased significantly since 2009 and with the application for charter plus status there is a desire to continue this level of engagement beyond 2023.

Appendix A

The Working Group considered a range of alternatives based on the data contained in this report: -

	Current (2019)	Based on the electorate projection for 2024										
		65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55
No. of elected Members	59	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55
Av. committee positions per Member	2.8	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0
Av. committee meetings per Member (per year) ¹³	16.8	15	15.6	15.6	15.6	16.2	16.2	16.8	16.8	17.4	17.4	18
Average external partnership positions per Member	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9
Av. external partnership/outside body meetings per Member (per year) ¹⁴	6.8	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.6
Average total weekly commitment for community leadership per Member (hours)	16.6	16.2	16.4	16.7	17.0	17.2	17.5	17.8	18.1	18.4	18.8	19.1
Average items of correspondence per Member (weekly)	50.4	49	50	51	52	52	53	54	55	56	57	58
Average electors per Member	3,575	3492	3547	3603	3661	3721	3783	3847	3914	3982	4054	4127
(+/-) change to electorate per Member compared to 2019	-	-82	-28	28	87	147	209	273	339	408	479	553

¹³ On average there are six meetings of a committee each year, this figure is based on the average meetings per Member based on the committee positions

¹⁴ On average there are four meetings of each external partnership or outside body per year.

**Central
Bedfordshire**

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in contact**