

Council Size
Submission: Fenland
District Council

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How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

About You

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

This submission sets out Fenland District Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) request for us to submit a proposal regarding future Council size. This was the result of the Council requesting that the LGBCE undertook an electoral review, primarily as a result of the criteria in relation to electoral equality. The issue of Council size is the key factor in determining the type and scale of the review to be undertaken by LGBCE.

In considering Council Size the Commission considers the following four parts:

- Governance and decision making – what is the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business in an effective way?
- Scrutiny functions – what is the right number of councillors to administer Fenland's scrutiny responsibilities in a convenient and effective way?

- Representational role of councillors – what is the right number of councillors to represent and provide leadership to local communities in Fenland?
- The future – what governance changes are being considered and how do these impact on the number of councillors needed in the future?

This document represents the Council's submission on Council Size after consideration of these four factors. This document constitutes the preliminary stage of the Electoral Review process and in keeping with guidance provided by the LGBCE the Council has not sought to address future ward patterns and boundaries as part of its submission.

The Council's submission has been developed by a cross-party Member Working Group which has been informed by solid evidence, contributions from all Members through specific Member Focus groups, a Member survey and informal feedback via briefings, email and virtual face to face contact.

The Member Working Group provided for a robust consultation process with all Members to ensure the views of all Members from across political groups and individual Councillors were sought and taken into consideration within this submission. The Member Working Group also considered the current and projected electorate figures for Fenland.

The Member Working Group made a recommendation to Full Council in relation to the future Council Size of 42 elected Members which was subsequently endorsed by Full Council.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

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

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body established by Parliament in April 2010. One of its objectives is to work with principal local authorities to help them deliver effective and convenient local government to citizens. Every year, the LGBCE assesses electorate data for each local authority in England with the intention to intervene where "significant" electoral inequality exists. As a result the LGBCE intervention would be in the form of an electoral review should significant electoral inequality have been identified.

An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. This means:

- the total number of members to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards / divisions) for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- the number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority; and
- the name of any electoral area.

The LGBCE will aim to ensure its recommendations remain relevant for the long term delivering effective and convenient local government well after the completion of the review.

A review can be initiated for two reasons:

- 1. At the request of the local authority; or
- 2. If the local authority meets the Commission's intervention criteria, where significant electoral inequality exists, namely:
 - a) If one ward has a ratio of electors to Councillors in excess of +/- 30% from the average electorate for the authority.
 - b) If 30% of all wards have a ratio of electors to Councillors in excess of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.

In April 2021, the Council conducted a review of current electorate figures, and projected electorate figures in 2026 for wards within Fenland, taking into account County Council population forecasts, extant planning permissions and empty properties.

Reviewing current and future projections in relation to elector numbers illustrates that Fenland District Council will exceed the LGBCE intervention criteria therefore reviewing ward boundaries to correct these inequalities ahead of the 2023 elections will ensure that Councillors represent closer to the average number of electors overall through an Electoral Review process.

If FDC's electoral arrangements are not reviewed in time for the 2023 elections, the electoral inequality between wards within Fenland may increase by 2027 to levels which would not be conducive to good governance in the District.

An example of this is the draft projection that, by 2027, if no changes are made to existing ward boundaries before the next District Elections, Wenneye ward in Chatteris (represented by 1 Councillor) is projected to have an electorate of 2,963, whilst Benwick, Coates and Eastrea ward (represented by 2 Councillors) is projected to have an electorate of 3,861. This would equate to 2,963 electors per Councillor in Wenneye ward and 1,931 electors per Councillor in Benwick, Coates and Eastrea. If a Councillor in one ward was to represent 65% more electors than a Councillor in another ward, there would be a level of inequality of representation within the District which may be undesirable.

As a direct result of the projected electoral inequalities arising in the short term (by 2027), during the Annual Council meeting in May 2021, elected Members agreed to approach the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to request an Electoral Review of Fenland District Ward Boundaries in time for this review to inform the 2023 Fenland District Council elections.

Whilst elected Members did not give an early indication of the future Council size, discussions during the Annual Council meeting suggested general early agreement that the number of elected Councillors that are needed in order to support effective, efficient and accountable local democracy would benefit from a review.

The LGBCE subsequently agreed to conduct an electoral review.

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

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

The most recent review of the Council's electoral arrangements was undertaken in 2012, with the new arrangements coming into effect at the May 2015 all out local elections. During the 2012 electoral review a number of boundary anomalies arose requiring resolution via a Community Governance review in Chatteris, Manea and Whittlesey.

Whilst the initial recommendation regarding Council size was to maintain the status quo at that time of 40 elected Councillors. When we moved onto the second stage of the electoral review process, namely to consider the names, numbers and boundaries of district wards in conjunction with the electoral review statutory criteria in relation to electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local government, the criteria could not be effectively achieved and therefore at that point the LGBCE decided that the Council size should reduce by one elected representative to 39 Councillors.

Following the changes introduced in the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has changed its governance model to the 'Strong Leader' model of Executive arrangements. Full Council appoints the Leader of the Council for a four year term. This model of governance has been in operation since 2003 following a change from operating a traditional committee system. There are no proposals to change the current approach to governance.

Fenland District is relatively unique in that it is served by 4 tiers of local government – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council and is fully parished at a town/parish council level,

with 16 Town and Parish Councils. There are 9 Cambridgeshire County Councillors representing 8 county divisions, the entire district currently falls within the North East Cambridgeshire Parliamentary Constituency. Whilst financially beneficial to the area the emergence of the Combined Authority has undoubtedly increased the workload of those Councillors chosen to represent Fenland within the Committees and at the Combined Authority Board and at Leader Strategy meetings.

Local Authority Profile

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

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

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

Fenland District Overview

Located in East Anglia, Fenland covers an area approximately 550 square km (210 square miles) and is one of five districts within the county of Cambridgeshire. Fenland is a predominantly rural district located in Northern Cambridgeshire. Bordering with Peterborough, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, South Holland and East Cambridgeshire. Fenland District has a population of approximately 102,080. Fenland residents account for 15.53% of the population of Cambridgeshire.

There are around 45,770 dwellings in Fenland, the majority of which are owner occupied (2020) and 72% of residents live within the districts 4 market towns, with the remaining 28% residing in more rural locations interspersed between the district's 29 villages. Fenland has an ageing population with 28.2% of residents aged 65 or over, and indications are that this trend will continue.

State of the District

Fenland ranks 51st (out of 317) local authorities in the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 and is the most deprived area in Cambridgeshire with Cambridge City 205th, Huntingdonshire 247th, East Cambridgeshire 266th and South Cambridgeshire 300th. There are pockets of deprivation in the district, with the highest levels of multiple deprivation located in the North of the District in Wisbech.

Fenland has a set of unique and varied challenges as a district that the Council is working proactively with its partners to overcome.

These challenges include:

- High levels of deprivation.
- Low levels of educational attainment, aspiration and skills.
- Lowest levels of healthy eating and exercise in the East of England.
- Highest levels of smoking in the East of England.
- Lowest employment rates in Cambridgeshire (Fenland 70.1% employment rates in working age people compared to 76.6% across Cambridgeshire),
- One of largest populations of Gypsy Travellers in the country.
- Poor public transport links and infrastructure impacting accessibility to further education and employment opportunities.

Other issues also exist within the district which are not as visible such as rural isolation, literacy levels and levels of caring for family members.

Fenland has the lowest house prices in Cambridgeshire, with the average house priced at £182,549 (UK HPI: 2020), along with plentiful availability of commercial land. As a result, our population is growing quickly. By 2036, it is predicted that the population will have increased by 9% to 110,700 (ONS: 2019).

Relative poor connectivity in the Fenland area is an important factor in shaping both the recent and longer standing lower growth in the area (CPIER Report 2018)

The population of the Fenland district is predominantly white, with 97.2% of all residents of white ethnic origin which is higher than the average for Cambridgeshire (92.6%) and England (85.4%). The district has the lowest percentage of residents from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) origin in Cambridgeshire (0.5%). The largest single BME group in the district is Asian/Asian British representing 0.8% of the total population.

In economic terms, 55.7% of the population of Fenland District are of working age (aged 16 to 64 years of age) which is lower than the Cambridgeshire average at 58%. 5.4% of working age people across the district were claiming either Universal Credit or Job Seekers Allowance, which is the highest monthly claimant rate across Cambridgeshire.

Fenland District Council

Fenland District Council was formed on 1 April 1974, with the merger of the Borough of Wisbech, Chatteris Urban District, March Urban District, Whittlesey Urban District, North Witchford Rural District and Wisbech Rural District.

Today, Fenland District Council (FDC) has 39 Councillors, representing 24 wards, with 2 political groups. The Council has majority Conservative control with 27 Conservatives and 12 Members of the Fenland Independent Alliance (which comprises of, 2 Liberal Democrats, and 1 Member of The Green Party, with the remaining 9 Members being Independent). The Council has adopted a Leader and Cabinet structure, with an Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and an Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Each of the 24 Fenland District Council wards is represented by 1, 2 or 3 councillors and whole council elections are held every four years with the next elections due in May 2023.

Fenland District is relatively unique in that it is served by 4 tiers of local government – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council and is fully parished at a town/parish council level, with 16 Town and Parish Councils. There are 9 Cambridgeshire County Councillors representing 8 county divisions, the entire district currently falls within the North East Cambridgeshire Parliamentary Constituency.

The Council underwent a Periodic Electoral Review in 2012 in order to implement the resulting changes at the 2015 'All Out' local elections. Since then the Council has seen a growing electoral variance in a number of wards. Based on the electorate figures for May 2021, there are electoral variances of 10% or greater in the wards of Birch (+18%), The Mills (+16%), Wenneye (-11%) and Stonald (+17%). When considering the electoral forecasting figures up to 2027, the electoral variance trend continues with eleven of the district wards having an electoral variance of greater than 10%, including one ward with a variance in excess of 34% and a second with a variance of 29%.

Shared Services

At the 19 December 2013 meeting of Full Council members endorsed the Council's approach to service transformation including the way forward in respect of Shared Services. This meeting approved that the Council's Revenues and Benefits service joined the Anglian Revenues Partnership (ARP) as of 01 April 2014

In December 2018 Freedom Leisure, a charitable trust, took over the operation and management of the Council's four leisure centres with a 15-year agreement. This arrangement, after Hudson Leisure Centre capital costs and gym equipment replacement costs, has saved FDC £351,000 p.a. Additionally, a review of contract management staff as a result of the new Freedom contract added £49,000 p.a. to the annual savings, equating to a total of £5.6 million of savings over the life of the contract.

At the September 2014 meeting of full Council the Council endorsed the proposal to join the CNC Building Control Partnership including the fact that full governance oversight would be achieved with Member representation on the CNC partnership Joint Committee, with Fenland established as a full partner.

On the 23rd July 2015, Fenland District Council agreed to join a Shared Planning Service arrangement with Peterborough City Council. The Shared Service consists of a Shared Head of Planning, Shared Technical Support Manager and the ability to buy and sell services between the Councils.

The Legal service provision within Fenland is currently being delivered through a partnership agreement with Peterborough City Council. This agreement has been in place since 2016 however the degree of service delivery has changed significantly over the duration of the agreement with the vast majority of legal support now being sourced via this successful agreement.

Commercialisation

On 9th January 2020 Fenland District Council approved the Commercial Investment Strategy and the associated formulation of the new Local Authority Trading Company

(LATCo), Fenland Future Ltd, for the purpose of facilitating delivery of the strategy. To date a full business case is currently being developed in relation to Council owned land that could result in the delivery of good quality local housing.

Fenland District Local Plan

The Council agreed to start production of a new Local Plan for the District in February 2019, which will eventually replace the Local Plan adopted in May 2014. This will address the changes in national policy, but also to take into account local visions and objectives to attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities in Fenland, and promote increased housing growth across the district. The new Local Plan will focus on commercial deliverability, market demand, and meeting growth targets as well as supporting and encouraging economic investment. A Draft Local Plan will be published for public consultation in December 2021.

Fenland District Council Corporate Priorities

The Council’s corporate priorities were developed, following comprehensive consultation with local people, to address the key demographic issues in the district. These priorities are reviewed every year as a part of the corporate Business Planning process. The 2021/22 Corporate Priorities are illustrated below

Council for the Future	Quality Organisation	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support vulnerable members of our community • Promote health and wellbeing for all • Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage
		Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service • Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene • Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion
		Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland • Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland • Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

Council Size

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

Strategic Leadership

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

Topic		
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i>
<p>Governance Model</p>	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Following the changes introduced in the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has changed its governance model to the ‘Strong Leader’ model of Executive arrangements. Full Council appoints the Leader of the Council for a four year term. This model of governance has been in operation since 2003 following a change from operating a traditional committee system.</p> <p>The role of a Councillor within this model of local governance is substantial due to the varying aspects of a Councillors role.</p> <p>The Leader appoints the Cabinet, which is where most of the day to day decisions of the Council are made. Cabinet consists of the Leader and nine other councillors. The Cabinet meets collectively on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Major decisions to be made by Cabinet are detailed in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions, which is updated as required and not less than on a monthly basis.</p>

		<p>Individual members of the Cabinet are known as Portfolio Holders and are allocated particular service responsibilities aligned to the Council's corporate priorities. They have wide ranging decision-making powers in relation to these responsibilities. Portfolio Holders are able to make individual decisions within certain restrictions, which are documented, published and circulated to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and can be subject to the call-in function.</p> <p>Portfolio Holders also have monthly briefings with their responsible Corporate Director and associated Head of Service, as well as joint meetings collectively with members of the Corporate Management Team around six times per year. Portfolio Holders also become involved with events and other meetings associated with their portfolio area, ie. opening of play parks, award ceremonies, etc.</p> <p>Portfolio Holders are also required to work in partnership with other agencies on issues and policies within their service area as well as representing the District Council within Executive Committees within the Combined Authority. For CPCA O&S, representation is drawn from the FDC O&S Panel.</p> <p>The Cabinet delivers reports to Full Council on their respective Portfolio areas at every meeting and also to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a regular basis.</p> <p>The Council has 39 councillors, elected every four years at a single set of elections, the last being in 2019. Councillors have a duty to the whole community of Fenland and are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. All councillors are members of Full Council and meet on average 5 times per municipal year (normally in May, July, September, December and February). Full Council is responsible for appointing the Leader and Chairman of the Council, setting the overall policies of the Council and its budget, and approves the Policy Framework which comprises a series of major plans. The Council also receives recommendations from other committees and petitions from the public.</p> <p>A comprehensive review of the Council's Constitution was conducted by a Member</p>
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Working Group led by Cllr Mrs French (Deputy Leader) in 2011/12. This reviewed the entire Constitution including the scheme of delegation to ensure a greater degree of transparency, accountability of officers and to ensure Members were at the forefront of Council decision making. This review concluded the levels of delegation within the Constitution were appropriate and in keeping with the running of an effective Council.

An Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) recently reviewed Members' Allowances (May 2021). The previous IRP recommended that the Members' Allowances Scheme be subject to review 18 months after its last review in 2019, this was to ensure that the Members Allowances Scheme adequately reflected the changing Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) requirements and commitments as well as reflecting any impact from the implementation of the Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS).

The most recent Member Allowances Review researched and analysed the workloads and time commitments of all Members. The results of the interviews with elected members and survey responses evaluated, suggest that on average District Councillors spend 15 hours a week fulfilling their district council role or 60 hours per month. This was an increase from 38 hours per month in 2011/12. This recognised that some Members committed substantially more time than the average due to the demands of the role in individual areas. This was taken into account when considering an increase or decrease to Council size.

There are six main Council committees with a total of 65 seats, which are allocated in proportion to the size of each of the political groups, plus a number of smaller sub-groups for example the Non Licensing Act 2003 Committee, the Investment Board as a Sub Committee of Cabinet in addition to the Audit and Risk Management Determination Sub Committee.

In addition to attending Council Meetings and other constituency work, Councillors are required to sit as representatives of the Council on other organisations and agencies. These organisations and agencies are known as

		<p>outside bodies. The Council appoints Elected Members to represent it on a range of Outside Bodies, both at a national and local level. Such appointments ensure that the Council's interests and therefore citizens of Fenland are represented within key agencies.</p> <p>The Council recognises the value and contribution outside organisations make to the wider community. Members also welcome the opportunity for the Council to be represented on outside organisations which operate within Fenland. There are currently 54 Outside Bodies requiring representation to 111 seats 39 of which carry vacancies. Nominations and representation to Outside Bodies is reviewed annually by Cabinet. A previous Overview and Scrutiny review of Outside Bodies made recommendations regarding the criteria to assess requests for Outside Body representation these recommendations were later endorsed by Full Council and remain relevant. Prior to the Overview and Scrutiny review there were 73 outside bodies requiring representation.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Cabinet is currently composed of 10 members (including the Leader) holding 10 positions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council (also holds the Finance Portfolio) • Deputy Leader (also holds a Portfolio) • Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth • Portfolio Holder for Health • Portfolio Holder for Benefits, Anglia Revenues Partnership, Parking • Portfolio Holder for Housing • Portfolio Holder for Planning • Portfolio Holder for Licensing and Community Safety • Portfolio Holder for Finance

- Portfolio Holder for Environment
- Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage
- Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Communication

A detailed breakdown of each Executive Councillor's area of responsibility appears at Appendix A.

The positions of Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder, although not deemed as being considered as full time positions, do require a substantial commitment given the level of responsibility and significant additional time that needs to be spent to undertake those roles effectively.

Executive Members serve on other decision making partnerships, sub-regional, regional and national bodies. Appointments are considered on an annual basis. The Executive Leader represents the Council on The Combined Authority Board and a Leader Strategy meetings. Whilst the most recent review of Members allowances did not conclude that the additional commitments associated with local Government Devolution, and the representational requirements of the Combined Authority, warranted an additional separate Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA), the IRP did conclude that the proposed increase to the Executive Leaders existing SRA was in part to recognise the additional requirements and commitments resulting from the Combined Authority.

In addition the Investment Board comprising of the Leader of the Council in addition to two other Cabinet Members was formulated in 2019. It is a sub Committee of Cabinet and is the Council decision making body in relation to the Commercial Investment Strategy, overseeing the three key strategic themes, 1, Commercialisation, 2, Commercial and Property Investment and 3, Regeneration and Place Shaping Investment. The Investment Board currently meet five times per annum but

		<p>this will increase as the LATCo further develops and matures.</p>
<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Decisions are made by the Council every day. These decisions cover a wide range of functions and some can affect large numbers of the district's residents, while others may affect only a single individual. The level of impact that a decision might have affects how the decision can be made.</p> <p>The most significant type of decision is a 'key' decision. A key decision is one which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the budget relates; • Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District. <p>The majority of day-to-day decisions are taken under delegated authority by officers under authority from the Leader, Council or a specific committee. The delegating of specific powers, duties or functions to officers can speed up council decisions and ensures that council meetings are not tied down by procedural and routine administrative decisions. It also enables councils to use the technical knowledge, training and experience of officers to support their decisions.</p> <p>Decisions to delegate specific powers to members, officers or committees are made at a formal council, cabinet or committee meeting and specify what the delegation authorises the delegate to do. They are usually required to observe the strategies, policies and guidelines adopted by cabinet or the council and may be required to report periodically to the council on decisions made. The Council's Constitution contains a full list of all delegations in Part 3 Responsibility for Functions.</p>

		<p>The Council publishes, by way of decision notices, all member decisions taken outside of meetings under executive powers and all officer decisions that are key decisions or considered significant decisions. During both the municipal years 2019/20 and 2020/21, there were 17 decision notices issued per year in respect of decisions taken by members or officers that fell within these categories. These decisions ranged from the Leader making nominations to an outside body to the disposal of land.</p>
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Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	<p>The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>
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>The Local Government Act 2000 requires that where a Council has adopted an Executive model of governance it must make arrangements that “must include provision for the appointment by the authority of one or more [scrutiny] committees of the authority.”</p> <p>The Council must ensure that the scrutiny committees have the power to exercise the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of

any functions which are the responsibility of the executive;

- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive;
- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive;
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive; and
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has a challenging, wide ranging and in depth work programme which is set on an annual basis, led by Councillor Mason. This reflects the level of ambition within the Council and includes scrutiny of the Council's corporate priorities, council policies, Cabinet decisions and partners responsible for delivering services to the Fenland residents.

The Panel consists of 13 elected Councillors in accordance with political proportionality, in addition each political group can allocate up to 4 substitute members (again to reflect political proportionality rules). The Panel takes a range of evidence from FDC Members and officers as well as officers and Members from other organisations. The Panel uses this information to make recommendations to Cabinet or to other organisations for implementation. This is followed up to ensure action or the Panel have made use of 'call-in' procedures to emphasise their viewpoint on particular policies.

The Council has traditionally taken an inclusive approach to scrutiny and encouraged non-scrutiny committee members to attend, speak or alternatively pose questions via a Panel member at meetings where they may have a particular interest or concern.

In addition the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee attends meetings of the Investment Board in an observational capacity only as well being consulted regarding urgent decisions. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the

public's interests. Any decisions deemed urgent have to be reported to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel as they are not subject to the 'Call In' procedure. During 2020/21 the Chairman was consulted on 4 urgent decisions.

Working groups are convened on a regular basis to scrutinise or review particular aspects of Council or partner organisation policy, for example the 2020 Member Led review of the Anglia Revenues Partnership

Special meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are called to address emerging local issues, however ordinarily the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meets on a six weekly basis and no more than 12 occasions during the municipal year. The Panel also have pre meetings a week in advance of the formal public committee meetings to maximise engagement and ensure that Portfolio Holders, Officers and Partners are briefed in advance in relation to the anticipated key lines of enquiry therefore ensuring that attendees are able to give comprehensive, meaningful responses during the public meetings

The Panel does not generally cancel meetings from lack of business; indeed, they have in the past convened additional meetings to ensure the work programme and associated meetings agenda's do not become overly congested.

The Panel has a Work Programme report at every meeting to enable Members to monitor progress and plan ahead. The Panel is reliant on the goodwill and co-operation of external witnesses. This can mean that Agendas can sometimes be lengthy.

The District Council has previously (2011) had two Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the first responsible for scrutinising performance, therefore taking a backward look and the second responsible for scrutinising policy therefore taking a forward look.

Panel members previously feedback that they found the split confusing as key lines of enquiry would stray into the remit of the other panel resulting in a lack of clarity and the potential for an overlap or worse still contradictory recommendations.

A large number of our Members are either twin or triple-hatted and therefore represent their communities at County Council and Town and Parish Council positions. 39 members is sufficient to ensure conflicts of interest do not arise too often, however, this could potentially increase if the number of Members are reduced

		<p>resulting in it becoming difficult to manage Council business effectively.</p> <p>It is the view therefore that the proposed option to retain one Scrutiny Panel enables the Council to continue to effectively hold the decision makers to account and ensure that the council can discharge its responsibilities to other organisations (e.g. other public sector bodies and partnerships) while not significantly increasing the workload for scrutiny committee members or weakening the ability of backbenchers to be involved in the scrutiny process</p>
Statutory Function		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>
Planning	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Planning Service is an important function within the Council which enables housing growth, regeneration and economic development in the District; creating more homes and jobs for residents to enjoy.</p> <p>The Planning Service aspires to provide excellent customer service and sound planning advice in reaching decisions that have an impact on residents and the look and feel of our towns and villages.</p> <p>Members and the Planning Committee have a crucial role to play in the above in determining larger and more contentious planning applications using the policies set out in the Local Plan and using sound planning reasons.</p> <p>Planning Committee is a regulatory committee of the Council and consists of 13 members of the Council, which can include up to three members of Cabinet. Places are allocated according to political proportionality rules and there is a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Each political group can appoint up to 4 substitute members, Planning Committee members approach the substitute Members to attend in their absence.</p> <p>The committee ordinarily meets every five weeks basis, however more recently there have been additional</p>

		<p>Planning Committee meetings to consider applications (7 extra meetings so far this calendar year). All members of the committee and substitutes are required to undertake internal and external training on an annual basis and no new member of the committee is able to participate in decision making at a meeting until they have completed the internal and external training requirement. Training for Planning Committee members is also an on-going commitment during the municipal year.</p> <p>The review of Members Allowances undertaken in 2019 stated the following 'The Panel considered the role of Planning Committee members, without exception feedback from all members confirmed that the Planning Committee meet more frequently compared to any other committees and the requirement to attend site visits, attend mandatory training, as stipulated in the constitution, in addition to reading significant volumes of reports in order to make informed decisions which directly impact on local residents, place additional responsibilities on committee members which are not comparable with other committees. Members also reflected that the time commitment associated with being a member of the planning committee could potentially be a barrier for some elected members'. Therefore, the panel recommended that all members of the Planning Committee should receive an SRA at a rate of £500pa. In addition substitute members attending Planning Committee meetings on behalf of a substantive member should receive an SRA of £100 per annum. This recommendation was endorsed by Full Council. The 2021 member allowances reviewed continued to endorse the Planning Committee SRA introduced in 2019.</p> <p>The five weekly and additional Planning Committee meetings are often very lengthy. Experience has shown that providing interested parties with the opportunity to address the Panel on applications prolongs the process but Panel Members, and the Chairman in particular, strongly support the retention of this facility to aid their decision-making.</p> <p>Members also undertake Site Inspections the week prior to committee. Prior to the COVID pandemic the Council organised a Site Inspection bus to enable all Members to attend collectively with the support of a Planning Officer. Since the start of the pandemic Members have attended site inspections individually including their own transport, thus ensuring compliance with COVID social distancing requirements. These Site Inspections are normally pre-empted site visits looking</p>
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		<p>at sites and applications that will be considered by the committee at its meeting the following week.</p> <p>The Chairman of the committee meets with the Chief Planning Officers on a monthly basis to discuss applications to be considered at committee and to agree a list of site inspections.</p> <p>A Scheme of Delegation exists and the Planning Committee determine applications whereby they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Called-in by Member (the development must be within their ward area or adjacent ward area and the Member request has been granted by the Chairman of Planning).• 6 or more unresolved written opinions from 6 or more separate sources are received from within the ward area or adjacent ward area which differ from the officer recommendation.• Town/Parish views are in conflict with officer recommendation and the application is for more than 2 dwellings. <p>The number of applications determined by committee varies from month to month, with on average 5-6 applications being considered per month. The figures outlined below illustrate the number of Planning applications determined by the Planning Committee during the past 3 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2018/19 – 66• 2019/20 – 66• 2020/21 – 75 <p>The number of applications determined by Committee remained consistent during 18/19 and 19/20 in spite of having a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review, one of the recommendations from which was that the scheme of delegation should be reviewed, however Members wished to await the new administration in 2019 before making any changes. This recommendation remains outstanding. Members have made a further change to the scheme of delegation in that the Chairman of Committee is consulted on every application that an officer is seeking to refuse and has the ability to recommend to the Head of Planning to place the application on the Planning Committee agenda which has seen an increase in business for the Committee to consider.</p>
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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>Licensing Committee is another regulatory committee of the Council. The full Committee consists of 13 members of the Council. The same Members are to be appointed for the Licensing Act 2003 Committee and the Non Licensing Act 2003 Committee. These places are allocated according to political proportionality rules and there is a Chairman. In accordance with the Act, decisions affecting licensing conditions or policy making are all made at Committee level, ordinarily the Committee meets 2 -3 times per year.</p> <p>The committee has the power to appoint panels of up to 3 members with 1 substitute to hold hearings considering individual cases in relation to the Licensing Act 2003, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing and other miscellaneous licensing. These panels are formed from a rota of Licensing Committee members on a frequent basis, with the Chairman of Licensing Committee normally sitting as Chairman of the Panel. However, members cannot sit on a panel if the matter is in relation to something within their own ward or neighbouring area.</p> <p>A new member appointed to the committee cannot take part in or vote on any decision until they have attended at least one internal and one external training session on Licensing related topics. Existing members should complete at least one internal and one external training session on an annual basis. Training for Licensing Committee is also an on-going commitment during the municipal year.</p> <p>With the exception of the Licensing Act, which states that if an objection is received to an application it must go to a Committee or Sub-Committee, all licensing matters are determined by officers with a right of appeal to an Appeals Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Members cannot sit on a hearing in relation to their area, therefore preventing any potential challenges regarding conflicts of interest, however this reduces the pool of Members available. Reducing Members could exacerbate the issue of servicing Licensing issues, however there has been a downward trend in relation to the number of Licensing Hearings in recent years as outlined below</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2018 - April 2019 = 4 • May 2019 – April 2020 = 9 • May 2020 – April 2021 = 2
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>During the December 2020 meeting of Full Council, changes were agreed in relation to the former Corporate Governance Committee, which as a result of those agreed changes has become the Audit and Risk Management Committee in addition to the Audit and Risk Management Determination Sub Committee, the Sub Committee replaces the former Staff Committee.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk Management Committee is a key component of Fenland District Council’s corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards. The purpose of our Audit and Risk Management Committee is to provide independent assurance to the members and other parties of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of Fenland District Council’s governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place. It also ensures the Council is managing the risk of ensuring services have the resources to deliver on the Council’s statutory responsibilities and corporate priorities whilst recognising the Council’s financial position.</p> <p>There are a maximum of 13 members of the Council on the Audit and Risk Management Committee with seats allocated to political groups in proportion to the number of seats held by each group on the Council as a whole. In addition each political group can appoint up to 4 substitute members. Up to three members from Cabinet and three members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel may be members. A Cabinet member may not be Chairman.</p> <p>The Committee holds no more than 5 ordinary calendar meetings of the Committee per annum. In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time as and when appropriate.</p>

		<p>The Audit and Risk Management Determination Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and has decision-making powers in relation to the following delegated functions: (a) To receive reports from officers on strategic employment matters & policies; (b) To consider staffing restructures and changes to the establishment; (c) In collaboration with the Staff Side group to promote effective communications and consultation between the Council and its employees on general personnel matters; and (d) Exercise discretion allowed under the local government pension scheme, including the award of discretionary payments to employees.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk Management Determination Sub-Committees comprises of six members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee including either the Chair or Vice-Chair but no more than 2 Cabinet Members. Political proportionality rules apply. There are no set number of meetings per annum of the sub committee as they take place as required, however the Sub Committee meets at least once a year to consider strategic staffing Policy updates and revisions.</p> <p>The promotion and maintenance of high standards and conduct within the Council are the responsibility of the Conduct Committee. The committee comprises of up to 5 members of the Council. The Conduct Committee is advised by the Independent Person appointed in accordance with section 28 of the Localism Act 2011. The committee may appoint up to two non voting members who are Town or Parish Councillors, in addition three additional substitute members can be appointed.</p> <p>Amendments to the constitution and associated Conduct Committee procedures, which recently include a comprehensive pre sifting process have resulted in fewer conduct matters requiring referral to the Conduct Committee and therefore the number of occasions they are required to meet has reduced significantly, to date since the process changes have been implemented no conduct matters have required referral through to Committee.</p>
External Partnerships	Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.	
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i>	

	<p>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>On 3 March 2017, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was established as a Mayoral Combined Authority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.</p> <p>It is made up of a directly elected Mayor and the following seven local authorities (referred to as the Constituent Councils) and the Business Board (Local Enterprise Partnership):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge City Council • Cambridgeshire County Council • East Cambridgeshire District Council • Fenland District Council • Huntingdonshire District Council • Peterborough City Council • South Cambridgeshire District Council <p>There are a number of decision making committees within the Combined Authority that require representation from the constituent councils including the following:</p> <p>In accordance with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017, each Constituent Council must appoint one of its elected members and a substitute member to the Combined Authority Board. This is usually the Leader of the Council</p> <p>The Combined Authority Board is chaired by the elected Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and consists of the leaders of the seven constituent councils, the chair of the Business Board and co-opted members: the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Police & Crime Commissioner and representatives from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group.</p> <p>The purpose of the Board is to ensure that the decisions and actions of the Combined Authority deliver key outcomes for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</p> <p>In addition there are several other decision making committees within the Combined Authority requiring</p>

Fenland representation. Nominated representatives are members of the Executive and more widely from elected members

The Audit and Governance Committee 1 Fenland representative in addition to 1 substitute member

The Employment Committee 1 Fenland representative in addition to 1 substitute member

The Housing and Communities Committee 1 Fenland representative in addition to 1 substitute member

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2 Fenland representatives in addition to 2 substitute members

The Skills Committee 1 Fenland representative in addition to 1 substitute member

The Employment and Skills Board 1 Fenland representative in addition to 1 substitute member

The Transport and Infrastructure Committee 1 Fenland representative in addition to 1 substitute member

During the 2021 Member Allowances Review the IRP stated the following 'The panel considered the roles that members undertake on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) both in respect of constituted committees in addition to the requirements associated with CPCA Board membership. Other constituent Councils of the CPCA have either already agreed to make SRA payments to members fulfilling roles on the CPCA or have been asked to consider making payments as part of their respective Independent Remuneration Panel deliberations. From the extensive feedback and evidence received in relation to this matter the panel recognises the significant responsibilities, extent of decision making and associated time commitment these roles carry above that expected of a District Councillor, which would suggest that an additional SRA was justifiable. The panel also acknowledge the importance and associated potential benefits of having Fenland representatives contributing to the role of the CPCA.' The IRP asked all elected members about the potential for a further SRA in respect of the commitments and responsibilities associated with the CPCA. All members who were either interviewed or took part in the survey felt that an additional SRA could not be justified, particularly at this time due to the financial impact globally resulting from the COVID pandemic. As a result the IRP recommend that No New SRA is to be introduced in respect of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, however the SRA for the Leader of the

	<p>Council is proportionately higher in comparison to the basic allowance to reflect the additional commitment associated with the CPCA Board role.</p> <p>In addition due to the Council's commitment to exploring shared service where appropriate and where they meet the needs of the Council and the local residents we serve Fenland also provides representation from 1 elected member on the Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee and 1 elected member to the CNC Board for Building Control.</p>
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Community Leadership

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

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Fenland is a unique and diverse area with strong traditions and a variety of strong identities. This is characterised and supported by historical traditions</p>

and the isolated and sporadic geographical layout of the different settlements across the District. It is important to maintain effective elector representation within all communities' right across the District to take account of the variety of values, perspectives and outlooks, which can vary substantially from town to town and village to village.

The majority of Fenland District Councillors are also Town and Parish Councillors or County Councillors. Feedback resulting from the recent Member survey confirmed that the majority of District Councillors regularly attend Town and Parish meetings. This can be a substantial commitment for Members who have a number of Parish Councils to attend, especially in the rural areas. Members confirmed that attending Town and Parish Council meetings is important to keep in touch with local issues and developments and to support Councillors and residents at the local level to achieve the aspirations they have for their area. These meetings are an important two way communication between town/parish councils and the District Council.

Councillors are often a focal point for the community and therefore they are asked to participate in numerous community groups to provide advice and to lever in support from the District Council or other organisations if appropriate. With the introduction of the Localism Act, this role will increase as Members are looked to by the community to support them to take on new roles and responsibilities.

The Council has a high retention rate for Councillors with 25 returning Councillors and 14 new Councillors elected in May 2019. New members also come on to the Council as a result of by-elections.

The Council is 'One Team' with Councillors and officers working together for the benefit of the community. Councillors set policy which officers work to implement and are accountable to Members for this delivery. Residents contact Councillors regarding service issues which are passed to officers for resolution. Councillors will respond to the residents involved. Other mechanisms available to residents are our Fenland website, telephone contact centre and 3C's (Correspondence, Compliments and Complaints) system for resolution of issues.

Councillors are also the focal point for resident issues with other agencies which Councillors research, contact relevant officers and follow up on issues if required on behalf of residents.

		<p>Councillors often proactively work together, especially in multi member wards, to fulfil their responsibilities when a Councillor is on holiday or ill. Feedback during the Member workshops in relation to Council size stated that Multiple Member wards do not necessarily result in the workload being equally shared across both or all 3 elected representatives in that area and therefore in order to level up the workload members need to effectively work together, which can be easier if elected representatives are from the same political party.</p> <p>Councillors undertake a variety of formal and informal training to carry out their roles effectively. All Councillors participate in a Member Induction Programme which sets out what the Council does, committee responsibilities, the role of Members, the roles of Officers etc. Training is an important aspect of a Councillors role to ensure effective decision making. Compulsory training is set out in the Council's constitution for Planning and Licensing Committees which must be carried out before a Councillor can participate in the decision making process. For all other Committees, there is training associated with the role which is incorporated either before a meeting or within a separate session and is delivered by either an FDC officer or external trainer. Briefings on particular issues and legislative changes etc are incorporated on an as and when basis. Portfolio Holders, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees will be consulted and briefed on a regular basis regarding on going or new issues affecting Council business.</p> <p>Recent (July/ August 2021) survey information and focus group feedback has indicated that Members find time to fulfil their roles effectively and it is appropriate within the time they have to dedicate to the role. As one member described it 'there is enough work as a District Councillor to fill any time you are prepared to make yourself available. The more you make yourself available the more local people will approach you resulting in more work to fill your time'</p> <p>Members confirmed that they are able to effectively sit on Committees, this includes training, briefings, report reading, research, and meeting attendance including travel, which is time consuming. Several Members commented that they were actually more productive during the pandemic when legislative changes enabled virtual meetings. When virtual meetings were allowed Members explained they could attend meetings relating to the Combined</p>
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		<p>Authority, which would ordinarily be held across the whole of Cambridgeshire followed immediately by meetings about the immediate local area, without the need for any travel therefore being more available to attend meetings without any cost implications from the requirement to travel.</p> <p>Many Members are self employed or retired, which enables those members to have greater autonomy about the use of their time. These Members reported they would find it difficult to fulfil all aspects of the role effectively if they had to cover a wider electorate and/or balance other substantial commitments, such as a young family or full time employment.</p> <p>Attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds (especially working age candidates) therefore increasing the diversity of perspectives and views available to set policy for the area will be improved if it is perceived that the current councillor workload would be potential reduced by having an increase in the number of Councillors to meet the overall increase in workload.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The rapid increase in smart device ownership has resulted in 81% of people (nationally) having access to a smart device. This means that even people without traditional home internet access can now contact the Council and their Elected Members through e-mail and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) which supplements or replaces more traditional methods such as face-to-face contact, letter writing and the telephone. Whilst the use of social media and other online communication methods has provided alternatives to traditional contact methods with residents, the increased use of emails and social media has resulted in the public having greater expectations that the Council and councillors will be instantly contactable.</p>

		<p>The Council places strong emphasis on “channel migration” with the aim of encouraging its customers to obtain information and services for themselves through electronic means. Councillors, however, believe that while this has realised benefits in terms of reduced transaction costs for the Council as an organisation, it has not decreased their levels of constituent casework. On the contrary, it is commonly found that technology has contributed to increased contact with Councillors because they are readily available via email and mobile telephone there is an expectation of a quick response.</p> <p>The Council does not issue elected members with Council owned devices, largely because the majority of members are twin or triple hatters at parish and county level and therefore wish to avoid having multiple devices depending on the role they are fulfilling at any given time. All Members are however issued with council email addresses to facilitate contact and better assist their constituents. In turn, Members are also now more easily able to contact officers through email and find out information themselves on-line</p> <p>The Council has a 3C’s process (correspondence, compliments and complaints) which enables residents to raise issues directly with the Council rather than through their elected representative however some residents ask their local Member to conduct this process on their behalf.</p> <p>Members have support with ongoing training and development through their respective Committee responsibilities and can also request to attend training courses etc. The Council promotes the use of free resources such as those available through the Local Government Association.</p>
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Other Issues

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

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Summary

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

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

Having considered the future arrangements for Council size, the Council is recommending that 42 Councillors would provide efficient and effective representation to the public, although it strongly emphasises that, in view of the rural nature of the district and the number of communities that make up Fenland, any number below 42 would not be preferable by way of ensuring democratic representation to the district's residents.

In developing this submission the Council took as its starting point the existing number of Members and then considered whether the evidence supported a variation of that figure.

Initially the Member working group considered a range of between 39 to 48 elected representatives but narrowed this down to a recommendation of a future Council Size of 42 Members. This recommendation was later considered and endorsed by Full Council.

Fenland District Councillors have a high profile within their local communities and there is an expectation from most of the Parish Councils in the district for District Councillors to attend the majority, if not all, of their meetings. A future Council size of 42 Members will enable a presence at Parish Council meetings, thereby fulfilling this expectation of accountability and community leadership.

Furthermore an increase from the current 39 Members to 42 Members is recommended to the LGBCE for consideration in order to:

- Ensure the effective running of the Council and to ensure there is no detrimental impact on effective representation especially given the increase in electoral figures to 2027.
- The proposal for a future Council Size of 42 elected representatives when considered in conjunction with the forecast electorate figures is the mid point when compared with the CIPFA nearest neighbours (comparative Council's).
- Reflect the significant increase in workload associated with the creation of the Combined Authority – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Board, Leader's Strategy meetings and Committees - which has occurred since the last setting of Council Size through an electoral review in 2012.
- Reflect the additional workload associated with access to external funding which requires Members' input and decision making for example CPCA £4 million Growing Fenland funding and £3.6 million Cambs Horizons monies.
- Reflect the creation of the Commercial Investment Strategy and Investment Board as well as Local Authority Trading Company.
- Reflect the Cambridgeshire County Council devolution plans to encourage local involvement in CCC services.
- Reflect extra Planning Committee meetings due to the Council's pro growth agenda.
- Reflect the rise, as reported by Councillors, of the increase in workload of 38 hours to 60 hours per month since the previous electoral review in 2012.
- Reflect the number of unfilled vacancies on Outside Body Organisations, currently 39 seats remained unfilled when compared against 111 available seats

The primary reason for rejecting a reduction in the number of Councillors or retaining the existing number of councillors is recognition of the increased and increasing workload for councillors, and therefore an increased number of councillors is needed to ensure the efficient and effective discharge of the Council's responsibilities.

Members also recognised that attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds (especially working age candidates) will be improved if it is perceived that the current councillor workload would be potential reduced by having an increase in the number of Councillors to meet the overall increase in workload.

As further justification for consideration, the Council has answered the questions within the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's guidance document on Council size as part of this submission.