

**Waltham Forest Electoral Review
by the Local Government Boundary
Commission for England**

**Submission on Future Councillor
Numbers from the Conservative
Councillors' Group of the London
Borough of Waltham Forest**

February 2019

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1. Introduction and Recommendation

- 1.1. The London Borough of Waltham Forest Conservative Group recommends that Waltham Forest should in future be represented by 63 Councillors.
- 1.2. The London Borough of Waltham Forest Conservative Group welcomes the review of electoral boundaries and the opportunity to submit representations to the Commission.
- 1.3. The Group has considered the question of council size and following work by an appointed Working Group and several meetings and discussions of the full Group has come to its decision that 63 is the ideal number of Councillors for Waltham Forest.
- 1.4. This report was ultimately taken to a meeting of the Conservative Group on 25th February 2019 at which members had the opportunity to debate and consider before it was adopted at that meeting as the Conservative Group's submission to the Commission.

2. Our Borough Profile

- 2.1. Waltham Forest is an outer London borough which is home to over 275,000 people¹ and 107,000 households².
- 2.2. Waltham Forest is formed of a network of 4 major town centres with Leyton and Leytonstone in the south, Walthamstow in the centre and Chingford in the north. The borough is more urban and densely populated in the south in contrast to the suburban, less densely populated north of the borough. The borough is defined by its natural water landscape of the Lea Valley to the West, and Epping Forest to the East, the two largest public open spaces in London.
- 2.3. The borough has seen a rapid population growth in the past decade (from 2007 to 2017) by approx. 40,000 people – equivalent to 17% compared with 15% in London as a whole – largely driven by international migration, particularly from EU countries.
- 2.4. The long-term impact of Brexit is still too uncertain to enable accurate population projections but according to the GLA's 2016-based demographic projections, the number of people living in Waltham Forest is anticipated to increase by around 5% between 2018 and 2024 (approx. 13,000 in total).³
- 2.5. Waltham Forest has a young age structure with higher proportion of children and working-age residents compared to the UK as whole. The average age of Waltham Forest residents is 34.5 years compared to the national average of 39.9 years.⁴
- 2.6. The young age structure in the borough has been driven by the high levels of international migration into the borough accompanied by high birth rates. Over the next decade, however, the effects of population ageing are likely to present more, as the number of over 65s is projected to increase faster than the population as a whole (14% and 5% by 2024 respectively).⁵
- 2.7. Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically-diverse areas in London. More than two thirds (68%) of residents are from minority ethnic background (other than White British/Irish) compared to 58% in London as a whole. The largest ethnic group is White British/Irish (32%), followed by Asian/Asian British (21%), Other White (18%), Black/Black British (17%), Mixed/multiple ethnicities (6%) and Other (6%).
- 2.8. Around a third of Waltham Forest residents (36%) are born outside the UK (including 15% born in EU countries and 21% born outside the EU). About a quarter of population (24%) are not British nationals (including 14% EU and 10% non-EU nationals).⁶
- 2.9. Over the last decade the borough's population has become increasingly diverse. White Other groups – predominantly of EU origin – have been the fastest growing ethnicity in the borough since 2011 (35% compared to 8% of overall growth).⁷ Until

¹ 275,505 according to the mid-2017 population estimates (Office for National Statistics)

² GLA 2016-based central trend household projection as at 2017

³ GLA 2016-based housing-led ward population projections (Borough Preferred Option Dec 2018)

⁴ Office for National Statistics

⁵ GLA 2016-based housing-led ward population projections (Borough Preferred Option Dec 2018)

⁶ ONS Annual Population Survey (2017)

⁷ GLA 2016-based ethnic group population projections

Brexit, these trends were expected to continue whereas it is uncertain how the ethnic make-up of the borough will change post-Brexit.

- 2.10. About one in four residents aged three and over (26 per cent) do not speak English as their main language compared to 8 per cent nationally. The majority, however, can speak English well or very well. About 6 per cent of the borough's residents said in the 2011 Census that they do not speak English well or at all. English language proficiency varies across the borough in line with ethnic make-up of the areas and is higher in the north (Chingford) and lower in the more diverse neighbourhoods in the south of the borough.⁸
- 2.11. Waltham Forest is a multi-faith community reflecting the diverse population of the borough. In the 2011 Census, around half (48 per cent) of residents identified as Christian. Almost a quarter of residents (22%) identified as Muslim (compared to 5% nationally), an increase from 15% in 2001. There has also been a small increase in the proportion of people who identify themselves as secular (15% to 18%).
- 2.12. Waltham Forest is ranked as the seventh most deprived borough in London, and 35th most deprived in England (out of 326). The borough ranks poorly on three out of seven domains of deprivation nationally:
- Crime (7th most deprived)
 - Barriers to Housing and Services (2nd most deprived)
 - Living Environment (25th most deprived)⁹
- 2.13. Waltham Forest has seen a growth in the number of people living in private rented sector in the past decade from 15% in 2001 to 26% in 2011, and is now estimated to make up 32% of the housing stock (London average is 26%).¹⁰ Owner occupied homes are estimated at 51%, similar to the 2011 level (50%). The social rented sector (Council or Housing Association owned) makes up 17% of housing stock, down from 22% from 2011 Census.
- 2.14. Waltham Forest currently has a housing target of 862 new homes per year, as set out by the London Plan in 2016. The new draft London Plan set 1,794 new homes per year as the provisional target; representing an increase of 108% on the previous target. In 2017/18 a total of 949 net units were delivered in Waltham Forest.¹¹

⁸ 2011 Census

⁹ 2015 Indices of Deprivation

¹⁰ ONS Annual Population Survey

¹¹ Housing in Waltham Forest.LBWF Authority Monitoring Report 2017.

3. Waltham Forest's Priorities

- 3.1. Creating Futures is the Council's corporate strategy. It was published in January 2018 and lays out five driving principles:
- harness the unique strengths of our borough and its people;
 - apply a relentless focus on investment;
 - be people focused in everything we do;
 - commit to creating a new collaborative relationship with our residents;
 - embrace new ways of working.
- 3.2. Creating Futures is the Council's strategy for improving life chances and delivering its priorities for the future. The Council has adopted three priorities following consultation with residents. These are:
- Keeping Waltham Forest clean, green and safe;
 - Ensuring a decent roof over residents' heads;
 - Improve residents' life chances.
- 3.3. **Think Family** transforms the way Council and other public services are delivered with greater emphasis on evidence-based intervention, which helps to connect people with sources of support in their local community. It will deliver new mechanisms for engaging with the community, including a new capacity-building programme for local people and organisations to build an integrated, supportive and active community in Waltham Forest.
- 3.4. **Life Chances** is the plan for improving life chances for young people, which focuses on four priority areas for action: ensuring every child gets the best start in life; providing a good quality education for every child; supporting young people to be resilient, confident and healthy; and giving young people the opportunities to flourish. The plan outlines a broad range of interventions across these areas, and pledges a new way of working with partners, parents and young people in particular – to co-design and deliver these.
- 3.5. **London Borough of Culture 2019** will provide 12 months of flagship cultural initiatives and programming that will transform the way residents and the rest of London perceives Waltham Forest. Its legacy will enrich the borough for years to come, putting culture at heart of an ongoing approach to reduce inequalities and open up opportunities for all residents from every background.
- 3.6. **Think Work** is the counterpart to our Think Family Strategy, and is all about boosting good jobs and skills locally, with a focus on three key sectors: construction, health and social care, and culture. The Think Work Strategy will include work to boost take-up of apprenticeships in the borough, create a living wage zone with businesses, tackle unemployment and in-work poverty, and create good jobs for everyone in the borough.
- 3.7. A new **Housing Strategy** is currently in development at Waltham Forest. The key objectives of the new strategy are to support growth and aspirations within the borough; ensure decent, safe and healthy homes; tackle and prevent homelessness; and create inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods. The housing strategy will go to cabinet in March 2019, and be launched at a Housing Summit in April. Our new **Local Plan** is also in development, and will lay out a vision for planning and regeneration over the next 15 years.

4. Changes in Waltham Forest From Last Boundary Review 2002-2024

4.1. The last boundary review was carried out in June 1999 ahead of the 2002 local government elections. Since then, Waltham Forest has undergone a number of changes which affect local government and the work of councillors.

4.2. Population

4.3. The population of Waltham Forest continues to grow. The GLA population growth forecasts set out below show that from a 2002 population of 223,776, Waltham Forest will have reached a population of 302,893¹² by 2024.

Year	Population
2002	223,776
2011	260,397
2012	263,221
2013	266,452
2014	268,675
2015	271,825
2016	276,498
2017	280,045
2018	283,533
2019	286,962
2020	290,312
2021	293,588
2022	296,776
2023	299,881
2024	302,893

4.4. The council has recently revised its residential development trajectory which forecasts an additional 5,421 homes by 2024.

4.5. The Conservative Group are further concerned that the GLA forecast for Waltham Forest in 2030, which is the same distance away from us in the future as the last boundary review is in the past, is 319,182, an increase from now of over 35,000 and over 95,000 from 2002.

4.6. Council Governance

4.7. The Council has changed how it has operated since the last boundary review. We now operate under the Strong Leader model as set out later in this paper and have introduced scrutiny committees which have changed the way that Waltham Forest is governed and the role of members.

4.8. Infrastructure

4.9. There have been other changes in the borough which have affected the work that the council does. Legacies realised following the London 2012 Olympics including improved transport infrastructure have helped attract new business. In the west of

¹² [GLA 2016-based central trend projections](#)

the borough, along the Lea Valley the council is working with landowners and developers to realise extensive regeneration and housing provision.

- 4.10. Through the Government's One Public Estate programme the council is working with partners and local business to make the most of shared resources and deliver affordable housing to residents.

4.11. Council Funding

- 4.12. The Government has reduced and continues to reduce funding for local authorities and Waltham Forest has had to make savings of over £115million since 2010. This has a huge impact on the council's ability to deliver services and puts a greater pressure on Councillors to do more with less.

4.13. Future

- 4.14. The council expects changes to continue over the next five years. Waltham Forest has ambitious house building targets of 1,794 per year. Waltham Forest is a borough which is being transformed and this change will continue.
- 4.15. The cost of living continues to rise as does the cost of housing. The average house price in Waltham Forest has increased by 165.26% since 2002¹³. The cost of housing and the cost of living puts a real strain on many residents in the borough. Our young population includes many who want to buy their first home, yet struggle to afford it. Our challenge is to help people stay in the borough and ensure that there is adequate housing of all types to maintain the diversity of the borough and the mix of people who want to make this their home.

¹³ Land Registry UK House Price Index

5. Governance and Decision Making

- 5.1. Waltham Forest is made up of 20 wards, with 60 Councillors leading the Council. These Councillors make up the Council as a sovereign body. There are 4 meetings of the Council in a municipal year, as well as an Annual General Meeting and a special meeting to determine the Council budget.
- 5.2. Council meetings are chaired by the Mayor of Waltham Forest. The Mayor is elected for the municipal year at the Annual General Meeting of the Council.
- 5.3. The Council elects a Leader to serve a four year term. The Leader appoints a Cabinet of up to ten members (including the Leader) which has executive responsibility for decision making.
- 5.4. The Council sets the organisation's budget and policy framework, including its Medium Term Financial Strategy. It is also responsible for deciding any change to the council tax precept.
- 5.5. Council establishes and agrees the size and composition of the Council's committees for the municipal year. The political balance of the Council is currently 46 Labour, 14 Conservatives. All parties have a role in the governance and decision making process. The breakdown of the number of committees and how seats are allocated for 2018/19 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.6. All councillors serve on Council and an average councillor serves on 3 committees.
- 5.7. The Constitution sets out delegated responsibilities for the Council, Cabinet and, for non-executive powers, to committees, and the powers that are delegated to key officers. The Leader set out her scheme for the delegation of executive powers, including to Cabinet members and officers, at the 2018 Council Annual General Meeting. The Scheme of Delegation is presently under review, in order to ensure a proper balance between the responsibilities of the Leader, the Cabinet, individual cabinet members and officers.
- 5.8. Directors agree and maintain Schemes of Delegation for their service areas. The Scheme of Delegation sets out the levels at which decisions can be made in respect of core decision making such as procurement, human resources and finance. This is supported by detailed procedure rules which set out relevant duties, requirements and authorisations. Decisions taken under delegated powers are recorded. If they are Executive decisions, those records are published online.
- 5.9. The full schedule of Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings is agreed at the Annual Council Meeting, and is also available on the Council's website. All key decisions to be taken by Cabinet or under delegated powers are included in the Cabinet's published forward plan.

6. Leader and Cabinet

6.1. The Leader

- 6.1.1. The Council has adopted a “Strong Leader” governance model.
- 6.1.2. The Leader agrees the Cabinet forward plan and can specify that a decision is to be taken by a particular decision maker. The Leader can vary this in line with the Council’s constitution.
- 6.1.3. The Leader can give authority to delegate to a cabinet member or chief officer individually, including details of the limitation on their authority.
- 6.1.4. The Leader can remove or replace members of the cabinet or make changes to portfolios.
- 6.1.5. In practice most decisions are delegated by the Leader to the Cabinet or to individual cabinet members.
- 6.1.6. The Leader is a full time role.

6.2. The Cabinet

- 6.2.1. There are currently 9 members of the Cabinet including the Leader. There are three non-executive junior Cabinet Members.
- 6.2.2. Individual Cabinet Members are responsible for the decisions in their portfolio that come to the Cabinet and play an active role in the formulation of reports before the Cabinet. Reports and policies are prepared by officers, in consultation with Cabinet Members.
- 6.2.3. Cabinet members have regular one to ones with the management team of the services they are responsible for. Their role is to provide political leadership to the various decisions that are being taken across the council.
- 6.2.4. Cabinet members are expected to work a substantial number of hours per week on executive matters. This work may take place outside office hours, and they are regularly working away from the Council offices.
- 6.2.5. The Cabinet meets monthly to make executive decisions. The Council’s constitution sets out the Cabinet’s role:
 - 1. To propose the annual budget to Council for approval.
 - 2. To ensure full consultation with the public, review committees and other members of the Council on policies and strategies.
 - 3. To implement, within approved budgets, agreed plans and policies of the Council.
 - 4. To oversee expenditure within budget heads and limits approved by the Council.
 - 5. To provide political leadership to enable the Waltham Forest Council to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Borough.
 - 6. To exercise collective responsibility for the Council and its performance.
 - 7. To lead the Council's contribution towards the community planning process and the preparation of plans and strategies.

8. To set strategies for partnership with external stakeholders in Waltham Forest. In particular to convene local strategic partnerships which should then be responsible for the development and delivery of community strategies.
9. To develop strategies for fostering internal partnerships and shaping corporate direction.
10. To give political leadership to the Council's Best Value programme in consultation with the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
11. To approve the senior management structure of Waltham Forest Council.
12. In matters of urgency, except for planning applications and statutory functions, which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet, to decide on any matter relating to the function of the Council.
13. To receive recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee
14. To oversee implementation of the Councillors' Allowance Scheme.
15. To establish appropriate arrangements for formal consultations with trade unions and teacher associations.
16. To determine grant allocation priorities for appropriate external organisations.
17. To discharge all functions of the Authority which are not required by legislation to be discharged by any other body, subject to any Regulations made by the Secretary of State.
18. To publish a four-month work programme every month called the Forward Plan.

6.2.6. The membership of the Cabinet and allocation of responsibilities to Cabinet Members are as follows:

Leader – Councillor Clare Coghill

Strategy

Policy

Budget

Chair of Investment and Infrastructure Board and Walthamstow Town Centre Board

Communications

Relationship with partners and government

Libraries

Borough of Culture

Promoting and building links with arts organisations

Deputy Leader – Councillor Clyde Loakes

Redefining Waltham Forest

Envirocrime and enforcement

Mini Holland programme

Neighbourhood services including street cleansing, refuse collection, waste and recycling

Environmental health and trading standards

Parks and greenspaces

Climate change

Traffic

Parking

Highways policy and management

A12 Decking

Transport – bus priority, overground, accessibility

Work to ensure Victoria Line entrance at Walthamstow Central is included in new Mall

Transformation and Commercial Operations – Councillor Liaquat Ali

Commercial Operations

Traded Services
Digital and Smart Technology
ICT
Smart Cities
Customer Interface
Revenues and benefits
Procurement and Commissioning
Civil contingencies and Emergency Planning

Health and Voluntary Sector Partnerships – Councillor Naheed Asghar

Strategic relationship with local, regional and national health authorities
Health and wellbeing strategy
Chair of health and wellbeing board
Public health
Voluntary sector
Leisure centres and facilities

Housing – Councillor Louise Mitchell

Waltham Forest Housing
Registered social landlords
Private housing sector
Private sector licensing
Housing standards
Housing Association Liaison

Economic growth and high streets – Councillor Simon Miller

High streets and town centre management
Economic development and inward investment
Employment
Relationship with business
Regeneration
Planning policy
Council property and capital strategy
Training, skills and adult education
Walthamstow Market
Housing strategy
New housing delivery

Children, young people and families – Councillor Grace Williams

Statutory functions under the Children Act
Education
Children and young people's social services provision
Schools capital projects
Early years
Youth provision
Youth offending team
Children safeguarding
Child poverty
Think Families

Community Safety – Councillor Ahsan Khan

Crime and disorder strategy
Anti-gangs strategy
Troubled families programme
Drug action team

Relationships with police and fire authorities
Prevent strategy

Adult Services – Councillor Khevyn Limbajee

Statutory responsibility for adults' services
Personalisation strategy
Families and adult services
Older people's strategy
Supporting people
Identifying and addressing Isolation
Ethical Care Charter
Bridging the intergenerational divide
Financial inclusion

Cabinet junior – Culture – Councillor Paul Douglas

Borough of Culture delivery planning
Sports development

Cabinet junior – Life Chances – Councillor Ros Flowers

Response and implementation of recommendations of the Life Chances
Commission

Cabinet junior – Connecting Communities – Councillor Vicky te Velde

Community engagement
Equalities
Community cohesion

6.3. Non-Executive Councillors

- 6.3.1. There are 50 non-executive councillors (excluding Leader, Cabinet and Mayor). They all attend full Council and sit on the various committees of the Council.
- 6.3.2. 3 Councillors also serve as Junior Cabinet Members who are not voting members of the executive.
- 6.3.3. The council's constitution sets out details of the role of a Councillor (see section 13).
- 6.3.4. Each party has a whip who liaises to agree business and manage work between the groups. This includes agreeing business for Council meetings and constitutional changes.

7. Outside Bodies

- 7.1. The Council appoints members to outside bodies at its Annual General Meeting and at other ordinary meetings of the Council as required. In addition to those, some members serve on panels by virtue of their executive function, such as the Leader sitting on the London Councils' Leaders Committee.

8. Scrutiny Functions

8.1. Waltham Forest has eight scrutiny committees, covering a full range of council services and community partners:

Adult Social Care
Budget and Performance
Children and Families
Communities
Growth
Health
Housing
Neighbourhoods

8.2. The committees have the following collective responsibilities, as set out in the constitution:

1. To monitor and review the policies and practices of and services provided by the Council, its partners and contractors.
2. To investigate how successfully Council policies deliver these services and to make recommendations on future policy development.
3. To scrutinise decisions of Cabinet that affect matters falling within the remit of each Committee.
4. To undertake particular reviews of services within the Committee's remit as may be requested from time to time by Council or Cabinet and to make reports or recommendations on matters which affect these services in the Borough's areas.

8.3. Each committee is comprised of six Councillors, with membership being 4 Labour and 2 Conservative members. The Council decided unanimously to vary the proportionality arrangements, as per Local Government & Housing Act 1989 s17, in order that 2 Conservative members could serve on each scrutiny committee.

8.4. Each committee meets five times a year, scrutinising a range of topics relevant to their individual remits. Committees are a non-executive function of the Council.

8.5. The committees also conduct a themed review throughout the year, with a final report and recommendations being prepared by each committee. This is then referred to Cabinet for a formal response. This approach enables ongoing engagement with a topic, and an opportunity to shape policy and scrutinise services by gathering a range of views from service users, officers, the community and external experts.

9. Regulatory Committees

9.1. Planning Committee

9.1.1. The Council has one planning committee. Its powers are set out in part seven of the Council's constitution. It considers planning applications that meet one of the following criteria:

- when requested by a Member of the Council;
- where major matters of planning policy are involved;
- where the Council would be involved in any financial liability;
- where there is significant public interest; and
- where considered appropriate by the Deputy Chief Executive, Growth & Regeneration.

9.1.2. The Committee also deals with other functions contained within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and related legislation including Historic Building Grants, though it does not deal with planning policy issues.

9.1.3. In the financial year 2017/18 the council has determined 1,585 planning decisions, of which 52 (0.03%) were made by members.

9.1.4. The Committee meets once a month, and has public speakers for a majority of planning applications.

9.2. Licensing Committees

9.2.1. The council has the following Licensing Committees and subcommittees:

- Gambling Act Subcommittee
- Licensing (General) Committee
- Licensing (General) Subcommittee
- Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Committee
- Licensing Act 2003 Subcommittee

9.2.2. The powers of these committees are set out in section seven of the Council's constitution. The committees consider and determine applications, revocation of licenses and polices in relation to licensing and registration. The committees maintain a scheme of delegation, with the subcommittees being convened as necessary to consider any applications. A subcommittee can be convened with any three members of the main committee.

10. Pension Fund Committee

- 10.1. As an administering authority of the Local Government Pension Scheme, the Council is required to establish a Local Pension Board. This is comprised of employer and LGPS member representatives. The powers of this committee are set out in section seven of the Council's constitution. The Council has also delegated decision making responsibilities to a Pension Fund Committee.
- 10.2. The Pension Fund Committee is comprised of five Councillors. It meets four times a year. It is responsible for overseeing governance for a pensions fund with assets of approximately £842 million

11. Other Council Meetings

- 11.1. Waltham Forest also has a number of other committees and panels which play an important role in decision making and governance. These are:
- Audit and Governance Committee (4 Cllrs)
 - Health and Wellbeing Board (4 Cllrs)
 - Staffing Committee (10 Cllrs)
 - Children in Care Council (3 Cllrs)
 - Corporate Parenting Board (3 Cllrs)
 - Fostering and Adoption Panel (1 Cllr)
 - Mobility Forum (2 Cllrs)
 - Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (4 Cllrs)
 - Transport Liaison Consultative Group (5 Cllrs)
 - Outer North East London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (3 Cllrs)

12. Role of the Councillor

12.1. The core role of Councillors is set out in Part 12 of the constitution:

- To represent electors and the local communities of the Ward to which they have been elected by acting as representatives, advocates, champions and create opportunities for communication with different sectors including vulnerable and hard to reach groups.
- To attend and contribute to meetings of the Full Council Committees as required.
- To undertake any role allocated in respect of either Executive, non-Executive, Overview & Scrutiny, Audit & Governance or quasi-judicial / appeal functions of the Council.
- To undertake other official duties or act as representatives of the Council on outside bodies/external organisations where appointed and feedback where required.
- To actively participate in budget setting, forming the Council's policies and scrutiny of practices and service delivery.
- To attend Committees, Panels, Working Groups, Task and Finish Groups and other meetings as required.
- To understand and translate to residents the role of public services.
- To effectively represent constituents by actively seeking their views, taking these into account when considering policy and taking decisions and feeding back to constituents Council decisions that impact on them.
- To undertake advice surgeries and diligently follow up casework on behalf of constituents.
- To address and present to the Council, using the appropriate process, issues of concern to them or their constituents.
- To mitigate impact of austerity on residents by developing policies and approaches to helping residents find support.
- To liaise with other levels of government, agencies or bodies with influence over the well-being of the borough and local area.
- To maintain and promote high standards of conduct and ethics.
- To promote equality, diversity and fairness.
- To participate in any training and development initiatives that are either a constitutional or legal requirement or which have been identified as a development opportunity and undertake appropriate personal development necessary to carry out their role(s) or designated responsibilities.

12.2. Demands of time

12.2.1. Councillors have been surveyed as part of the electoral review process to better understand the demands on their time, how they communicate with residents, their local leadership role and the impact of past and future changes.

12.2.2. The average councillor is attending around 22 meetings per month, taking up an average of 44 hours. This includes borough wide meetings, ward level and community meetings.

12.2.3. Members who have been councillors for some time observed that the absolute volume of correspondence had increased, with constituents demanding more and a more immediate response from their elected members. This is expected to increase as communication channels like WhatsApp and Twitter become more prevalent

than telephone calls, and where instant responses require members to spend more time communicating than previously. The average councillor spends 22 hours per month handling casework enquiries. This ranges from 6 to 80 hours per month between individual councillors.

- 12.2.4. Members were asked about the time commitment of being a councillor. Around two fifths expected it to be a lesser time commitment. Members who felt this were surprised by the volume and complexity of casework and the level of need of residents through social and electronic media.
- 12.2.5. Currently there are around 250 places that need to be filled by members across committees, bodies, panels and positions within the council.

12.3. Resident Engagement Toolkit

- 12.3.1. The resident engagement toolkit provides Councillors with the means to deliver engagement with their residents. This model allows Councillors greater flexibility and ownership of their engagement activities as Councillors can choose the type and format of their engagement activity, from holding a ward forum to arranging a street surgery.
- 12.3.2. The toolkit comprises of the resident engagement budget and engagement guidance available on the online Councillor Hub:
- 12.3.3. The resident engagement budget is a fund of £1,000 per ward (£333.33 per Councillor) on a pre-paid credit card which ward Councillors can use to cover the costs of their engagement activity. For example, to cover venue hire, refreshments and equipment for engagement activities.
- 12.3.4. The Councillor Hub is on the Council's intranet and provides ideas and advice for resident engagement.
- 12.3.5. The engagement budget is in addition to community ward funding. Community ward funding is an annual community grant of £10,000 per ward which is to help residents and community-based organisations deliver local initiatives, projects or improvements for the benefit of the local area. Ward Councillors decide which projects to fund in their ward.

12.4. Representational Role of Councillors

12.5. Casework

- 12.5.1. Members are expected to manage their own casework and all councillors do casework differently. The council does not offer any general administrative support for members in their ward or casework but the council operates a councillor enquiries email account. This inbox is monitored by a Councillor Support Officer.
- 12.5.2. In May 2018, the Council introduced a digital casework system to record and track casework from members to draw information about the type and quantity of casework which exists. Councillors can either log their casework directly via an online form or email the councillor enquiries email inbox where it is logged by officers onto the system. From June to November 2018, councillors submitted a total of 431 cases excluding the Leader's casework.

- 12.5.3. Officers estimate that 20% of councillors regularly submit casework via the online form and from June to Nov 2018, an average of 72 pieces of casework a month were logged by members. Officers estimate that 40% of councillors occasionally submit their casework via the online form or inbox.
- 12.5.4. Councillors do also email officers directly. Officers and Councillors estimate that about 40% of councillors' casework is raised with officers directly outside of the casework management system.
- 12.5.5. The top five issues for members enquiries from the digital casework system are: housing enquiries; tree problems; highways requests; parking enquiries and bin requests.
- 12.5.6. Officers estimate that 10% of cases logged via the digital casework system are complex in that they require more than one service area to provide a response.
- 12.5.7. Councillors report that their case on average is evenly distributed between one-off and longer running issues, with those also being evenly split between complex and straight forward issues.

12.6. Representational boards, consultation and VCS

- 12.6.1. Members work with people across the borough. The Council has various mechanisms in place to assist with groups such as young people and other minority groups.
- 12.6.2. Waltham Forest Council works with young people from the Young Advisors charity and the Youth Independent Advisory Group to involve its young residents in local decision making and improving services. There are also occasionally specific events for young people as part of wider consultations that at times involve councillors such as the Life Chance Commission.
- 12.6.3. Partners have worked well together to empower communities and bring local people together to reduce tension. Recent resident surveys demonstrate a level of social capital and community cohesion that is strong but could be improved:
- 70% believe residents in their neighbourhood can be trusted (80% for London)
 - 70% believe that they if sensed trouble in the areas they could get help from the people who live here (80% for London); and
 - 88% believe that the local area is a place where local people get on well together (90% for London)
- 12.6.4. Members play a front line role in public consultations. The Council held "Coffee and Conversations", the council's largest public consultation to define the Council's Creating Futures priorities.
- 12.6.5. Another evaluation tool employed by the Council is the Resident Insight Survey. This is a quantitative tracking survey conducted three times a year with a statistically representative sample of 500 residents. Quotas are applied to ensure representative balance across neighbourhood, gender, age and ethnicity. The survey is used to monitor resident satisfaction with key services and also to test perception and opinion on other aspects of the Council's work.

- 12.6.6. A review of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Waltham Forest in 2015 found that our VCS is comparatively small when compared with neighbouring boroughs, and the sector is struggling to develop and grow in a changed financial setting. Many organisations face issues of sustainability, and have found it difficult to adapt to the move away from grants to commissioning.

12.7. Community Meetings

- 12.7.1. Members attend events in their community where they often play a local leadership role such as fairs and fetes, openings, estate and TRA events, charity events and arts and cultural events. Members report attending around 4 such events on average per month.

12.8. Communicating with Residents

- 12.8.1. How members interact with their constituents is changing.
- 12.8.2. Nearly all members hold regular surgeries however each councillor organises these differently. Members now spend on average just two hours a month in ward surgeries.
- 12.8.3. The average member reports that over half their time spent handling correspondence is via email (55%), with social media (18.5%) the next largest and other interactions – including ward walks, WhatsApp and home visits - accounting for 12.7%.
- 12.8.4. Modern forms of communication mean that members are spending a lot more time engaging with residents online, such as via email, on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp.

12.9. Officer support to Councillors

- 12.10. The role of officers is set out in the Council's Constitution ([Part 9 - Protocol for Member/Employee Relations](#)). Their job is to give full and impartial advice to enable Councillors to carry out their duties. There is no general administrative support for members to discharge their duties, although there is support for members performing certain roles. For example, if they are cabinet portfolio holder they will have access to (but not exclusive use of) an Executive Support Officer. If they are a committee member they will receive some additional support from Democratic Services Officers.
- 12.11. The two main groups have a political assistant. They provide limited support with press and group administration.

13. Policy Changes

- 13.1. The legislation that defines and informs the workload of the Council's various bodies has developed since the last boundary review of Waltham Forest in 1999. The governance of local authorities changed significantly following the Local Government Act 2000, with Waltham Forest adopting the "Strong Leader" model described above. Subsequent legislation, such as the Localism Act 2011, has seen increased responsibilities for elected members. This includes additional powers and duties for the Council. For example, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred the responsibility for Public Health to local authorities, and the requirement to establish a Health and Wellbeing Board. Members might also be involved in Neighbourhood Forums.
- 13.2. Further changes are expected in central government policy in the years to come, with responsibilities increasing for executive and non-executive Councillors. These include:
- Impact of leaving the European Union
 - Development and delivery of the London Plan
 - Financial and demand pressures faced by local government, and the impact of the Fairer Funding Review
 - Social Care and Health integration, including the development of an integrated commissioning function
- 13.3. These changes have significant implications for the Council, and Councillors can anticipate an impact in the roles they hold as local decision makers and scrutiny members, as well as an increase in the numbers and complexity of resident case work.

14. The Future

- 14.1. The Council faces a number of challenges in the years ahead, and as outlined above, there is an expectation that the demands on local Councillors' time will increase. There are currently no planned changes to the Council's model of governance.
- 14.2. In addition to the day to day duties of elected members, the Council has a number of key initiatives for the years ahead:
- Think Families - including Connecting Communities; Transforming Services; Strategic Commissioning
 - Redevelopment of the Town Hall Campus (One Public Estate Project)
 - Private Rented Property Licensing Scheme
 - Digital and Technology Strategy
 - Clean, Green and Safe Strategy
 - Leisure Strategy
 - Commercial activity - including Sixty Bricks and the Services Store
- 14.3. These require the input of executive and non-executive Councillors, both in shaping and scrutinising this work to ensure they are in the interests of Waltham Forest residents.
- 14.4. The Council's current Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out a total value of savings for 2017/18 to 2019/20 of £22 million. These savings will mean services are expected to change and develop in order to meet the financial challenges, with Councillors providing political leadership and good governance to ensure that there is appropriate local accountability and challenge.

15. Conclusion and Recommendations

15.1. Rationale for recommending 63 Councillors

- 15.1.1. This submission notes a number of challenges facing the Borough in seeking to address and combat deprivation levels, health inequalities and the overall alleviation of poverty within the Borough. It also presents opportunities through the ambitions in the Council's priorities and future plans and the work with partners. This not only illustrates a commitment to public service but also devotion to the local community.
- 15.1.2. In achieving effective and convenient but above all, accessible local government within the Borough, it is the conviction of the Waltham Forest Conservative Group Members that the optimum Council size should be at least 63 Members. We submit this for the following reasons.

15.2. Increase in Casework and associated Councillor Duties.

- 15.2.1. We believe Casework and associated Councillor Duties will increase because of the following factors

15.3. New Methods of Communication

- 15.3.1. As outlined above Councillors were surveyed as part of the electoral review process to better understand the demands on their time, how they communicate with residents, their local leadership role and the impact of past and future changes.
- 15.3.2. This survey of Councillors discovered that the average councillor is already attending around 22 meetings per month, taking up an average of 44 hours. This includes borough wide meetings, ward level and community meetings.
- 15.3.3. Members who have been councillors for some time observed that the absolute volume of correspondence had **increased**, with constituents demanding more and a more immediate response from their elected members.
- 15.3.4. This is expected to **increase** as communication channels like WhatsApp and Twitter become more prevalent than telephone calls, and where instant responses require members to spend more time communicating than previously.
- 15.3.5. Members are expected to manage their own casework. The council does not offer any general administrative support for members in their ward or casework.
- 15.3.6. The average councillor spends 22 hours per month handling casework enquiries. This ranges from 6 to 80 hours per month between individual councillors. We believe that having 63 Councillors would keep this at manageable levels despite the expected increase in correspondence.

15.4. Population Increase

- 15.4.1. The population of Waltham Forest is set to rise considerably into the foreseeable future. Waltham Forest currently has a housing target of 862 new homes per year, as set out by the London Plan in 2016. The new draft London Plan set 1,794 new homes per year as the provisional target; representing an increase of 108% on the previous target.

- 15.4.2. At present Waltham Forest has 60 councillors to represent the 182,195 electors (Dec 18). So at present each Councillor represents an average of 3037 electors.
- 15.4.3. In 2024 it is predicted that there will be 193093 electors in Waltham forest with 60 councillors that would mean an average of 3218, a marked increase with a subsequent **increase** in casework and associated councillor duties.
- 15.4.4. We believe that the increase in the average number of electors that 60 councillors or less would produce casework and associated work at potentially unmanageable levels for councillors given the expected increase in electors and casework as outlined.
- 15.4.5. In 2024 with 63 councillors the average number of electors per councillor would be 3065, a much smaller variance from now. We believe that 63 councillors would leave councillors in relatively static position as regards casework, with a certain amount of room if there is indeed a further significant expansion in casework and associated work as predicted.

15.5. Demographics of the Borough

- 15.5.1. This increase in Casework and associated Councillor duties will be compounded by the fact that Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically-diverse areas in London. More than two thirds (68%) of residents are from minority ethnic background (other than White British/Irish) compared to 58% in London as a whole. Around a third of Waltham Forest residents (36%) are born outside the UK. About one in four residents aged three and over (26 per cent) do not speak English as their main language compared to 8 per cent nationally.
- 15.5.2. In addition, the effects of population ageing are likely to present more, as the number of over 65s is projected to increase faster than the population as a whole.

15.6. Deprivation in the Borough

- 15.6.1. The increase will also be compounded by the fact that Waltham Forest is ranked as the seventh most deprived borough in London, and 35th most deprived in England (out of 326). The borough ranks poorly on three out of seven domains of deprivation nationally:
- Crime (7th most deprived)
 - Barriers to Housing and Services (2nd most deprived)
 - Living Environment (25th most deprived)
- 15.6.2. All these factors outlined above will increase Councillors casework and we believe support the case for 3 extra councillors

15.7. Governance of the Council

- 15.7.1. As outlined above the governance arrangements for Waltham Forest have changed since the last boundary review to a strong leader model with Overview and Scrutiny.
- 15.7.2. All councillors serve on Council with 56 members serving on at least one committee. An average councillor serves on 3 committees.

- 15.7.3. Waltham Forest has eight scrutiny committees, covering a full range of council services and community partners. Each committee meets five times a year, scrutinising a range of topics relevant to their individual remits.
- 15.7.4. Further changes are expected in central government policy in the years to come, with responsibilities increasing for executive and non-executive Councillors. Including:
- Impact of leaving the European Union
 - Development and delivery of the London Plan
 - Financial and demand pressures faced by local government, and the impact of the Fairer Funding Review
 - Social Care and Health integration, including the development of an integrated commissioning function
- 15.7.5. These changes have significant implications for the Council, and Councillors can anticipate an impact in the roles they hold as local decision makers and scrutiny members, as well as an increase in the numbers and complexity of resident case work.
- 15.7.6. In addition to the day to day duties of elected members, the Council has a number of key initiatives for the years ahead:
- Think Families - including Connecting Communities; Transforming Services; Strategic Commissioning
 - Redevelopment of the Town Hall Campus (One Public Estate Project)
 - Private Rented Property Licensing Scheme
 - Digital and Technology Strategy
 - Clean, Green and Safe Strategy
 - Leisure Strategy
 - Commercial activity - including Sixty Bricks and the Services Store
- 15.7.7. These require the input of executive and non-executive Councillors, both in shaping and scrutinising this work to ensure they are in the interests of Waltham Forest residents.
- 15.7.8. These additional duties will put extra pressure on the time commitments of councillors and we believe that having 63 councillors would allow the councillors the required time to cover these committees and extra responsibilities properly and enable good and proper governance in Waltham Forest.

Appendix 1 – Committee Appointments as at May 2018

SECTION 101/102 STANDING COMMITTEES

Audit and Governance Committee (4 – 3:1 plus one independent member)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Joe Lacey Holland	Chair	Labour
Councillor Umar Ali	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Rosalind Doré		Labour
Councillor Marion Fitzgerald		Conservative
Caryle Webb-Ingall	Independent Member	(Co-Optee)

Health and Wellbeing Board (not subject to political balance)

Member	Role	Party	Substitute
Councillor Naheed Asghar	Chair	Labour	Not required (as agreed by Council as part of the substitution scheme)
Councillor Hather Ali	Board Member	Labour	
Councillor Khevyn Limbajee	Board Member	Labour	
Councillor Grace Williams	Board Member	Labour	
Joe McDonnell	Board Member	Director of Public Health	Jacqui Lindo (Interim Consultant)
Jane Mehta	Board Member	Managing Director Waltham Forest CCG	Jane Mehta, Helen Davenport and Les Borrett
Dr Tonia Myers	Board Member	Clinical Director, Waltham Forest CCG	Dr Mayank Shah
Dr Anwar Khan	Board Member	Clinical Director, Waltham Forest CCG	Dr Abdul Q Sheikh
Ken Aswani	Board Member	Clinical Director, Waltham Forest CCG	Dr Dinesh Kapoor
Lucy Shomali	Board Member	Director Regeneration and Growth	Jane Custance

Linzi Roberts-Egan	Board Member	Deputy Chief Executive, Families	Heather Flinders / David Kilgallon / Daniel Phelps / Bernice Solvey
Jamie Walsh	Board Member	Waltham Forest Healthwatch	Sahdia Warraich / Sue Toole / Althea Bart / Daniela Muenzel
Ceri Jacob	Board Member	Sector Director, NHS England	None

Licensing (General) Committee (15 – 11:4)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Chris Robbins	Chair	Labour
Councillor Sharon Waldron	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Masood Ahmad		Labour
Councillor Raja Anwar		Labour
Councillor Mohammed Asghar		Labour
Councillor Rosalind Doré		Labour
Councillor Mitchell Goldie		Conservative
Councillor Jenny Gray		Labour
Councillor Nick Halebi		Conservative
Councillor Kay Isa		Conservative
Councillor Jonathan O’Dea		Labour
Councillor Keith Rayner		Labour
Councillor Richard Sweden		Labour
Councillor Vicky te Velde		Labour
Councillor Geoff Walker		Conservative

Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Committee (15 – 11:4) (proportionality traditional but not obligatory)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Chris Robbins	Chair	Labour
Councillor Sharon Waldron	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Masood Ahmad		Labour
Councillor Raja Anwar		Labour
Councillor Mohammed Asghar		Labour
Councillor Rosalind Doré		Labour
Councillor Mitchell Goldie		Conservative
Councillor Jenny Gray		Labour
Councillor Nick Halebi		Conservative
Councillor Kay Isa		Conservative
Councillor Jonathan O’Dea		Labour
Councillor Keith Rayner		Labour

Councillor Richard Sweden	Labour
Councillor Vicky te Velde	Labour
Councillor Geoff Walker	Conservative

Pension Fund Committee (5 – 4:1)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Johar Khan	Chair	Labour
Councillor Keith Rayner	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Karen Bellamy		Labour
Councillor Andy Hemsted		Conservative
Councillor Terry Wheeler		Labour

Planning Committee (5 – 4:1)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Jenny Gray	Chair	Labour
Councillor Alistair Strathern	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Marie Pye		Labour
Councillor Keith Rayner		Labour
Councillor Alan Siggers		Conservative

Staffing Committee (10 – 8:2)

Member	Role	Party
Relevant Cabinet Member	Chair	Labour
Cabinet Member		Labour
Councillor Hather Ali		Labour
Councillor Elizabeth Baptiste		Labour
Councillor Paul Douglas		Labour
Councillor Marion Fitzgerald		Conservative
Councillor Jenny Gray		Labour
Councillor Keith Rayner		Labour
Councillor Alan Siggers		Conservative
Councillor Vicky te Velde		Labour

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BODIES (SUBJECT TO POLITICAL BALANCE BUT ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS – DISCRETION UNDER LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989 s.17(1) (B) EXERCISED)

Adult Social Care Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Richard Sweden	Chair	Labour
Councillor Saima Mahmud	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Kastriot Berberi		Labour
Councillor Ros Flowers		Labour
Councillor Tim James		Conservative
Councillor Catherine Saumarez		Conservative

Vacancy	Children in Care Council	(Co-optee)
Shumon Rahman	Waltham Forest Resident	(Co-optee)
Vacancies under review		(Co-optees)

Budget and Performance Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Keith Rayner	Chair	Labour
Councillor Jenny Gray	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Hather Ali		Labour
Councillor Jacob Edwards		Labour
Councillor Andy Hemsted		Conservative
Councillor John Moss		Conservative

Children and Families Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Marie Pye	Chair	Labour
Councillor Richard Sweden	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Elizabeth Baptiste		Labour
Councillor Tom Connor		Labour
Councillor Emma Best		Conservative
Councillor Kay Isa		Conservative
Dermot O'Neill	Diocesan Representative	
Fr Paul Trathen	Diocesan Representative	
Sayed Butt	Parent Governor Representative	
Kenneth Nkemnacho	Parent Governor Representative	
Vacancy	Co-optee	

Communities Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Karen Bellamy	Chair	Labour
Councillor Jacob Edwards	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Elizabeth Baptiste		Labour
Councillor Roy Berg		Conservative
Councillor Mitchell Goldie		Conservative
Councillor Vicky te Velde		Labour
Philip Dundon	Chair, Safer Neighbourhoods Board	(Co-optee)

Growth Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Patrick Edwards	Chair	Labour
Councillor Rosalind Doré	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Emma Best		Conservative
Councillor Asim Mahmood		Labour

Councillor Jonathan O’Dea	Labour
Councillor Selina Seesunkur	Conservative

Health Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Saima Mahmud	Chair	Labour
Councillor Richard Sweden	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Johar Khan		Labour
Councillor Anna Mbachu		Labour
Councillor Catherine Saumarez		Conservative
Councillor Geoff Walker		Conservative
Shumon Rahman	Waltham Forest Resident	(Co-optee)
Vacancy	Healthwatch	(Co-optee)
Vacancy under review		(Co-optee)

Housing Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Masood Ahmad	Chair	Labour
Councillor Steve Terry	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Whitney Ihenachor		Labour
Councillor Nick Halebi		Conservative
Councillor Jemma Hemsted		Conservative
Councillor Terry Wheeler		Labour

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny (6 – 4:2)

Member	Role	Party
Councillor Shabana Dhedhi	Chair	Labour
Councillor Steve Terry	Vice-Chair	Labour
Councillor Paul Douglas		Labour
Councillor Jemma Hemsted		Conservative
Councillor John Moss		Conservative
Councillor Yemi Osho		Labour

OTHER COMMITTEES AND BODIES (INCLUDING NON-STATUTORY AND ADVISORY BODIES, AND BODIES WITH NON-ELECTED MEMBERS)

Children in Care Council (3 – 2:1)

Member	Party
Councillor Karen Bellamy	Labour
Councillor Kay Isa	Conservative
Councillor Anna Mbachu	Labour

Corporate Parenting Board (3 – 2:1)

Member

Councillor Joe Lacey-Holland

Party

Labour

Councillor Yemi Osho

Labour

Councillor Kay Isa

Conservative

Note: 3 councillors nominated by party groups, in addition to the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Chair, and the relevant Portfolio Holders for Health, Adult Services, and Children and Young People, plus:

Ryanna Hamblett

Children in Care
Council

Vacancy

Children in Care
Council

Earlene Mattis

Foster Carer

Fostering and Adoption Joint Panel (1, substitute permitted)

Member

Councillor Vicky te Velde

Party

Labour

Councillor Richard Sweden
(substitute)

Labour

Mobility Forum (2 – 1:1) Membership to be drawn from Members appointed to the Transport Liaison Consultative Group

Member

Councillor Tony Bell

Party

Labour

Councillor Mitchell Goldie

Conservative

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (4 – 3:1)

Member

Councillor Gerry Lyons

Party

Labour

Councillor Anna Mbachu

Labour

Councillor Zia-Ur Rehman

Labour

Councillor Selina Seesunkur

Conservative

Transport Liaison Consultative Group (5 – 4:1)

Member

Councillor Tony Bell

Role

Chair

Party

Labour

Councillor Zia-Ur Rehman

Vice-Chair

Labour

Councillor Tom Connor

Labour

Councillor Mitchell Goldie

Conservative

Councillor Gerry Lyons

Labour

JOINT COMMITTEE

Outer North East London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (3 – 2:1)

Member	Party
Councillor Saima Mahmud	Labour
Councillor Catherine Saumarez	Conservative
Councillor Richard Sweden	Labour

NOTE:

Fostering Panel

Now defunct and functions combined with new Fostering and Adoption Joint Panel.

Waltham Forest Tenants Council

Formally discontinued from 2017/18 as recommended by the Housing Quality Network Review.