

East Staffordshire Borough Council

# Council Size Submission

East Staffordshire Borough Council

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## How to Make a Submission

1. It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal.
2. The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses are should unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

## About You

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

This response has been prepared by Officers on behalf of the Council and was approved for submission at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019:

Of the 33 Councillors in attendance (six were absent) at Full Council:

- 31 voted in Favour
- 1 voted Against
- 1 Abstention

No alternative proposals were put forward for debate.

## Local Authority Profile

4. Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description may cover all, or some of the following:
- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraint for example that may affect the review?
  - Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
  - Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transitional populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
  - Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

East Staffordshire Borough Council is a non-metropolitan district council operating as part of a 2 tier administrative structure, whereby Staffordshire County Council is responsible for social services, education and highways.

East Staffordshire is resident to 117,600 people. The population has a lower proportion of people aged 16-64 compared to England. There are more people aged 65 and over in East Staffordshire compared to average. According to the [Staffordshire Observatory's 2018 District Profile](#):

- The overall population of East Staffordshire is projected to increase between 2017 and 2027 by 4% with a significant growth in people aged 65 and over (22%) and aged 85 and over (29%). The rate of increase in the number of older people in East Staffordshire is faster than the England average and equates to 800 additional residents aged 85 and over by 2027.
- 18% of East Staffordshire residents (20,800 people) live within the most deprived national quintile.
- The dependency ratio for older people in East Staffordshire is 31 older people for every 100 people of working age which is higher than England.

The Borough is characterised by a mix of urban and rural areas, with two main towns; Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter. The [Local Plan 2012-2031](#) notes that under the Rural and Urban Area Classification (2013), 23% of the East Staffordshire population is classified as rural, compared with 18% nationally, with 21% of the Borough having no access to a private car.

East Staffordshire is located on the edge of the West Midlands boundary, adjacent to the East Midlands and has significant social and economic links with both. The Borough's position within the Midlands and proximity to the A38 and A50, are contributing factors to a number of well-known brands locating within the Borough (including JCB, Argos, Pirelli, Molson Coors, Unilever, Boots, SuperGroup and Fox's Biscuits) and the growth in the distribution, warehousing, hotels and restaurants sector. The Borough has become home to St George's Park, the FA's National Football Centre, whilst Burton upon Trent is most widely known for its Brewing Heritage (with Molson Coors and Marstons still prominently based within the town) and is also capital of The National Forest.

East Staffordshire Borough Council adopted its [Local Plan 2012-31](#) in 2015, and parishes within the Borough have been very proactive in wanting to shape their local area by producing [Neighbourhood Plans](#) to set further planning policies for the development and use of land in their neighbourhood. To date, there are 17 Parishes who have either had their Neighbourhood Plans 'made' (adopted) by East Staffordshire Borough Council or who are currently writing them.

As the Local Plan is heavily "front loaded", house building has rapidly resumed in recent years and there are a number of large housing developments currently underway or due to start across the Borough, which will expand existing settlements and in some cases straddle existing ward boundaries. There have been 3016 houses completed in East Staffordshire over the last 6 years, and a further 4266 are expected by 2025 (further details are provided in the Housing Development Data pack and shape files).

## Council Size

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

## Strategic Leadership

6. Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified.

Topic	
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you have represents is most appropriate for the authority.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Governance Model</b>	<p>ESBC operates a Strong Leader Cabinet model; the Council’s “Executive” for the purpose of the Local Government Act 2000. These arrangements are reflected in the Constitution. <a href="#">Part 3C</a> details the Cabinet.</p> <p>The Council elects a Leader for a four year term who then appoints Members to form a Cabinet. Under the Constitution the Cabinet may consist of up to 10 members, including a Leader and Deputy Leader.</p> <p>We note the report from the last Boundary Review referenced the Council’s intention to create a Cabinet of 9 Members, but do not believe it has ever operated at these levels.</p> <p>The current Leader has appointed 5 Members to serve on the Cabinet, each with a portfolio. Cabinet Members have individual executive decision-making powers within their portfolios and act as the Council’s main representative and spokesperson for their nominated areas of responsibility.</p> <p>The Cabinet carries out all of the local authority’s functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the authority. Some of these decisions / plans / policies / strategies require the approval of Full Council e.g. Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Local Plan.</p> <p>There are approximately 12 formal meetings of the Cabinet per year and fortnightly informal briefings.</p>

		<p>The existing Cabinet comprises 5 members, a reduction of 2 from the previous year, and 1 less than originally budgeted for in March 2019.</p> <p>Following the election in May 2019, the Conservatives retained power but a new Leader and new Deputy Leaders were appointed to Cabinet.</p> <p>The new Cabinet is considering the potential for Cabinet Support Members which may increase in the Cabinet size.</p>
<b>Portfolios</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p><u>The portfolios of the Cabinet Leader and Deputy Leaders</u> are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leader (Corporate functions)</li> <li>2. Deputy Leader: Leisure, Culture and Tourism</li> <li>3. Deputy Leader: Regeneration and Planning Policy</li> <li>4. Deputy Leader: Environment and Housing</li> <li>5. Deputy Leader: Regulatory Services and Community Support</li> </ol> <p>Cabinet portfolio holders are responsible for making the day-to-day executive decisions concerning the strategy of the Council (within the overall policy and budgetary framework agreed by Council) as set out in <u>Part 3C</u> of the Constitution.</p> <p>These Councillors manage their positions in conjunction with external employment, and have sometimes also been elected as County Councillors or Parish Councillors.</p>
<b>Delegated Responsibilities</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The responsibilities are set out in <u>Part 3C of the Constitution</u></p>

## Accountability

7. Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role.

Topic	
<b>Internal Scrutiny</b>	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i></li> <li>➤ <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></li> <li>➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i></li> </ul>
Analysis	<p>ESBC has reviewed its Overview and Scrutiny arrangements on five occasions during the last three Council administrations (2007, 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2017), each merging and simplifying the scrutiny structure.</p> <p>At the time of the implementation of the last boundary review (2003) the Council employed a team of 4 FTE Scrutiny Officers to assist councillors with task and finish reviews. The last boundary review report referenced the intention to have five scrutiny committees comprising 6 Members each.</p> <p>The most recent changes in 2017 (<a href="#">Fit for purpose Scrutiny Arrangements report</a>) took into consideration value for money gains, external benchmarking, internal consultation and attendance levels and resulted in a reduction of 5 to 2 scrutiny committees, aligned with the corporate priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Scrutiny (Economic Growth, Communities and Health) Committee</b> has powers delegated from the Staffordshire County Council Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. The remit of this committee is set out in <a href="#">Part 3IA</a> of the Constitution.</li> <li>• The <b>Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee and Audit (Statement of Accounts) Committee</b> provides independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance. The remit of this committee is set in <a href="#">Part 3Ib</a> of the Constitution</li> </ul>

The Scrutiny Committees:

- Hold the Cabinet to account by monitoring decisions that they make, checking whether they are successfully implemented, and exercising the right to 'call in' a decision which they consider needs to be reviewed.
- Undertake scrutiny reviews and making recommendations for improvement.
- Undertake performance management by monitoring council achievement of priorities as set out in the key strategic and business plans.

The Committees meet around 6 times a year, agreeing a planned workload at the beginning of the municipal cycle and a rolling work programme which is reviewed at each meeting.

The Committees also receive quarterly performance reports and are invited to question and challenge the Council's progress in achieving its Corporate Plan commitments, as well as inviting representatives from external organisations to question services and hold them to account e.g. environment agency, bus companies health service providers etc.

The 2017 review of scrutiny arrangements surveyed Members and Officers about scrutiny and found overall the feeling of participants towards Overview and Scrutiny in the Council is positive.

Reducing the number of scrutiny committees has realised benefits in giving each committee a wider Member base to deliver a piece of scrutiny, as well as wider terms of reference for nominating review topics.

This number of committees does not impinge on the number of reviews that can be conducted, as these are led by subgroups which can run concurrently and report back to the relevant wider scrutiny committee.

Traditionally all non-executive Councillors have the opportunity to take part in Scrutiny, supported by officers in the Council.

The new Leader has expressed a desire to review scrutiny arrangements.

The Council has only had 3 call ins in 20 years.

<b>Statutory Function</b>		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?
<b>Planning</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<p>The Planning committee currently has 15 Members and operates as a single council-wide committee.</p> <p>Two Executive Members currently sit on the planning committee but do not hold chair or vice chair positions.</p> <p>The committee site visit and meeting is 1 day per month, with background papers and officer reports to read, potentially taking up to 1 day per month.</p> <p>96% of applications are delegated to officers, leaving around 4% determined by planning committee.</p> <p>The attendance levels for the Planning Committee show an average of 79% attendance over the last 3 years (i.e. an average of 12 of the 15 members, but often only 10 members) and this may in some respects be considered an artificially high figure in the sense that some of the members in attendance may not have been entitled to vote because they hadn't attended the site visit.</p> <p>Given former levels of attendance, it would appear the Committee could successfully function with a lower membership, especially given the recent changes to the allowance scheme brought in following the review of remuneration<sup>1</sup> which are expected to encourage greater attendance and therefore ensure the committee remains quorate.</p>

<sup>1</sup> ([Independent Remuneration Panel – Final report](#) Where a Member on the Planning Committee does not attend the preceding site visits but does attend the subsequent Planning Committee meeting then no attendance will be recorded. Furthermore, where a Member attends both the site visits in the morning and Planning Committee meeting in the afternoon then they will have been deemed as attending two meetings. The report also recommended an increase in Councillor attendance threshold - Withholding of the 12th monthly instalment of any BA and SRA monies due if the Councillor has not attended at least 75% of the meetings which they are due to attend by the end of the municipal year)

		<p>The former Chair of Planning (now current Deputy Leader for Leisure, Culture and Tourism) stated:  <i>“as the former chair I felt that 15 was the right number of members. It gave sufficient leeway for a daytime committee so although attendance levels may vary we were not in danger of having to cancel a meeting. The majority of the workload of that committee is in the preparation, reading the reports prior to the site visits and meeting. A reduced attendance merely puts a greater obligation on those present to bring out the relevant points at the public meeting.”</i></p> <p>However, the Planning Manager stated <i>“I think committee would operate effectively with a smaller number.”</i></p>
<p><b>Licensing</b></p>	<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</li> <li>➤ And what will be the time commitment for members?</li> <li>➤ Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</li> <li>➤ Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</li> </ul>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The <b>Full Licensing Committee</b> currently has 15 Members and meets annually to appoint Members to the General Sub-Committee, and as necessary to sign-off policies.</p> <p>The <b>General Licensing Sub-Committee</b> meets monthly and comprises 6 Members appointed from within the Full Licensing Committee and realistically needs a minimum of 5 members for meaningful deliberations.</p> <p>The <b>Licensing &amp; Gambling Acts Sub Committee</b> comprises 3 Members drawn from the wider committee and meets as necessary to deal with applications.</p> <p>The attendance levels for the Licensing General Sub Committee meetings show an average of 78% attendance over the last 3 years (i.e. an average of 5 of the 6 members, but sometimes only 3 or 4 members) and an average of 68% for the Full Licensing committee meetings (as low as 7 on one occasion and an average of 10-11 of the 15 members).</p> <p>Commenting on former attendance levels, the former Chair of Licensing (and current Deputy Leader for Regulatory Services and Community Support) said:</p> <p><i>“...business was not significantly hindered or delayed by the absence of members when those in attendance were experienced and compensated for any absenteeism.” With regards to the size of the Full Licensing</i></p>

		<p><i>Committee he concluded it “be reduced by 2 members mindful of the need for commitment, availability and competency”.</i></p> <p>As with all Council meetings, the changes to the attendance threshold for the allowances scheme is likely to increase attendance levels and reduce the likelihood of being inquorate.</p>
<b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	N/A

<b>External Partnerships</b>	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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies?</i></li> <li>➤ <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></li> <li>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></li> </ul>
Analysis	<p>East Staffordshire’s key external partnerships are detailed below:</p> <p><b><u>Greater Birmingham and Solihull Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP)</u></b>  The <u>Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP)</u> was set up in October 2010 to help strengthen local economies, encourage economic development and enterprise, and improve skills across the region. It is formed of Birmingham and Solihull, with East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Tamworth, Bromsgrove, Cannock Chase, Redditch, and Wyre Forest. It is one of the largest partnerships in the country, covering a population of over 1.96 million people, and is home to 840,000 jobs.  A Cabinet Member (Deputy Leader) from ESBC sits on the Joint LEP Supervisory Board.  A non-Executive Member represents ESBC on the Joint LEP Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p><b><u>Staffordshire Joint Waste Management Board</u></b>  The purpose of the Joint Waste Management Board is to develop a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Staffordshire which sets out Local National and European environmental targets to be achieved. The Board are responsible for co-ordinating the successful delivery of the objectives set out in the Strategy for the effective management of municipal waste in Staffordshire.  The <u>SJWMB Terms of Reference</u> state that membership comprises the Portfolio Holder and Lead Officer for waste management services, or their nominees, for each of the Member Authorities i.e. the appropriate Deputy Leader and Head of Service.</p> <p><b><u>Leisure Services Contract</u></b>  In November 2018 Full Council approved the award of a ten year contract (with the option to extend for up to five additional years) for the management of its Leisure Facilities and Services (comprising Meadowside Leisure Centre, Uttoxeter Leisure Centre; Shobnall Leisure Complex and Active East Staffs) to an external Leisure Operator (Sports and Leisure Management Limited operating under the brand name of Everyone Active).</p>

The Contract between East Staffordshire Borough Council and Everyone Active commenced on 1st February 2019.

In January 2019 the Council appointed a Leisure Services Contract Manager to monitor and performance manage the Contract and the outcomes being delivered by the Leisure Operator, in addition to delivering the Council's wider strategic direction in relation to Leisure.

**Trent and Dove Housing Ltd.**

As mentioned later in the document, in 2001, ESBC transferred its housing stock and social housing service to Trent and Dove Housing Ltd.

## Community Involvement

8. The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties?

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers? <b>No</b></i></li> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i></li> <li>➤ <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? <b>No</b></i></li> <li>➤ <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? <b>See information about review of outside bodies</b></i></li> <li>➤ <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></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The level and methods of community engagement and leadership undertaken is at the discretion of each Councillor. Some Borough Councillors have also been elected as Parish and/or County Councillors.</p> <p>The widespread use of ICT and other channels of communication have reduced the need for residents to rely on Councillors for information about council services – for example, residents no longer need to contact their Councillor to find out about meetings as minutes and agendas are published online. Information about council services is available 24/7 through the Council's website and the public can contact ESBC online, through social media or face to face at the Customer Service Centres.</p> <p>ESBC provides a range of support to Councillors to assist them with their role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All new and returning councillors undertake a full induction programme after each Borough election. The 2019 <b>Member Induction</b> comprised of 19 sessions designed to support Members in their role and covered 'The Role of the Councillor' (provided by the Local Government Association), Communications and Media training (including use of social media), Legislative changes since 2015, the Constitution, the Code of Conduct, a Meet the Managers event, a practice Council meeting, Partnership, Safeguarding</li> </ul>

and equalities, tours of council premises and the Borough, Scrutiny Skills, Chaining skills, IT skills and specific council services. Councillors are also provided with a Member Handbook and an A-Z of services for future reference.

- **Member Briefings** on new legislation or changes in services are also delivered within each year to ensure Members are kept up to date on topics such as Universal Credit, Planning, Finances, ICT security etc.
- Councillors are emailed **weekly electronic Member Briefings** to keep them up to date with news about council services, forthcoming events, partner service updates etc
- Councillors are provided with a tablet and email account and are expected to work paperlessly in relation to meetings.
- The Council employs 2 FTEs with responsibility for Member support (this has been reduced over time – see later)

ESBC operates a **Councillor Community Fund** (CCF) to provide Councillors with the opportunity to contribute to small local projects. This concept was originally introduced in 1995 (then known as Ward Action Service Plan (WASP) funding) and involves all of East Staffordshire's 39 Councillors and 21 Wards. Traditionally, each of the Borough Councillors had £1,000 allocated to them to support community projects. Councillors have often paired up to pool their monies together for projects. For 2019/20 the annual budget was reduced from £39k to £21,750. The aim of the CCF remains the same in that it is designed to support small local activities and projects and applications are made by the Ward Councillors but the process has changed and now operates as an open-bidding fund with applications dealt with on a first come first served basis and the maximum grant available through CCF has been capped at £1,000.

A Councillor led grant panel (with one independent community member) review and assess the funding applications.

The Council also provides a neighbourhood working service, first established in 2001 as a pathfinder in the wards of Eton, Shobnall and Anglesey. Best practice from this pathfinder project was subsequently built upon and Neighbourhood Working expanded to cover the whole of East Staffordshire in 2009. The Council has continually refined its approach to neighbourhood working but models have consistently utilised a forum process that allowed community groups and elected Members to come together at a ward level to review and prioritise nominated projects. The Council's **Neighbourhood Development Fund** (NDF fund) provided one-off capital investment for community projects.

The current iteration is the **Neighbourhood Fund** which was launched in 2017 and replaced the previous Neighbourhood Development Fund, which awarded funds based on identified Ward priorities. The Neighbourhood Fund differs in that it is a rolling 3 year programme designed to provide a “one-off” capital investment for a project that meets an identified community need. Grants of up to 50% of the total project cost will be awarded to successful projects. Applications are made by local community groups, parish councils and voluntary organisations but should projects should have the support of their local Councillor.

A Councillor led grant panel (with one independent community member) review and assess the funding applications.

This is the final year of the Neighbourhood Fund and the scheme will close on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

Decisions over future arrangements or funding have not been decided.

#### **Representation on outside bodies**

Elected Members of East Staffordshire Borough Council can be appointed to sit on and liaise with outside bodies. These, in the main, tend to be charitable and / or community organisations who support the Council’s work – usually through the priorities of the Corporate Plan. As of September 2018, there are 22 outside bodies in total.

There were 39 “appointments” in total across the 22 Outside Bodies. This included 5 substitute appointments whereby one Member represents the Council if the appointed Member to that Body is unavailable. In addition, Staffordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee and Queens’ Hospital Governors’ Board both receive regular reports received at Scrutiny EGCH Committee from the nominated representative. Therefore the true number of appointments was 32.

It has been several years since the last review of Representation on Outside Bodies and as such, in 2018, the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee decided to review the current arrangements.

A little over half (52.2%) of Elected Members attended all of the possible meetings for their respective Outside Bodies. In terms of non-attendance, where the percentage of meetings attended is below 70%, the main reasons cited in the reports are illness; conflicting with other engagements; and holidays.

At the request of the Committee, a survey was sent to all Members who sit on Outside Bodies to ascertain their views on the relevance and usefulness of the organisation to the work of the Council. 14 responses i.e. 14 Representatives (from 39) were received to the survey relating to related to 10 outside bodies.

A category approach was used to assess which outside bodies should be retained. The categories suggested included:

1. Financial Link to ESBC e.g. *where we award funding / we own building*
2. Strategic Link to ESBC e.g. *GBSLEP*
3. Organisation is Ward specific
4. Community Focus
5. None of the above *Therefore removed from list*

The review considered the outside bodies and assigned them to the various categories.

The sub group also reviewed the number of representatives on each outside body. The majority of outside bodies (n15) have 1 representative.

The following recommendations were approved by Cabinet on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019:

- That organisations that fall within categories 3, 4 and 5 (Ward Specific, Community Focus, None of the above) are removed from the list of outside bodies associated with East Staffordshire Borough Council, with the exception of Consolidated Charity of Burton, CPRE, SARAC. Therefore a reduction of 22 to 18, losing the following organisations:
  - Nottingham East Midlands Airport Consultative Group;
  - Rolleston Alms Houses;
  - Barton and Dunstall Key Trust;
  - Henry Warford Trust
- That it be left to the individual Ward Elected Member(s) to decide whether they wish to attend outside groups.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To reduce the number of representatives to 1 Elected Member per outside body with 1 appointed substitute, with the exception of East Staffordshire Sports Council; Consolidated Charity of Burton; Uttoxeter Leisure and Development Company Ltd, thus allowing flexibility for both the Council and the outside body, where deemed necessary. This would require constitutions or terms of reference for organisations being amended in certain cases.</li><li>• To write to all remaining bodies and request that they update all records to include latest representatives and also copy Democratic Services in all correspondence.</li></ul> <p><b>The review of Outside Bodies has demonstrated a reduction in the number of outside bodies as well as a reduction in the workload and responsibility placed on Elected Members.</b></p>
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<b>Casework</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <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></li> <li>➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p>East Staffordshire Borough Councillors do not undertake regularised casework or hold surgeries. They deal with queries on an ad hoc basis.</p>

## Other Issues

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

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of looking forward when contemplating options for ESBC's future Council size, we feel it is also important to recognise how ESBC has changed in the last 20 years.

ESBC has undergone significant and substantial changes in its organisational structure, services, and budget, since the last boundary review in 1999. Residents have also changed how they access council services, reducing the need to contact their Councillor in relation to council services, meetings or decisions, and there are fewer services over which Councillors are able to influence. More detail is set out below:

### ***Organisation structure and workforce:***

In 2007, the Council adopted an Organisational Strategy (approved by Leader and Deputy Leaders 16 Aug 2007) which set out a vision of becoming: *"A smaller council with a smaller, but more efficient, support function and a greater concentration of resources on service delivery."* This was underpinned by a series of supporting strategies covering Service Commissioning, Access to Services, Procurement and Workforce Planning.

The organisation has dramatically streamlined its management structure, stripping out tiers of management which included Assistant Chief Executives, Directors and several Heads of Service, reducing the present day Corporate Management Team down to the Chief Executive and just 2 Heads of Service. In 2012 there were 12 senior managers compared to only 3 in 2019.

The Council undertook an extensive programme of Business Transformation across council services, using process reengineering to review all customer facing processes to develop a simplified, consistent approach to handling customers and to provide the most effective and efficient service that we can. As a result of these changes:

- The Council's workforce has reduced by 56% from 530 FTE in 2003 to 233 FTE in 2019 (or 613 actual in 2003 to 260 actual in 2019).
- The Council has reduced its office space, and has sold the Midland Grain Warehouse and the Town Hall Annex (former council offices)

### ***Changes in Council Finances:***

ESBC has been subject to a cumulative reduction in core funding of £6.4m or 78% since austerity measures began in 2011/12

The Revenue budget in 2010/11 was £16,578,000, compared to £10,582,000 in 2018/19 – a reduction of just under £6m

### ***Changes in Council Services:***

In 2001, ESBC transferred its housing stock and social housing service to Trent and Dove Housing Ltd. In 2004 the Council disbanded the remainder of its former Trent Force service, ceasing building maintenance for Trent and Dove Housing Ltd and South Derbyshire District Council properties and contracted out its grounds maintenance service in 2007.

- ESBC no longer provides a Pest Control Service, Tourist Information Centre or Shopmobility Service
- In 2011 the Internal Audit function was outsourced
- In 2019, the Council contracted out its leisure services (3 leisure centres and sports development service) to an external company for a period of 10 years
- Street parking enforcement has transferred to Staffordshire County Council
- The corporate centre has also reduced in that time. We used to employ an FTE rural officer, community safety team, research officers, dedicated scrutiny team etc. These functions are now delivered within a core team of 4.5 FTE.

Whilst it is recognised that the Council has inherited some additional responsibilities, such as alcohol, gambling and taxi licensing, and has brought the homelessness service back in-house, these changes have been absorbed against an overall reduction in the Council's workforce.

### ***Changes in how residents access information and services***

Changes in how residents access information and services since the last boundary review has reduced the need for residents to rely on contacting councillors directly:

- ESBC opened Customer Service Centres in Uttoxeter and Burton in 2007, enabling residents to access council services face to face. These now handle an average of 41,000 customers each year. The Customer Service Centres (CSCs) help people with their enquiries regarding East Staffordshire Borough Council's services. This includes:
  - Receiving advice on housing benefit and council tax reduction, offering assistance with completing online application forms if required.
  - Submitting planning applications, viewing pending applications online, purchasing Ordnance Survey maps and advice on building regulation visits and fees.
  - Receiving help with waste management queries such as missed bin collections, assisted collections, recycling and trade waste bags.
  - Setting up direct debits for Council Tax or changing address, taking Council Tax payments by cheque or debit / credit card.
  - Applying for a blue car badge for people with disabilities. (This is a service we offer on behalf of Staffordshire County Council).
- Since May 2003, the minutes and agendas for Council meetings have been published on the Council's website (initially through CMIS – now replaced with website). Audio recordings of meetings started in 2010 (available by request) and are due to be published online from September 2019, making it easier for residents from across the Borough to keep informed of council decisions, without the need to contact their Councillor.
- ESBC has invested in technology to enable residents to access council services and information through its website and to communicate with the Council directly by email and social media. Our ICT Policy, the adoption, delivery and completion of the Marcomms Strategy and

Service Commissioning Strategy as well as the ongoing SMART approach has led to a gradual evolution in digital services. The Council's [Digital Strategy report](#) noted an increase in the number of visits to the Council's website from 1208905 in 2010 to 2389105 in 2017 and also highlights the significant progress ESBC has made in its digital maturity – achieving a 'managed' level and some examples of how the Council has achieved the 'optimised' level (Digital Maturity Index in the [Digital Strategy](#)). Residents can access their council tax bill online and make an online application for housing benefit and council tax reduction.

### ***Changes in Councillor workloads:***

The above measures have reduced the need for residents to contact Councillors in relation to council services, meetings and decisions. Since 2007, Councillors have been issued with Tablet PCs to reduce the need for paper committee documents and improve their accessibility and communication. The Council has also been able to halve the number of officers employed to support Members. Multiple Councillors are parish and county councillors, suggesting that there is capacity within the borough councillor role.

### ***The present day ESBC – 'A smaller council with a smaller, but more efficient, support function and a greater concentration of resources on service delivery'***

It could be said ESBC has achieved its vision of becoming '*A smaller council with a smaller, but more efficient, support function and a greater concentration of resources on service delivery*'. It has also successfully managed to continually 'balance the books' despite reduced core funding from central government and Council Tax not increasing for nine years between period 2010/11 to 2018/19.

Whilst the Council may have reduced in terms of staffing structures, office space, funding, and services delivered, it has emerged as a strong, proactive and forward looking organisation with a culture of continuous improvement and a track record of grasping opportunities to participate in pilot schemes to help shape the future of local government. For example:

- Neighbourhood working pathfinder
- Burton upon Trent was selected as a Growth Point in 2005, an initiative designed to deliver significant new housing growth to boost the area's competitiveness and long-term economic prosperity
- ESBC commissioned a pilot for Family Nurse Partnerships which attracted national attention and a Best Business Award for Best NHS Commissioner for its cross-boundary work to set up its trial scheme (referenced in Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter 2010-11)
- In 2010, ESBC opted to join the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) to gain greater funding for East Staffordshire businesses as a result (see [Scrutiny review on the benefits realised from the membership of the GBSLEP](#))
- ESBC is participating in the business rates retention pilot scheme as part of the Staffordshire Pool for 2019/20 (also applied for 2018/19)
- ESBC is accessing £25m stronger towns fund for Burton upon Trent.

ESBC has also successfully delivered several major projects, including:

- 3 rounds of the Inner Burton Housing Initiative
- Creation of 2 Customer Service Centres
- Refurbishment of Meadowside Leisure Centre
- Refurbishment of Uttoxeter Leisure Centre
- Refurbishment of Burton Market Hall
- Accommodation move to The Maltsters and back to Town Hall

The Council's success has also been recognised with many awards:

- The Programmes & Transformation team were awarded the LGC 'Team of the Year' in 2013
- Shortlisted for LGC climate change entry in 2013
- The ICT team were shortlisted at the LGC awards in 2016
- The Council was shortlisted in the top 10 public sector category in the last two Digital Leaders award.
- In 2018 the Washlands vision project won the Local Landscape Planning category at the 2018 Landscape Institute Awards (now used as a case study)
- Family Nurse Partnership – shortlisted for a MJ award

## Summary

10. In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate any other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

The election in May 2019 resulted in both a new Leader and Deputy Leaders being appointed and as it has only been a few months since the formation of the new Cabinet and the beginning of a new 4 year term, we may expect to see changes in committee numbers and sizes. Therefore, whilst the Council Size may have the capacity to reduce in line with ESBC's 'story', we need to be mindful not to 'self-harm'.

All things considered, ESBC would therefore like to propose a Council Size of 37 (a reduction of 2 Members).

This proposal takes into account the following factors:

- **Changes to ESBC** – Since the last boundary review, ESBC has undergone significant and substantial changes in its organisational structure, services and budget.
- **Changes in technology** – advances in ICT mean the public no longer need to contact their Councillor face-to-face to find out about council services, meetings or decisions.
- **Attendance levels** – past levels of attendance suggest committees could comfortably function with minor reductions in size to support a smaller Council Size.
- **Electorate forecasts** – a Council Size of 37 would result in an average of around 2470 electors per Councillor by 2025. There are 7 wards (from 21) within East Staffordshire currently operating with ratios over 2400 electors per Councillor so this would appear to be a manageable level.
- **Need for flexibility** – Whilst the organisation has undergone significant changes since the last boundary review, we also need to be mindful of the need to retain a level of flexibility to support the future ambitions of the new Cabinet, as well as an increasing electorate.
- **Comparison to Nearest Neighbours** – appears to show ESBC as having a lower than average Council Size and a higher than average electoral ratio.
- **The nature of East Staffordshire** – the rural areas of the borough need to be taken into account when considering ward size, particularly as 21% of the Borough having no access to a private car.