

Submission from Warwick District Council

Part one: Council Size

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Warwick District Council is seeking to slightly increase its current number of Councillors from 46 to 48, recognising the usual tolerance of plus or minus 1 Councillor. The Council believes that this will maintain the Governance arrangements, scrutiny functions and representational roles of Councillors.
- 1.2 The Council has prepared this submission only dealing with council size at this stage to support effective, efficient and accountable local democracy in the District of Warwick. A further submission on the number of wards and number of Councillors per ward will be made once the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has determined the size of the Council.
- 1.3 The submission recognises the changing face of Local Government with reductions in both numbers of staff and budgets for the delivery of services at the same time as a significantly increasing and changing population. The Council adopted its Local Plan on 20 September 2017 which includes significant allocations of land for additional houses partly because of complying with the Duty to Co-operate in respect of planning matters arising from Coventry City being unable to wholly meet its housing needs within its own boundary.
- 1.4 Since the size of the Council was last reviewed in 2012 (with an electorate of 102,710 at 2,233 electors per councillor) the District has already faced high growth in its electorate (current electorate of 109,155 at 2373 electors per Councillor) and it is forecast to continue to grow at a significantly increased rate up to 2023 (anticipated 123,633, a ratio of 2,576 electors per councillor based on 48 councillors). Therefore the electorate growth between 2012 and 2023 is anticipated at 20%. Even with the proposed Council size of 48 Councillors this is equivalent to a reduction of 7 councillors in terms of ratio of Councillors to electors and therefore electorate representation.
- 1.5 The Council has considered its size carefully, considering what a reasonable size would be that would not be out of step with its nearest neighbours (Appendix A) but which could provide the potential to achieve coterminous boundaries with both Warwickshire County Council Divisions and enable revised Town Council Wards.
- 1.6 Taking account of the above-mentioned considerations, the Council considered and rejected the idea of retaining the current number of Councillors, and of reducing the number of Councillors, as set out in section 6 of this submission.

2. Governance arrangements

- 2.1 The Council is currently composed of 46 Councillors made up from five political parties; 31 Conservative, 9 Labour, 3 Whitnash Residents Association (WRA), 2 Liberal Democrat and 1 Green. Each represent, one, two or three, member Wards. Elections are held every four years and the next election will take place in May 2019. Each Councillor currently represents an average of 2,373 electors.

- 2.2 Warwick District Council has adopted the strong Leader model for its Democratic Structure. This means that while the Council continues to have an important role in setting the broad budget and policy framework, the responsibility for most decision-making rests largely with the Leader.
- 2.3 Under this model, the Leader has determined that the authority to take decisions will be made by an Executive of 8 Councillors including himself. The Leader is appointed by Council for four years and the Leader determines who will sit on the Executive.
- 2.4 The Council has established two Scrutiny Committees, each of 11 Councillors, to hold the Executive to account. One of these also acts as the Council's Audit Committee. The Council also has an Employment Committee, Planning Committee, Standards Committee and a Licensing & Regulatory Committee.
- 2.5 Seats are allocated to each group that nominate which of their Members will sit on a Committee, with Council taking the final decision on which Members are on each Committee. These allocations are politically proportional except for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee where the Council has determined that the opposition Groups should have the majority of the seats.
- 2.6 Since the 2011 submission by this Council, the following changes have occurred in the democratic structure of this Council, all of which serve to reduce the number of formal meetings or the number of Councillors on Committees. In summary these are:
- Council – Delegated the approval of accounts to its Audit Committee
 - Executive – Reduced in size by one Councillor
 - Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Reduced in size by 4 Councillors
 - Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee – Designated as the Council's Audit Committee and has taken on approval of statement of accounts from Council and as a result has reduced the number of times Council meets by one per year
 - Licensing & Regulatory Committee – Two Committees have been merged (one of 11 and one of 15) to a single committee of 15 but in addition a large proportion of their work has been delegated to Sub-Committees or officers
 - Standards Committee – The introduction of the Localism Act has seen the work of this Committee significantly reduced and the previously required sub committees for considering cases at an early stage has been removed and replaced by delegation to officers
 - Planning Committee – The membership size has increased by 1 but the frequency of meetings has decreased from once every three weeks with a second night 8 times a year to once every four weeks with the reserve night being used occasionally for meetings but normally (every eight weeks) for briefing all Councillors on planning matters
 - Housing Appeals Review Panels – this work has been delegated to officers.
- 2.7 A summary of the current Committee sizes and number of meetings per year is set out at Appendix B to this submission.
- 2.8 *Council* - Council remains responsible for setting the budget, council tax and significant policies for the area. At Council meetings, Councillors receive a limited number of cases of recommendations from the Executive to determine,

as well as petitions and motions. The minutes of the Executive are received for information. The Council agenda also allows for the questioning of the Council's portfolio holders and Leader. The Council meets 9 times per year.

2.9 *The Executive* - The Executive is the Council's main decision-making body, and is responsible for providing effective strategic leadership. The Executive is currently composed of 8 Conservative Councillors including the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council. The Executive meets collectively 10 or 11 times per year and make all decisions, excluding those matters delegated to officers, and to the Standards, Employment, Audit, Planning and Licensing & Regulatory Committees.

2.10 *Portfolio Holders* - Each member of the Executive is a Portfolio Holder who acts as spokesperson for a service areas (or part thereof) and who may be given delegated authority by the Council to take Executive decisions within these areas.

The Portfolios are:

- Neighbourhood
- Health & Community Protection
- Strategic Leadership (Leader)
- Development
- Housing
- Finance
- Culture (Deputy Leader)
- Business

2.11 The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees provide ideas, challenge and debate that contribute to making Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit. The wider details are described in section 3 of this submission.

2.12 *Employment Committee* - The Committee, of 11 members, is responsible for setting policies relating to staffing matters as well as approving the staffing structure of the Council. It meets around 5 times per year.

2.13 *Licensing & Regulatory Committee* – This Committee comprises of 15 Councillors and meets seven times a year. The Committee has a wide range of responsibilities covering licensing as well as electoral matters and boundary review. However its meetings are mainly to recommend policy amendments (to Council or the Executive), hold training sessions or for consideration of minutes of its Panels. However, most of its work is delegated to Licensing & Regulatory Panels.

2.14 *Licensing & Regulatory Panels* - These sub-committees (of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee) are responsible for determining: applications made to the authority under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005 when representations have been made; and specific matters relating to hackney carriage, private hire drivers and private hire operators. They have 3 Members selected from the 15 Members of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee and normally meet 16 times a year although in the last 12 months they have met 30 times due to the introduction of two new policies relating to hackney carriage and private hire drivers. It is anticipated the number of panels meetings will reduce to around 16 in 2017/18 municipal year.

- 2.15 *Planning Committee* - The Planning Committee, of 11 members, is responsible for the determination of planning applications of around 250 of the 2500 planning applications received by the Council each year. It meets around 13 times, plus holds nine site visits (prior to meetings) and hosts seven training events during each year.
- 2.16 *Standards Committee* - The Standards Committee's main purpose is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and governance within the Council and within the Parish and Town Councils within the District. It meets around 3 times per year. It currently has 15 Members comprising of 11 District Councillors and 4 Parish/Town Council representatives.
- 2.17 Warwick District Council is part of a Joint Committee comprise 8 elected Members appointed by the Authorities comprising 1 Councillor (Leader) for each of the principle authorities in Warwickshire and Coventry plus Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. In addition the Council is part of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership to which it may appoint 1 voting and 1 non-voting Member.
- 2.18 The overarching aim of the Joint Committee is to provide its constituent Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnership with a forum in which to address collaboratively, issues relating to economic development, regeneration and strategic planning at a sub-regional level and to enable collective decision-making on issues that require sub-regional agreement from the constituent authorities. The Joint Committee has the power to:
- (1) Develop and set the economic and growth strategies for the sub-region and to keep the same under review;
 - (2) Develop and set joint investment strategies for the sub-region and to keep the same under review;
 - (3) Consider, approve and implement decisions relating to sub-regional investment, including expenditure of external funding within the sub-region;
 - (4) Develop and encourage a co-ordinated approach within the sub-region to inward investment;
 - (5) Develop and facilitate collaboration between the constituent authorities in the discharge of functions relating to economic development, regeneration and strategic planning; and
 - (6) Create a forum for elected Members to agree strategic direction and exert a collective influence over other bodies exercising similar functions.
- 2.19 Currently the total of this work results in a Councillor needing on average, to sit on less than two Committees each (plus Council). However, at present 19 Councillors sit on either no Committees or just one Committee. The Council is mindful that the current size of the Committees (featuring 11 members) is due to ensuring they are politically proportionate and therefore depending on the results for the 2019 election they could change in size to reflect the new political balance with a membership range as low as 9 or as up to 15, without adversely affecting the operation of the meeting or significantly increasing workload for the Councillors on the Committees.

2.20 The Council has Working Parties and Forums for specific areas of work. In 2011 there were 21 active groups of which there are now only 13. These are:

| | Number of places |
|--|--|
| Green Space Development Group | 6 (2 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 WRA and 2 vacancies) |
| Housing Advisory Group | 11 (6 Conservatives, 2 Labour, 1 WRA, 1 Lib Dem and 1 Green) |
| Councillor IT Working Party | 7 (4 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 WRA, 1 Lib Dem) |
| Kenilworth Town Centre Joint Steering Group | 1 Conservative |
| Leamington Town Centre Partnership | 5 (2 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 WRA, 1 Lib Dem) |
| Leisure Development Member Working Party | 7 (2 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Lib Dem, 1 WRA and 1 vacancy) |
| Members – Trades Union Joint Consultation & Safety Panel | 4 (1 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 WRA and 1 vacancy) |
| Members' Development Group | 4 (The Four Group Leaders) |
| People Strategy Steering Group | 5 (2 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 WRA and 1 vacancy) |
| Planning Forum | 46 (All members of the Council) |
| St Mary's Lands Working Party | 4 (2 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 WRA) |
| Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Commissioning Panel | 7 Members (4 Conservatives, 1 Labour, 1 WRA, and 1 Liberal Democrat) |
| Warwick District Conservation Advisory Forum | 2 (both Conservative) |

2.20 The working parties are primarily established for specific pieces of work with a defined life span. Therefore, the number of these will fluctuate slightly but will normally be about this level. This said there are those which are ongoing as key parts of either public engagement (e.g. Planning Forum and Warwick District Conservation Forum) or key to the Council working as a good employer (Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation & Safety Panel).

2.21 The Council also appoints Councillors (number of Councillors in brackets) to act as Champions for Procurement (4), the Armed Forces Covenant (1), HS2 (1), Heritage (1) and Children (2).

2.22 The Council also participates at Community Forums that take place twice a year (a 50% reduction from 2011). Within the District there are seven forums as follows: Kenilworth Community forum, North Leamington Community forum, South Leamington Community forum, Warwick Rural East Community forum, Warwick Rural West Community forum, Warwick Town Community forum and Whitnash Community forum.

2.23 At present the forums are jointly organised by the District and County Council. They give an opportunity for residents to put their views and concerns about local issues directly to public service providers. Other local public-sector bodies that attend these meetings include the Police, local Health services and Parish and Town councillors. The meetings generally take place in the evening.

2.24 Community forums are part of a wider strategy to improve local engagement and partnership working. There is an expectation, but not a requirement, that District Councillors will attend the community forum meetings in their area when possible because providing leadership at the forums is a vital part of their community leadership and engagement role. The forums are chaired by one of the Councillors from that area.

3 Scrutiny functions

3.1 The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees provide ideas, challenge and debate that contribute to making Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.

3.2 The Council has two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, both comprising 11 Councillors, that carry out this role by conducting scrutiny reviews into issues affecting the District, contributing to the development and review of policies, monitoring performance and holding decision-makers to account.

3.3 The two Scrutiny Committees are both chaired by Councillors from opposition parties and always meet the day before Executive to consider, and if felt appropriate comment, on the reports the Executive are to take decisions upon the following evening.

3.4 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee have slightly different roles to play. This is because the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee also acts as the Council's Audit Committee.

3.5 The prime purpose of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review items to be considered by the Executive, to review past decisions, policy development, health and wellbeing issues, specific issues and problems within any service area.

3.6 It will also be able to address any other matter not otherwise specifically delegated to the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

3.7 The prime purpose of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment; independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment; and, issues of an audit nature and to oversee the financial reporting process.

3.8 The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee will:

- Review the robustness of business cases
- Promote value for money and good procurement practice
- Make recommendation on good financial management practices
- Keep the treasury management performance under review
- Review specific Executive items and past decisions

3.9 The Committee is also the Audit Committee for the Council and undertakes the following:

- Approve (but not direct) internal audit's strategy, plan and performance
- Review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary
- Consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies

- Consider the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements
- Seek assurances that action is being taken on risk related issues identified by auditors and inspectors
- Be satisfied that the authority's assurance statements, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it
- Ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted
- Review the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and report to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit
- Approve the Council's Audited Statement of Accounts

3.10 The two Scrutiny Committees will occasionally hold a joint meeting to consider specific items; however, this usually has been no more than twice a year and has occurred only once so far in the current municipal year.

3.11 The Overview & Scrutiny has also established a Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee as a sub-committee. It has been delegated the task by its parent committee to handle most of the health and wellbeing scrutiny work that would otherwise fall to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.12 The two Scrutiny Committees are also entitled to set up Task & Finish Groups to look at specific areas. On average one Task & Finish Group is established each year. There have been two this past year which have recently concluded working on Houses in Multiple Occupation and Car Parking respectively.

3.13 The Council currently makes appointments to 23 organisations or bodies to enhance engagement meet legal requirements or because of financial contribution the Council has made to them. These are:

1. Warwickshire Police & Crime Panel
2. West Midlands Employers (formerly West Midlands Councils and West Midlands Leaders Board)
3. Coventry and Warwickshire LEP (Including City Deal)
4. Limited Liability Partnership Board (3)
5. Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board
6. South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership (2)
7. Warwickshire County Council Health & Wellbeing Board
8. Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH)
9. Shakespeare's England
10. Coventry Airport Consultative Committee
11. Kenilworth Abbey Advisory Committee
12. Kenilworth Town Centre Partnership
13. LGA District Councils' Network
14. South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust
15. Warwick Town Centre Management Group
16. Warwickshire County Council – Adult Social Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
17. Warwickshire Waste Management Forum
18. National Association of Councillors
19. Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee

20. BID Leamington Board
21. Chase Meadow Community Centre
22. Rural Services Network
23. National Parking Adjudication Service (PATROL)

3.14 It should be noted that in 2011 the Council made appointments to 48 external bodies and that since the submission by the Council to the Commission in 2016 the Council has ceased making appointments to eight organisations. These appointments are under further review with a report to be considered by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee in autumn 2017. It is considered that this level of appointment is reasonable and amounts to an average of less than half an appointment for each Councillor.

3.15 In addition to this the Leader of the Council meets with the other Council leaders in the sub region on a regular basis.

4 Representational role of Councillors

4.1 All Councillors are expected to carry out their community engagements and representational roles within their wards. This means a commitment to dealing with residents' individual issues as well as involvement in the wider community concerns which may arise. In addition, Councillors are expected to attend Council, any Committees of which they are a Member, task groups and working parties as well as regular attendance at Community Forums. There is also an expectation that Councillors will attend training and briefing sessions throughout the year and act as the Council's representative on outside bodies (as detailed above). After the Council elections in May 2015 a significant training and induction programme was undertaken by all Councillors and this level of intensity will be repeated in 2019.

4.2 Although demands vary given the number of Parish Councils (20 Parish Councils and 4 Towns) and the way they operate. Councillors representing the more rural areas also face work demands arising from the Parishes in the Ward they represent. Attendance at such meetings provides a useful engagement and helps develop and maintain effective working relationships. Additional resource in this area would further enhance this relationship especially for those areas where significant levels of development are anticipated, and/or are affected by the proposed HS2 railway scheme.

4.3 The major expansion of housing arising from the recent adoption of the new Local Plan will both create new communities and expand its towns. Village expansion in rural areas in both in the North and the South of the District is also planned and will create different and difficult leadership issues compared with the more easily handled minor urban expansion. Councillors will therefore face a major leadership role in helping to establish new communities and integrate new developments and their residents with existing communities.

4.4 Warwick District Councillors are encouraged to become involved and help drive the creation of Neighbourhood Plans within their communities. Councillors also play a key role in delivering community projects for example the Bishop's Tachbrook Community Centre, King George's Playing Field in Barford and the proposals for Whitnash Community Hub.

- 4.5 The Council is mindful of the impact that HS2 will have on the District and this is likely to increase demand on local Councillors dealing with the concerns from members of the public during the construction phase over the next five years. This will be followed by a period of concerns and issues during the establishment of the route and residents getting used to living with the line.
- 4.6 The Council's Constitution sets out the following role of all Councillors:
- (i) Collectively to be the ultimate policy-makers and carry out a number of strategic and corporate functions;
 - (ii) Represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision-making process, i.e. become the advocate of and for their communities;
 - (iii) Deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances;
 - (iv) Balance the different interests identified within the ward and represent the ward as a whole;
 - (v) Be involved in decision making;
 - (vi) Be available to represent the Council on other bodies; and
 - (vii) Maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics.
- 4.7 The Council considers that it is vital to have well trained councillors who can use their skills and knowledge to engage with their community and provide informed leadership within the Council itself and for the wider community.
- 4.8 To this end the Council has a comprehensive training and development programme for all councillors and participation in a wide range of developmental activities is encouraged and in some cases, compulsory.
- 4.9 There is some compulsory training for Councillors, which was agreed with Group Leaders, for example training on Planning and Licensing matters before the Councillor is permitted to sit on the relevant Committee.
- 4.10 There is an expectation that Councillors will take advantage of training and development opportunities offered to them and this does create an added time commitment for Councillors, but reflects the overall commitment of the Council to developing and providing high standards of service.
- 4.11 The Council has recently had a review of its Members Allowances which the Council accepted. This included methodology for creating allowances as follows:
- "29. As the Basic Allowance is primarily a time-based allowance that must be paid equally to all Members, it should take into account the full range of duties and activities that Members are expected to undertake including:*
- *Attending meetings of the Council, Executive, Committees and related panels, forums and task and finish groups, including training events*
 - *Ward casework and constituent meetings*
 - *Attendance at meetings of external organisations (Outside Bodies) including local community groups, parish councils*
 - *Emails, reading reports, agendas and research, preparation and travel time where relevant*

30. *The most up to date source of what time is required to be an effective Member is from the Local Government Association (LGA) Census of Councillors 2013 which shows that on average an elected Member of a district council who does not hold any position of significant responsibility puts in 14 hours per week on 'Council business'.¹ In effect, it is the equivalent of just under two days per week spread over a whole week and in a context whereby there is an increasing need for some Members to meet informally during the day.*

31. *The Panel has not opted to utilize 14 hours per week as the time element to calculate the recommended Basic Allowance as the Panel is recognising the extra time put in by Planning Members (which is included in the Councillor Census 14 hours per week) separately - see below. In addition, where the issue was explored in interview, the weight of views felt that 14 hours per week was marginally high. Consequently the Panel has used an average of 12 hours per week as the time required from a 'backbench' Member to fulfil all their duties. This equates to 78 days per year on an 8 hour working day."*

4.12 The Council is of the view that on average 65% of this time is undertaken on representing their community be it by direct engagement with the community or representing them at meeting. Therefore, at present this is circa 8 hours per week.

4.13 The Council has concluded that with an anticipated increase in electorate of 13% between now and 2023 it can be reasonably predicted that there will be a similar percentage increase in workload for Councillors. This would see their time rise to 14 hours per week of which the time spent on representational work will be 9 hours per week. However, it is anticipated that because of the significant growth and establishment of new communities across the District the amount of engagement/contact with electors will increase dramatically across the District. This can only be estimated, based on those areas with development already taking place, but it is felt that for some areas the time required could increase by 50%.

5 Further information

5.1 Warwick District Council asked officers to bring forward proposals for revised boundaries and Council size following the outcome of the Warwickshire County Council Divisions. The concerns arose because of the loss of coterminous boundaries at local government level, the impact of this on the town wards and therefore on the ability for residents to consistently identify with their local communities and Councillors.

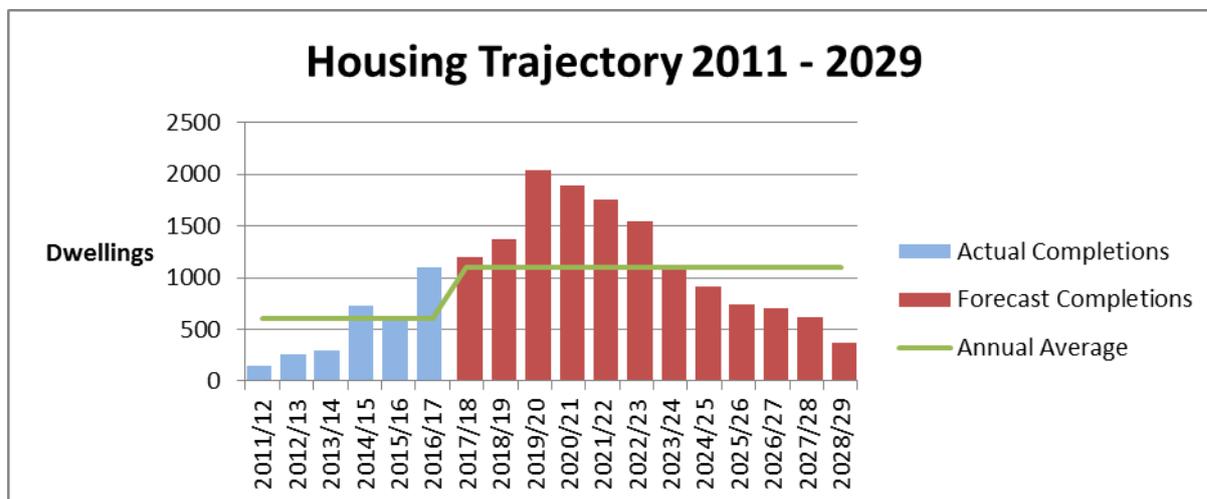
5.2 The Council is committed to coterminous boundaries and recognises that it has been fortunate to have had coterminous boundaries at local government level for most of its time in existence. In its opinion this has helped to build community cohesion, gives clear identification of elected representatives. Continuation of this state of affairs should take precedent over a simple enforcement of the ratio of electors to Councillors.

¹ This does not include on average an additional 5.8 hours per week on group/party business. The data on mean hours worked by Councillors by type of council and by positions held supplied to Chair of Panel in email from S. Richards, LGA 30 September 2014

- 5.3 While the scheduled County Council elections are held in different years to District and Parish/Town elections, the Council considers that the loss of coterminous boundaries will lead to confusion for electors and a loss of community identity with their elected representatives when the next District and Parish/Town Council elections are held in May 2019.
- 5.4 The Council is mindful that while scheduled elections County Council and District/Parish/Town are not due on the same day, by-elections could occur on the same day with different boundaries.
- 5.5 Two examples of this scenario have already occurred. Firstly, in May 2017 the County Council election for the Division of Kenilworth St Johns was combined with a by election for the Kenilworth Town Ward of Kenilworth St Johns. They do not have the same boundaries and this resulted in voter confusion with complaints to the Returning Officer about the ability to vote in either election. Secondly, in August 2017 a by election for a Leamington Town Council Ward where political parties canvassed part of the District Ward of the same name, which did not fall into the Town Council Ward. This resulted in accusations of electoral fraud from the public and complaints at polling stations, when electors arrived and found that they could not vote.
- 5.6 The Council is mindful of other key facts:
- There are, as at 1 September 2017 electoral register, 109,155 local government electors in Warwick District and 46 Councillors, giving a current ratio of 2,373 electors per Councillor;
 - The current figure of electors per councillor is equal to or higher than 10% from the average predicted by the LGBCE for 2018 in three Wards, and below the said average by 10% or more in four wards within the District. The remaining fourteen wards are within 10% of the average number of electors per councillor ratio predicted by the LGBCE for Warwick District in 2018;
 - The Council has undertaken a forecasting process for its electorate and it is estimated there will be circa 123,000 electors in 2023.
- 5.7 Achieving coterminous boundaries is an essential requirement within the town centres to avoid major warding problems at parish level. It will not be easy to achieve a perfect solution (3 District councillors per Division) because elector numbers (both actual and predicted) have changed and especially because the last County Council Division Review was based on information available at the time and subsequently the Local Plan has been revised and adopted. This has seen additional housing concentrated in certain WCC Divisions and consequently the anticipated Wards for Warwick District Council. This Council therefore believes that 48 Councillors would offer a better level of coterminous arrangements over other possible ratios. At Appendix C is an indicative proposal illustrating the potential number of Councillors per Ward if they were passed on the current County Council Divisions. However, this would be refined within the submission setting out the proposals for Warding if the LGBCE accept the proposed Council size of 48. The Council believes there is greater benefit from having the coterminous boundaries to enable a greater level of community cohesion, one its key aims within Fit for the Future (its Corporate Strategy). It is mindful that while this creates an imbalance in some areas for 2023 by 2029 (the end of the current Local Plan it provides a far greater equality than other proposals).

- 5.8 From May 2017 all official Committee meetings take place at 6.00pm on weekdays. The exception is the Licensing & Regulatory Committee, which will meet late afternoon, and its Panels that take place during normal office hours to accommodate the applicants and interested parties who will be attending them. However nearly half of all District Councillors are now employed and the need for meetings to take place outside normal working hours has increased. The informal meetings which take place during the day make it difficult for some Councillors to commit to serving on such groups. Therefore, it is important that the future size of the Council is such that it will be possible to ensure that all meetings whether evening or day time will be well attended.
- 5.9 In respect of the budget pressures on the Council it recognises that the banking crisis and the resultant period of public sector austerity have severely impacted on it, as with the rest of the public sector. In 2010/11 The Council's net expenditure (as funded by council tax, business rates and Government Grant) was £18.2m, this is now forecast to be below £13m for 2018/19. The main cause for this has been the reduction in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) which will be zero after 2018/19, this representing a reduction in funding of approaching £7m. Throughout most of this period the council tax charged in the district was frozen. In accommodating the funding reductions, substantial savings (or additional income generated) have been made in the way the Council has delivered its services avoiding the need to cut or reduce any mainstream services.
- 5.10 These savings (or income) were made by reviewing how all services were provided, making sure services were provided as effectively and efficiently as possible and making use of new technology where possible. Further savings or income generating initiatives are planned over the next three years as the Revenue Support Grant reduces to zero over the next 2 years. The Council has a greater level of reserves than many comparable authorities. Whilst these do provide some resilience, the level of reserves is due to diminish in future years as some of these are re-invested in services to cope with the growth of demand.
- 5.11 Councillors further recognise the pressures on Local Government and that from 2011 to 2017 the number of full time equivalent officers (ftes) at the Council has reduced from 530 to 450. In 2017/18 this reduced by a further 42 ftes as a result in change of management of the Council Leisure Centres to a private company. Whilst the number of directly employed officers has reduced by 24% over seven years, the Council has continued to deliver the same services as previously resulting in a similar workload and interaction with the public for Councillors.
- 5.12 In addition to this staff reduction, within the next few years there will be a review of senior management along with other proposals to further streamline the Committee structure. Members are mindful of reflecting this change in Council size themselves but also recognise the challenges ahead over the next five years and the importance there will be of representing their communities through these changing and challenging times.
- 5.13 However, the Council considers that while the number of officers has reduced the effect of outsourcing of service delivery has no proportional effect on the number of Councillors, therefore with the increased electorate the number of these enquiries and demands will continue to grow.

5.14 At the same time the Council is working to make its services capable of serving the significant development of homes and businesses across the District as part of its Local Plan up to 2029. This is likely to see the District increase, during this time by a further 17,000 properties (2011 to 2029), a large proportion of which will occur between now and 2023, as set out in the graph below:



5.15 Significant capital investments and service changes are also proposed by the Council. For example, the Council has decided to make significant investment £15.2m (as at June 2017) in its leisure centres and transfer the management of them to an external party so that the same (or better) level of service can continue to be delivered while increasing the facility's capacity and ensuring improved income for the Council.

6 Alternative options

- 6.1 Consideration was given to having two District Councillors representing each County Division. However, this would lead to a significant increase in workload for Councillors and would probably give rise to a full-time role, with a similar ratio of electors to Councillors as in single tier and County Councils. Councillors understood that this would be a much more radical change to their role had they chosen to pursue this option. It was unlikely that this route would generate much in the way of financial saving, as Officers predict that Member Allowances would need to increase significantly and would likely offset any saving that might be made by reducing the overall number of Councillors. For these reasons, this option was not progressed.
- 6.2 Consideration was given to deviating from the coterminous boundary principle and redrawing boundaries appropriately based on a ratio of electors to Councillors that best meets the needs of the community. This option was not brought forward because of the issues discussed in section 3 of this report. In addition, there are some historic Parishes within the District that the Council would not wish to impact upon by drawing boundaries which could result in new Parish Boundaries or "Warding" of these Parishes.
- 6.3 It is felt that in retaining the current Council size or reducing it would take the Council outside the ratio of Councillors to electors within its CiPFA nearest neighbours group.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council recognises the changing face of local government generally but also considers of equal importance the impact of significant increase expected in electorate within the District, in two main areas; one to the south of Leamington, Warwick, Whitnash and north and west of Bishop's Tachbrook; and, the other in the north of District to the south/east of Kenilworth and south of Coventry.
- 7.2 The Council recognises the importance of communities and being accountable for its actions to those communities. It also looks to have joint working and effective relationships across all levels of government especially in a shire district between County, District and its Parishes and Towns. These are better fostered through coterminous boundaries which also enable clarity of responsibility and accountability for the local community to be better provided.
- 7.3 It recognises that even with the prospect of an increasing population, the Council is reducing in size in respect of budget, numbers of employees, but not the level of services provided.
- 7.4 Therefore, based on these considerations a conclusion was reached on a proposed Council size of 48 councillors (plus or minus 1 councillor).

Appendix A

| Council | Electors | Number of Wards | Council Size | Electors per Councillor | Hectares (Census 2011) | Density (electors/hectares) | Electoral cycle | Councillors per ward |
|---------------------|----------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Taunton Deane | 84,478 | 26 | 56 | 1,509 | 46,236 | 1.8 | Whole | 2.15 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 82,125 | 20 | 48 | 1,711 | 33,133 | 2.5 | Thirds | 2.4 |
| Rugby | 78,221 | 16 | 42 | 1,862 | 35,111 | 2.2 | Thirds | 2.63 |
| North Hertfordshire | 99,114 | 24 | 49 | 2,023 | 37,538 | 2.6 | Thirds | 2.04 |
| Mid Sussex | 12,335 | 26 | 54 | 2,080 | 33,402 | 3.4 | Whole | 2.08 |
| Maidstone | 118,077 | 26 | 55 | 2,147 | 39,333 | 3 | Thirds | 2.12 |
| Cheltenham | 87,081 | 20 | 40 | 2,177 | 4,661 | 18.7 | halves | 2 |
| Eastleigh | 96,518 | 19 | 44 | 2,194 | 7,978 | 12.1 | Thirds | 2.32 |
| Harrogate | 120,762 | 35 | 54 | 2,236 | 130,794 | 0.9 | Thirds | 1.54 |
| Chelmsford | 130,662 | 24 | 57 | 2,292 | 33,878 | 3.9 | whole | 1.125 |
| Cherwell | 113,151 | 16 | 48 | 2,357 | 58,877 | 1.9 | Thirds | 3 |
| Warwick (current) | 109,155 | 20 | 46 | 2,373 | 28,288 | 3.8 | Whole | 2.3 |
| Stafford | 99,343 | 23 | 40 | 2,484 | 59,817 | 1.7 | Whole | 1.74 |
| Charnwood | 134,156 | 28 | 52 | 2,580 | 27,906 | 4.8 | whole | 1.86 |
| Colchester | 133,775 | 17 | 51 | 2,623 | 32,908 | 4.1 | Thirds | 3 |
| Canterbury | 105,702 | 21 | 39 | 2,710 | 30,885 | 3.4 | whole | 1.857 |

Appendix B

| Name of meeting | Number of Councillors | Number of meetings in 2016/17 |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Council | 46 | 9 |
| Executive | 9 | 10 |
| Overview & Scrutiny Committee | 11 | 10 |
| Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee | 11 | 12 |
| Employment Committee | 11 | 5 |
| Standards Committee | 11 | 3 |
| Licensing & Regulatory Committee | 15 | 7 |
| Licensing Panels | 3 (from 15 members of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee) | 30 (exceptional year due to policy changes average 17 per year) |
| Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee | 6 | 5 |
| Planning Committee | 11 | 13 (plus 9 Saturdays for site visits) |

Appendix C

| Ward | No of councillors | Electorate 2023 | distance from electoral equality 2023 | 1.58 electors per new build 2029 | distance from electoral equality based on 1.58 electors 2029 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Budbrooke & Bishops Tachbrook | 5 | 11891 | -8 | 13155 | 22 |
| Cublington & Leek Wootton | 3 | 9185 | 19 | 11365 | 6 |
| Kenilworth Park Hill | 4 | 9154 | -11 | 10149 | -6 |
| Kenilworth St. John's | 3 | 8160 | 6 | 8508 | 6 |
| Lapworth & West Kenilworth | 3 | 7961 | 3 | 7961 | -1 |
| Leamington Brunswick | 4 | 9293 | -10 | 9293 | -14 |
| Leamington Clarendon | 3 | 8100 | 5 | 8100 | 0 |
| Leamington Milverton | 3 | 7188 | -7 | 7188 | -11 |
| Leamington North | 3 | 8653 | 12 | 8653 | 7 |
| Leamington Willes | 3 | 9083 | 18 | 9146 | 13 |
| Warwick North | 3 | 7515 | -3 | 7515 | -7 |
| Warwick South | 4 | 10120 | -2 | 10620 | -1 |
| Warwick West | 4 | 9383 | -9 | 9383 | -13 |
| Whitnash | 3 | 7948 | 3 | 7948 | -1 |
| Total | 48 | 123633 | | 128985 | |
| Ratio | | 2576 | | 2687 | |