



Surrey Heath Borough Council

Electoral Review Council Size Submission

Introduction	4
<i>Summary of Proposals</i>	4
<i>The Borough of Surrey Heath</i>	4
PART ONE	6
<i>Governance and Decision Making</i>	6
The Borough Councillors	6
Member Development and Training	6
Leadership	7
Leader of the Council	7
Delegations of the Leader of the Council	7
The Mayor	8
The Regulatory Committees	8
The Planning Committee	9
Scheme of Officer Delegated Authority - Planning	9
The Licensing Committee	9
The Licensing Sub-Committees	10
The Audit and Standards Committee	10
The Hearings Sub-Committee	11
Outside Bodies	11
PART TWO	12
<i>Scrutiny Functions</i>	12
The Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee	12
The External Partnership Select Committee	13
PART THREE	14
<i>Representational Roles of Councillors</i>	14
PART FOUR	15
<i>The Future</i>	15
Localism and Policy Development	15
Service Delivery	15
Finance	16
Indicative Shape of the Council	16
Time Commitments of Councillors	16

PART FIVE	18
<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>18</i>
PART SIX	20
<i>SUBMISSION</i>	<i>20</i>
Links to further information on the Council's Website	21

Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has confirmed that a review of Surrey Heath Borough Council's warding pattern would be undertaken, with a view to addressing the electoral variance across the Borough within the existing warding pattern. The first stage of any such review is the consideration of the existing Council size, with a view to ensuring an efficient and effective structure is in place.

The Governance Working Group, a politically proportionate working group comprising 5 Members, which included both Group Leaders, was asked to develop a submission for consideration by the Full Council.

Summary of Proposals

This submission sets out the Council's proposal to seek a reduction in the number of Borough Councillors for Surrey Heath from 40 to 34, representing a reduction of 15%. In reaching this conclusion, the Council has taken into account a number of factors:

- the Strong Leader and Executive arrangements introduced since the last review;
- the extensive Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers extended since the last review;
- the technological advancements in communications and the changing way in which residents access information and services;
- reduction in the committee structure and frequency of meetings including the way in which the Council fulfils its scrutiny responsibilities; and
- the financial position of the Council, and the Country as a whole.

The Borough of Surrey Heath

The Borough of Surrey Heath was formed in 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972 from the former Frimley and Camberley Urban District Council and the former Bagshot Rural District Council. It has borders with 3 other Surrey Districts and 2 Hampshire Districts and 2 Berkshire Unitary Councils.

The total population of Surrey Heath according to 2011 census is 86,144, which is a 7.3% increase since the last Census in 2001. There are 33,546 households in the 9,509 hectares covering the Borough. This is an increase in households of 5.7% since 2001. The average household size is 2.52 people (the largest in Surrey) and this produces a population density of 9.1 people per hectare.

The split between Males (49.76%) and Females (50.24%) is stable although we have the largest proportion of males in Surrey. Our population continues to age with 16.72% of residents being over 65 years of age, an increase of 31.8% since the last Census. Our over 85 year olds have also increased significantly by 38.5% to 1,800 residents. The majority of the population (61.07%) is aged between 18-64 years.

The largest ethnic group is "White British" at 84.95%, followed by 5.24% being "All Other White Ethnicities". Other notable ethnicity groups are 1.99% "Asian/Asian British: Indian" residents and 1.89% "All mixed/multiple ethnicities". "All black/African/Caribbean/black British" residents represent 1% of the population. 0.77% of residents are "Asian/Asian British: Pakistani".

63.44% of the population classify themselves as Christian, 1.59% are Hindu and 1.87% are Muslims. 2.01% state other religions.

2.49% of the population has "bad or very bad health".

PART ONE

Governance and Decision Making

The Borough Councillors

Surrey Heath Borough Council currently has 40 Councillors and 16 Wards across 9,509 hectares, with each Ward represented by 2 or 3 Councillors. "All out" elections to the Borough Council are held every four years. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

The political balance of the Council for 2016/17 is 36 Conservative Councillors which forms the majority group and 2 Independents Councillors, 1 Liberal Democrat Councillor and 1 Labour Councillor, who have formed the Others Group.

There has never been an instance when the Council has been unable to discharge its duties due to a lack of Councillors.

The Council does not have a formal role description for Councillors. However, prospective candidates are invited to attend a briefing "So you want to be a councillor" which is held some six months before the local elections. The event, open to members of the public, is presented by the Chief Executive or a Executive Head and talks are given by the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition Group

The purpose of the briefing is intended to provide information on the roles and responsibilities of a Borough Councillor, including an indication of the likely workloads. Feedback from retiring Councillors indicates that their workload is on a par to their pre-election expectations, a position the Council has actively sought to achieve through its publications and sessions for prospective candidates.

Member Development and Training

Surrey Heath Borough Council provides a Member Induction Programme aimed at newly elected Members, although returning Members are invited to participate to share their experiences and attend mandatory training sessions. In 2015, sessions were provided on the Code of Conduct and the Standards Regime and the Constitution, the decision making structure and overview and scrutiny, Planning Training, Licensing Training a Finance Seminar and Economic Development Growth Workshop. A Departmental Fair which showcased the work of the services was also held and a Borough Tour was conducted.

Other training such as Data Protection, Information Governance, Safeguarding and Health and Safety is delivered through e-learning. A training session on Chairing

Meetings facilitated by South East Employers was arranged primarily for Chairmen and Vice Chairmen, although other members were invited to attend.

On-going training is provided throughout the Councillor's term of office, which includes annual Planning and Licensing training. Councillors also have access to training provided by external sources if appropriate to their role.

Leadership

Surrey Heath Borough Council moved to the Strong Leader with Cabinet in May 2011 in line with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Prior to that, the Authority had operated Executive arrangements, adopted as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. The decision to move to the Strong Leader with Cabinet model was taken by the Council at a Special Meeting on 13 October 2010 following an extensive consultation exercise undertaken in 2010. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Moira Gibson, has been Leader, under Executive arrangements and the Strong Leader with Cabinet arrangements, since 2002.

Leader of the Council

The Leader is elected for a four year term of office at the first business meeting of Council. Under Strong Leader arrangements, the Leader of the Council reports the make-up of the Executive at the Annual Council Meeting in May each year.

The Executive for 2016/17 consists of the Leader of the Council and six further Members, each of whom are responsible for one of the following six Portfolio areas which match the service areas of the Council:

- Finance
- Regulatory
- Corporate
- Business
- Transformation
- Community

Each Portfolio Area covers a service area of the Council.

Delegations of the Leader of the Council

On 18 May 2016, the Leader of the Council reappointed her Executive and allocated the Portfolio Areas of Responsibilities. She reported that all decisions would be taken collectively by the Executive. She had not reserved any decisions to the office of the Council Leader and no individual decision making powers had been delegated to Portfolio Holders.

The Executive functions as delegated by the Executive are set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution and are maintained by the Executive Head of Corporate. Any

changes to the Constitution in relation to Executive functions are reported to the next appropriate meeting of the Council.

No executive authorities have been delegated to the Portfolio Holders and the roles, together with the role of Leader of the Council, are not considered to be full time. Members of the Council serve on a variety of outside bodies and the Leader and Portfolio Holders are represented on decision making partnerships, such as the Local Committee with Surrey County Council.

The Mayor

The Mayor is elected each year at the annual meeting of the Borough Council, which is held in May. The role of the Mayor is to represent the Council in the local community as the Borough's "first citizen".

The Mayor adopts a non-political role, with key responsibilities and duties including:

- Chairman of Full Council.
- Opening functions, events and new businesses as the Council's representative.
- Attending award ceremonies and receptions at the request of local schools, businesses, voluntary and community groups.
- Hosting civic receptions for overseas visitors, civic dignitaries and other guests.
- Visiting individuals and groups throughout Surrey Heath to mark celebrations and key events.

During their period of office, the Mayor will receive numerous invitations to events/functions in the Borough and across Surrey. The role played at these events varies, depending on their nature and the expectations of the organiser. The Mayor's role may sometimes be purely passive where all that is required is the Mayor's presence. There may be other occasions when the Mayor's role is more active in terms of opening events, making a speech, awarding prizes and meeting guests. At the beginning of each mayor's year, it is traditional for the Mayor to set up an appeal for a certain cause. During the course of the year, the Mayor will organise a number of events to raise money for the appeal. Although the Executive Head of Finance acts as the honorary treasurer to the appeal, the appeal is not controlled by the Council and the Mayor has complete discretion over who should benefit from the money raised, having regard to the appeal's purpose.

The Mayor asks the Deputy Mayor to stand in if the Mayor is not available. The Deputy Mayor has two distinct roles. When formally deputising for the Mayor, they have the same non-political responsibilities and prerogatives as the Mayor. When not formally deputising they, however, continue to function as regular Councillors.

The Regulatory Committees

Surrey Heath Borough Council has 2 Regulatory Committees: the Planning Committee and the Licensing Committee.

The Planning Committee

The Planning Committee meets approximately every four weeks to, amongst other duties, determine planning applications that have been reported to it complete with a recommendation from the Executive Head of Regulatory.

Other duties of the Committee include consideration of other development control matters, e.g. planning enforcement cases.

Members of the public and applicants are entitled to address the Planning Committee on certain planning applications. Ward Councillors, who are not members of the Planning Committee, are allowed to speak at the Planning Committee, regardless of Party.

The Planning Committee has 16 Members, with a proportional allocation of seats (14 Conservative and 2 Other Group Councillors). It is a standing Committee, the membership of which is determined annually at the first business meeting of Council in May. The meetings of the Committee are normally held at Surrey Heath House at 7.00 p.m. on Thursdays. Attendance at the Planning Committee is high and there have been no occasions when the Committee has not been quorate.

The Council adopted a Core Strategy on 1 February 2012. This is an approved "Development Plan" for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Council will consider applications for Neighbourhood Forums and Neighbourhood Plans in the normal way. Although such applications will impose an additional workload on Officers, it is not anticipated that there will be any effect on Members.

Scheme of Officer Delegated Authority - Planning

The full scheme of Officer Delegations to the Executive Head of Regulatory is maintained in the Council's Constitution. The scheme is extensive and covers a wide range of categories of planning applications and other matters. However there is provision for a councillor to request the Executive Head of Regulatory to refer an application to the next appropriate meeting of the Planning Applications Committee for determination.

The Executive Head of Regulatory (or in her absence an authorised Deputy) determines applications under delegated authority. The officers will, at their discretion, refer particular applications to the Planning Committee for determination.

The Licensing Committee

The Licensing Committee is scheduled to meet four times a year and is responsible for any matter which falls under the remit of the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005 in accordance with the Council's approved statement of Licensing Policy.

Specifically the Committee is responsible for the policies of the Council relating to licensing.

The Licensing Committee is responsible for establishing the Licensing Sub-Committees but has delegated the responsibility for appointing Members to the Sub-Committees to the Executive Head of Corporate. The Licensing Sub-Committees consider premises licences, club premises certificates, temporary events notices and personal licences in the Borough in respect of the sale and/or supply of alcohol and the provision of regulated entertainment and late night refreshment where representations have been made.

The Licensing Committee has 15 Members, with a proportional allocation of seats (13 Conservative and 2 Others Group Councillors – 2016/17). It is a standing Committee, the membership of which is determined annually at the first business meeting of Council in May. The meetings of the Committee are normally held at Surrey Heath House at 7.00 p.m. on Wednesdays. Attendance at the Licensing Committee is high and there have been no occasions when the Committee has not been quorate.

The Licensing Sub-Committees

The Licensing Sub-Committees meets during the daytime and consists of three Members. A named reserve Councillor is appointed to ensure that the quorum can be achieved even if the Sub-Committees are called at short notice. The dates of the meetings are ad hoc, determined by the necessity to consider any matters within their remit.

The Audit and Standards Committee

The Audit and Standards Committee comprises 7 Councillors (6 Conservative and 1 Other Group Councillors – 2016/17). The meetings are held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday evenings at Surrey Heath House. The Committee is appointed annually at the first business meeting of the Council in May. Attendance at the Audit and Standards Committee is high and there have been no occasions when the Committee has not been quorate.

The responsibilities of the Audit and Standards Committee include:

- to promote standards within the Council and to monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct.
- to establish a Hearing Sub-Committee to hear and determine complaints of alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct by borough or parish councillors referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.
- to grant dispensations pursuant to Sections 33(2) (b), (c) and (e) of the Localism Act 2011
- to hear and determine appeals against refusal to grant dispensations by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to Sections 33(2)(a) and (d) of the Localism Act 2011.
- to receive an annual report from the Monitoring Officer on Standards issues.

- to act as the Council's Audit Committee.

The Hearings Sub-Committee

The Hearing Sub-Committee terms of reference are to hear and determine complaints of alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct by borough or parish councillors referred to it by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Standards Hearing and Determination Meeting Procedure (Part H of the Documents which support the Constitution).

The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to appoint 3 members to the Sub Committee from the membership of the Audit and Standards Committee. The meetings are only called when an allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct has been alleged. The Sub-Committee has not met since its establishment in June 2012.

To assist the Sub-Committee, as part of a consortium of councils namely Mole Valley, Guildford, Waverley, Spelthorne and Reigate and Banstead, the Council has appointed 5 Independent Persons as part of a pool of Independent Persons pursuant to Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011. Their Term of Office expires in May 2019.

Outside Bodies

Each year, the Borough Council appoints Councillors and other community representatives to a wide range of outside bodies. These include Management Committees of Borough and Surrey-wide organisations, including a number of voluntary organisations serving the community.

The workload associated with the appointments varies, though would normally involve the attendance of the Councillor at between 4 and 6 meetings a year at different venues in the County. The number of appointments to each Group is normally determined by the needs of the body concerned and varies between 1 and 4 Councillors. A schedule setting out the nature of the positions is provided to all Councillors prior to the confirmation of appointments by the first business meeting of the Council in May each year. The schedule seeks to give an indication of the time commitment of each body and further provides an indication of the number of meetings held each year, their location and time of day.

PART TWO

Scrutiny Functions

Surrey Heath Borough Council has 2 Overview and Scrutiny Committees each comprising 15 Councillors (14 Conservative and 1 Others Councillors).

The Committees ensure that its level of activity is manageable through its annual work programme and regular reports from task groups. Any proposals for new reviews are scrutinised carefully by the Committees, to ensure that adequate resources are available and that the potential outcomes of such reviews justify the resource and time necessary.

The Committees support the work of the Leader, Executive and the Council as a whole. These may lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.

The Committees also monitors decisions made under the Council's Executive arrangements. It can 'call-in' any Executive decision taken by the Executive. This enables the Committees to consider whether the decision is appropriate. The Committees may recommend that the Executive decision be reconsidered. The Committees may also be consulted on forthcoming decisions and the development of policy.

The Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is chaired by a Member of the Majority Group and meets at least 4 times a year. The meetings are held on Wednesday evenings at Surrey Heath House and attendance levels of Councillors are high. No meetings have been cancelled on the basis that a quorum has failed to be achieved.

The Committee's Terms of Reference include

- To monitor, to review and to report to the Leader/ Executive in relation to the following:
 - performance of the Council's services, including against targets in the Annual Plan;
 - financial performance;
 - treasury management;
 - reserves and provisions;
 - equalities;
 - complaints;
 - corporate risk;
 - emergency planning and business continuity.

- To scrutinise performance of Portfolio Holders.

- To receive an annual report from the Monitoring Officer in respect of authorisations granted during the municipal year pursuant to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

The External Partnership Select Committee

The Committee is chaired by a Member of the Majority Group and meets at least 4 times a year. The meetings are held on Tuesday evenings at Surrey Heath House and attendance levels of Councillors are high. No meetings have been cancelled on the basis that a quorum has failed to be achieved.

The Committee's Terms of Reference include

- To undertake investigations into such matters which have been referred to the Committee pursuant to the Councillor Call for Action Protocol at Part 4, Section C of this Constitution.
- To review services provided by other agencies and which affect the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Council's area.
- To scrutinise the partner organisations in receipt of grants from the Council.
- To scrutinise the Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- To scrutinise the Police and Crime Panel.
- As the Council's designated crime and disorder committee to review or scrutinise at least annually decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions, including matters referred to it by a ward councillor;
- To make reports or recommendations to the Council with respect to the discharge of crime and disorder functions with copies to the appropriate responsible authorities or co-operating bodies.

PART THREE

Representational Roles of Councillors

It is clear that one of the key reasons individuals seek to become a Councillor is the role they can play in the community, seeking improvements for local residents. It is therefore understandable that a significant proportion of their time is spent on engaging with their residents.

The actual time commitment will vary significantly between Councillors, dependent on their other responsibilities, the nature of the area they represent and the number of Councillors for that Ward. Regardless, community engagement continues to form a substantial element of the overall role of a Councillor.

The way in which Councillors undertake this engagement again varies though will involve local surgeries, blogs and, if necessary, attending public meetings such as those of local residents' groups. Significant changes have occurred in the way in which members of the public access information, and comments by Councillors would indicate that these have had a significant effect on the number of enquiries received.

The public, for example, is far more likely to find out information for themselves than was the case when the Council size was last reviewed. The use of the internet has replaced a high proportion of direct contact and the amount of information available electronically has grown enormously, with websites such as that hosted by the Borough Council providing extensive information which previously residents may have turned to their local councillor for. Telephone calls from members of public have fallen, with more and more enquiries being received by e-mail. Overall, the demands of residents on Councillors' time has reduced significantly as other avenues of enquiry have grown.

Councillors do attend local community meetings, such as Parish Council meetings, and meetings organised through residents associations or local community groups. The nature of the ward, and the number of Councillors representing the ward, has an impact on the level of commitment taken up by a Councillor for such events. The main purpose is to listen to the views of the residents and, where appropriate, represent those views within the Council. It is clear that Councillors deal with their caseloads in a variety of ways.

Overall, Councillors seek to assist their constituents directly though will seek the assistance of Officers if necessary. In the majority of cases, the Councillors will remain engaged until the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the resident.

PART FOUR

The Future

Localism and Policy Development

The Council has a wide programme of having devolved assets to local community organisations ranging from allotments to sports clubs. The Council does not have plans to devolve political responsibility to local areas. The Council has worked closely with voluntary and community organisations over many years and has extensive experience of working with the community to identify services that can be provided or supported by such organisations. Councillors often play a key role in such arrangements, with suitable Officer support to ensure that the Members have sufficient resources to function effectively. The Council also has a programme of enhancing community-owned assets to support local organisations.

Service Delivery

Up until the year 1993, the Council was responsible for the direct provision of housing in the Borough before the housing stock was transferred to a social landlord. Following the transfer of its housing stock, the Council's related service responsibilities were significantly reduced although the Council maintains housing responsibilities such as maintaining the Housing Register, homelessness and affordable housing activities.

The Council previously ran a 'Direct Services Organisation' for services such as refuse collection and since 1995, the refuse collection service has been externalised. In addition, the Council maintained the highways on behalf of Surrey County Council. Since the year 2000, Surrey County Council has undertaken the provision of the Highways function.

Whilst it is recognised that there have been some additional Council responsibilities, such as alcohol, gambling and Taxi licensing, there has been an overall reduction in the Council's workforce since the year 2000, reflecting these changes in the Council's service responsibilities.

In 2005/06 the Council employed 275 full time equivalent (FTE) staff. In 2016/17 the number of FTE staff has been reduced to 215 at reduction of almost 22%.

The Council has sought to make the difficult decisions between competing priorities and to help mitigate the effects of cuts across the public sector whilst maintaining high quality service delivery for residents.

Finance

Along with other Boroughs and Districts, the Council has seen a year on year reduction in its Government support. The Council received notification of an indicative settlement for 2016/17 of its rate support grant of £357k, representing a reduction of 67% in cash terms compared with 2015/16 followed by its total removal in 2017/18. This had been confirmed by Parliament in February 2016. However as a result of lobbying a transitional grant of £133k in 2016/17 and £85k in 2017/18 had been given to help manage the loss. It had been originally proposed by the Government that the grant would go negative in 2016/17, by applying a “tariff adjustment” to business rates. However this would now not come in to effect until 2019/20. The funding for the Local Council Tax support scheme is no longer shown separately and the Council is now expected to fund this themselves going forward. A number of other grants have also been removed.

Through streamlining of business processes, the Council has until now avoided cutting services to the public. There has, however, been a substantial reduction in the scale of directly employed people and it is considered appropriate to similarly reduce the number of Councillors as the ways of delivering business and ways of engaging with the public become increasingly streamlined.

The average cost for an elected Member is some £7,200. The proposed reduction to 34 members will secure an annual saving of an estimated £40,000 per annum. In addition the reduction will facilitate a more streamlined approach to decision making and scrutiny and will result in a further cost saving to the Council. Furthermore Members consider it is important to give a signal to staff and the public that they are making their contribution towards the savings requirements of the Council.

Indicative Shape of the Council

The Council’s Committee structure has recently been streamlined and from this it is considered that a total of 34 Councillors is sufficient to run the business of the Council.

Time Commitments of Councillors

The workload of Councillors covers attendance at meetings and representing the electorate. The reduction of Committees will enable 34 Councillors to meet the workload whilst still only requiring a Member being on up to two Committees.

The changing nature of public engagement with the Council through increasing use of self service via the web, email, social media and webcasting will continue to reduce the time demands of Members.

The electorate of Surrey Heath is 65,457 equalling to 1,636 electors per Member. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the public will continue to use alternative means of accessing Council information. The growth forecast for Surrey Heath by 2022 is an electorate of 66,082. This would increase electors per Councillor to 1,943. It is considered that, in the context of modern open and transparent local government, this will not result in an unacceptable workload per Member.

PART FIVE

Conclusions

The review of the Council's size has taken into account the information and evidence set out in this Submission. The Council has concluded that a reduction in the current number of Councillors from 40 to 34 Members is achievable whilst ensuring that their role in the community and on the Council is not adversely affected. The Council is aware that such a reduction can lead to risks and uncertainties and as such has taken into account a range of factors and evidence in reaching its conclusions. These factors are:

- **the Strong Leader and Executive arrangements introduced since the last review**

The Council considers that the proposed reduction to 34 Councillors is appropriate in the context of the Council's current arrangements and is also fit for purpose in the future. This is because the number 34 has been determined by reference to a Strong Leader structure where the Leader has chosen to delegate responsibility for executive decisions to her Executive. There are therefore no foreseeable circumstances in which an increased number of Councillors could be required. This stance is further reinforced as the Council's current formal decision making structure has recently been reviewed and restructured to ensure that it is fit for purpose. It is considered that with a Council size of 34 Members it is possible to maintain the effective formal decision making and scrutiny structure whilst continuing to adhere to relevant legislative requirements.

- **the extensive Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers extended since the last review;**

In 2014 the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers was extensively rewritten and extended to ensure that with the increasing speed of change, both external and internal, it was flexible, generic and user-friendly to meet the needs of a modern local authority. The new approach to the Scheme made the scheme more accessible. In addition in order to increase efficiency, decrease bureaucracy and reduce costs, new delegations were added.

The Scheme now represents effective and efficient decision making by officers enabling business to be conducted effectively.

- **the technological advancements in communications and the changing way in which residents accessed information and services;**

Since the last Electoral Review, the Council has invested in 'electronic' government to enable residents to access services of the Council through its

website and to communicate with the Council effectively by email / on line. This form of access has dramatically increased in recent years where residents increasingly 'self-serve' from the website, reducing the need for individuals to approach Councillors directly. Clearly, Members continue to engage with residents in a variety of ways, including e-mail, websites, Member Web Pages and by way of social media. This makes it significantly easier for residents to access information and services than was previously the case. Overall, this greater availability of information has reduced the volume of enquiries received by Councillors.

The Council has a contact centre located at Surrey Heath House in the town centre which local people can phone or visit. The Council has close integration with the Police, Social Care Services, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Job Centre which makes it significantly easier for residents to access information and services than was previously the case.

The Council now conducts paperless meetings and has offered iPads to all Members. 36 out of the 40 used the iPad for all Committee papers and email. This further supports Councillors in their work and streamlines processes.

- **reduction in the committee structure and frequencies of meetings including the way in which the Council fulfils its scrutiny responsibilities;**

The Council, from 2002 to 2012, operated four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, namely Community, Leisure and Environment, External Partnerships and Policy and Audit. In 2012 following a review this was reduced to 3 Scrutiny Committee, Community Services, External Partnerships and Policy and Audit.

A further review in 2014 found that such an arrangement was still leading to confusion, overlap and, in some areas, gaps in the areas of responsibility. It was felt that the workload was such that 2 Scrutiny Committees would provide a more efficient and effective model. As a result the Committees were reduced to 2 with effect from May 2015 namely the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee and the External Partnership Select Committee.

- **the financial position of the Council, and the Country as a whole.**

In proposing a reduction from 40 to 34 Councillors, the Council has recognised the need to make their contribution towards the savings of the Council. This is important not only in itself, but as a positive signal to staff who have already faced reductions and to the public. Considerable savings will be achieved through a reduction in Council size, whilst the level of engagement and representation is maintained.

PART SIX

SUBMISSION

The Council at its meeting on 18 May 2016 resolved that the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to submit, to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, the Council's proposal on a reduction of council size from 40 members to 34 members, based on the following factors:

- (i) the Strong Leader and Executive arrangements introduced since the last review;
- (ii) the extensive Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers extended since the last review;
- (iii) the technological advancements in communications and the changing way in which residents access information and services;
- (iv) reduction in the committee structure and frequencies of meetings including the way in which the Council fulfils its scrutiny responsibilities; and
- (v) the financial position of the Council, and the Country as a whole.

The Council has ruled out the possibility of increasing the Council size and, using the evidence gathered and the experiences of serving and retired Councillors, has proposed the reduction in the Council size by a manageable number.

The Council has concluded that a reduction in the Council size by six would achieve the aims of the review without impacting on its ability to deliver its services or adversely affecting the needs of constituents and Councillors in terms of engagement. Indeed, it is considered that a more streamlined approach to decision making and scrutiny will be achieved, together with a cost saving for the Council.

The Council considers that the proposed reduction to 34 Councillors is correct in the context of the Council's current arrangements, and will also be "future proof". This is because the number 34 has been determined by reference to a Strong Leader structure where the Leader has chosen to delegate responsibility for executive decisions to the Executive. There are therefore no foreseeable circumstances in which an increased number of Councillors could be required. This would not necessarily be the case if the Council was operating a structure under which the Strong Leader had retained responsibility for executive decisions.

Links to further information on the Council's Website

Councillors - <http://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

The Council's Decision-Making Structure -
<http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/council/council-meetings-councillors/decision-making-voting>

Executive Portfolios - <http://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/mgListExecPosts.aspx>

Current Committee Structure –
<http://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers -
<http://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=305&MId=2796&Ver=4&Info=1>

Outside Bodies -
<http://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/mgListOutsideBodies.aspx?bcr=1>

Membership of Committees and Chairman and Vice Chairman
- <http://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b8413/Membership%20of%20Committees%20and%20Appointment%20of%20Chairman%20and%20Vice%20Chairman%2018th-May-2016%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=9>
-