

Nottingham City Council Ward Boundary Review

Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England



Nottingham City Council Conservative Group



1. Introduction

- 1.1. In March 2016 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England began its review of arrangements for elections to Nottingham City Council. The first stage of the review is to determine the size of the council.
- 1.2. This document forms the response of the Conservative Group which currently comprises three out of the fifty-five councillors on Nottingham City Council, alongside the Nottingham City Conservative Federation, representing the three Parliamentary constituencies in Nottingham.
- 1.3. Nottingham City Council is currently represented by 55 councillors elected from 20 wards of which five are two-member and fifteen three-member.
- 1.4. It is the view of the Group that effective and convenient government would be provided by keeping the size of the council at **55 electors**. We will go on to justify this in terms of the criteria laid down by the Commission.
- 1.5. Given the projected growth in Nottingham's electorate up to 2023, the projected councillor:elector ratio for a 55-member council is 3,842.
- 1.6. The present size of Nottingham City Council compares reasonably with other urban councils (including metropolitan and London boroughs) that have approximately both the same population and the same council size:

Council	Population (mid-2015)	Parliamentary electors (Dec 2016)	Ratio of population to electors	Councillors	Average electors per cllr
Enfield	328,433	195,234	1.68	63	3,099
Plymouth	262,712	180,356	1.46	57	3,164
Walsall	276,095	191,066	1.45	60	3,184
Bolton	281,619	193,297	1.46	60	3,222
Lewisham	297,735	176,913	1.68	54	3,276
Stockport	288,733	216,687	1.33	63	3,439
Brighton and Hove	285,276	186,362	1.53	54	3,451
Nottingham	318,901	192,286	1.66	55	3,496
Wakefield	333,759	241,370	1.38	63	3,831
Bromley	324,857	230,366	1.41	60	3,839
Doncaster	304,813	215,105	1.42	55	3,911
Coventry	345,385	215,348	1.60	54	3,988
Stoke-on-Trent	251,648	176,234	1.43	44	4,005
Leicester	342,627	217,838	1.57	54	4,034

2. Background

- 2.1. Nottingham City Council has been a Unitary Authority since 1998. All local authority services within the city are provided through the City Council, either directly or commissioned.
- 2.2. The population of the City in mid-2015, according to the Office of National Statistics' estimate, was 318,901.
- 2.3. The population of the city is growing. Forecast growth of the electorate between 2016 and 2023 is 13% (over 24,000).
- 2.4. The city is an entirely urban area with areas of deprivation.

3. Decision Making Processes

- 3.1. Executive arrangements: The council operates the Strong Leader and Cabinet system of executive governance under the Local Government Act 2000.
- 3.2. The council's constitution places the decision of the size of the Executive Board (the council's cabinet) in the hands of the Leader, subject to the size being between two and nine in addition to the Leader.
- 3.3. The council currently has a Cabinet comprising ten members, the Leader with nine other councillors. The constitution also provides for Executive Assistants to Portfolio Holders, who cannot substitute for Executive Councillors and cannot take part in Executive decision making. There are currently five Executive Assistants.
- 3.4. The Executive Board meets eleven times a year (monthly, except August) and is responsible for taking key decisions and developing the Policy Framework of the Council which is subject to approval by Full Council.
- 3.5. A cabinet of ten members is the maximum in an English local authority, though a large number of other councils do have ten-member cabinets. Most authorities do not however have executive assistants to the Cabinet.
- 3.6. Full Council: The Council holds six scheduled Full Council meetings every year at which all councillors are expected to attend. One of these meetings is the Annual General Meeting. The budget is discussed in the March meeting although other business is also scheduled at that meeting.
- 3.7. Scrutiny arrangements: The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee with fourteen members.
- 3.8. In 2015, two other scrutiny committees were established: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and Health Scrutiny Committee. These scrutiny committees complement the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.9. Other committees: The Council at its 2016 Annual General Meeting appointed members to a number of committees. In addition to the three scrutiny committees and the Executive Board, there are ten committees of the council, the City Centre Forum, eight area committees representing eight separate areas of the city, and members were also appointed to five joint committees containing members from the City Council and members from other neighbouring councils.

	Nottingham City Councillor members
Executive functions:	
Executive Board	10
Scrutiny functions:	
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (includes two Independent members)	14
Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee	9
Health Scrutiny Committee	9
Other committees:	
Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee	11
Audit Committee	9
Corporate Parenting Board	10
Health and Wellbeing Board	4
Health and Wellbeing Board Commissioning Sub Committee	1
Licensing Committee	15
Planning Committee	16
Regulatory and Appeals Committee	13
Standards Committee	8
Trusts and Charities Committee	9
City Centre Forum and Area Committees:	
City Centre Forum	14
Area Committee – A.C.E. (Area Committee East – Dales, Mapperley, St Anns)	9
Area Committee – Arboretum, Dunkirk and Lenton, Radford and Park	7
Area Committee – Area 8 (Clifton North, Clifton South, Bridge)	8
Area Committee – Basford and Bestwood	6
Area Committee – Berridge and Sherwood	6
Area Committee – Bulwell and Bulwell Forest	6
Area Committee – West Area (Aspley, Bilborough, Leen Valley)	8
Area Committee – Wollaton East and Lenton Abbey	5
Joint committees:	
Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Advisory Committee (includes Nottinghamshire County Council members)	5
Joint City and County Health Scrutiny Committee (includes Nottinghamshire County Council members)	8
Joint Committee on Strategic Planning and Transport (includes Nottinghamshire County Council members)	4
Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority (includes Nottinghamshire County Council members)	6
Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel (includes one councillor from each Nottinghamshire authority and two Independent members)	4

3.10. Almost all of the city council's meetings are held during the day. This presents difficulties for members who work during the day. This causes a problem where members have alternative commitments. There is a certain level of absence from meetings which is detailed in the table below.

Table: Attendance at all council meetings held between May 2015 and December 2016:

	Members	Meetings	Present	Absent	%
City Council	55	11	520	85	86.0%
Executive functions					
Executive Board	10	17	130	40	76.5%
Scrutiny functions					
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14	17	183	51	78.2%
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	9	7	41	24	63.1%
Health Scrutiny Committee	9	14	97	36	72.9%
Overview and Scrutiny Call In Panel		6	27	15	64.3%
Total		44	348	126	73.4%
Other functions					
Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee	11	14	111	43	72.1%
Audit Committee	9	9	59	21	73.8%
Commissioning and Procurement Sub-Committee		13	51	36	58.6%
Corporate Parenting Board	10	10	64	33	66.0%
Health and Wellbeing Board	4	10	30	10	75.0%
Health and Wellbeing Board Commissioning Sub Committee	1	12	6	6	50.0%
Licensing Committee	15	4	36	26	58.1%
Planning Committee	16	18	230	58	79.9%
Regulatory and Appeals Committee	13	12	91	70	56.5%
Standards Committee	8	0			
Trust and Charities Committee	9	12	82	26	75.9%
Total		142	1410	454	75.6%
City Centre Forum	14	6	31	35	47.0%
Area committees					
Arboretum, Dunkirk and Lenton, Radford and Park Area Committee	7	7	41	8	83.7%
Area 8 Committee	8	7	52	4	92.9%
Area Committee East (A.C.E) Dales, St Ann's & Mapperley	9	7	48	15	76.2%
Basford and Bestwood Area	6	7	30	12	71.4%

Committee					
Berridge and Sherwood Area Committee	6	7	33	9	78.6%
Bulwell and Bulwell Forest Area Committee	6	7	30	12	71.4%
West Area Committee	8	7	43	13	76.8%
Wollaton and Lenton Abbey Area Committee (Area 7)	5	7	33	2	94.3%
Total		56	310	75	80.5%

- Data drawn from minutes of committee meetings available on the City Council's website

3.11. That these committees are functioning well despite a number of absences indicates to us that retaining 55 members will allow for continued effective government.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1. We are aware of the submission of Nottingham City Council which also advocates 55 councillors. We are minded to the overall thrust of their submission (and the conclusion relating to council size) however we will put forward any further proposals as appropriate during the subsequent stages of the Review.