

Council

25 February 2014

Report of the Chair of the Electoral Review Member Working Group – Council size

Recommendation from the Boundary Review Working Group

That Council approves the submission on Council size in Appendix 1 for onward transmission to the Local Government Boundary Committee for England.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Committee for England (LGBCE) has advised the Council that it will be undertaking a review of the boundaries of the electoral divisions in Warwickshire. An indicative timetable for the review is attached as Appendix 2.
- 1.2 The Leaders Liaison Group established the cross-party Electoral Review Member Working Group (2 Conservative; 2 Labour; 2 Liberal Democrat; 1 Independent/Green) to co-ordinate views and make recommendations to Council on the future overall size of the Council and the proposed pattern of divisions based on that overall size. The membership of the Working Group is Councillor Clarke, Councillor Parsons, Councillor Roberts, Councillor Rolfe, Councillor Roodhouse, Councillor Stevens, Councillor Tandy (Chair).
- 1.3 One of the first issues to be considered by the LGBCE is the overall size of the Council i.e. how many county councillors should represent Warwickshire in the future. The Working Group recommends that Council approves the draft submission attached as Appendix 1 which recommends a Council size of 57.

2.0 Options and Proposal

- 2.1 The LGBCE is undertaking the review as it considers there is a significant imbalance in electoral equality between the current electoral divisions in Warwickshire. The criteria adopted by the Commission to decide whether a review is necessary are
- Any local authority with a division or ward that has an electoral variance in excess of 30%. This means a division or ward having at least 30% more (or less) electors in it than the average for the authority as a whole; and/or

- Any local authority where more than 30% of the divisions or wards have an electoral variance in excess of 10% from the average for that authority.

The aim of the review is to secure better electoral equality and convenient government whilst reflecting community identities. Any changes would be implemented in time for the next elections in May 2017 based on electorate forecasts to 2020. The legislation sets the period for the forecasts.

- 2.2 Population shifts over time have led to around 45% of the current electoral divisions in Warwickshire having an electoral variance of more than 10% from the county average.
- 2.3 There is no set formula for determining the overall size of a Council. The appropriate size depends on the authority's structure, the variety and extent of roles that councillors of the authority are required to undertake in order to deliver effective local government and representation. The submission in Appendix 1 looks at these matters in more detail.

3.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 3.1 Views on Council size should be submitted by the Council to the LGBCE by 5 March 2014 so that the LGBCE can decide on appropriate Council size on 8 April 2014

Background papers

None

**Councillor MRS JUNE TANDY
CHAIR OF THE WORKING GROUP**

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Jane Pollard	[REDACTED]
Head of Service	Greta Needham	[REDACTED]
Strategic Director	David Carter	[REDACTED]
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs Seccombe	[REDACTED]

Electoral Review of Warwickshire County Council

Warwickshire County Council's Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on Council Size

Introduction

This statement sets out the Council's view of the appropriate size for the authority; that is, the appropriate number of councillors to allow local democracy, the council and individual councillors to operate most effectively.

The appropriate size depends on the authority's structure, the variety and extent of roles that councillors of the authority are required to undertake in order to deliver effective local government. This statement provides an account of the authority's structure and councillors roles, and then assesses the implications in terms of Council size.

Background and Context

Warwickshire lies to the south and east of the West Midlands conurbation, and has long established links with Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull in the West Midlands region, but also with the South East. Despite the focus of population within the main towns of the county, a significant part of Warwickshire is rural in nature. Warwickshire lies at the heart of Britain's transport network and several key strategic routes pass through the county.

Warwickshire is a two-tier local authority and comprises five district/borough areas:

- North Warwickshire Borough
- Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough
- Rugby Borough
- Stratford-on-Avon District
- Warwick District

Warwickshire has a mix of very rural areas and growing urban areas. Some electoral divisions can cover large geographical areas and include a large number of parish councils. It is important that electoral divisions remain of a reasonable geographical size to ensure that members in rural areas are able to maintain a meaningful level of local representation and engagement with constituents as well as undertaking effective liaison with parish councils and other community bodies.

The latest population figures from the 2012 mid-year estimates show that Warwickshire is home to 548,000 people. This is an increase of over 1,400 people from the mid-2011 population estimates that were reported by the Office for National Statistics. Looking back at the population of Warwickshire in 2001, there has been an 8.0% increase to the latest mid-2012 estimates. This equates to 40,400 people, an increase larger than the population of Bedworth. Warwickshire's population has been growing for the past four decades with continued immigration from the urban areas of Coventry and Birmingham acting as a key factor behind this trend. However, growth has not been consistent across Warwickshire's five districts. Since 2001, Rugby Borough has seen the largest

increase in population across the county, up 14.4% from 2001 to 2011. The population in Rugby was estimated at 100,100 people in 2011, a growth of almost 13,000 people over the ten year period between the 2001 and 2011 Census. The area with the lowest population change is North Warwickshire Borough, up just 0.3% from 2001.

The population of Warwickshire is projected to reach a total of 591,200 by 2021 – an increase of 44,600 people or 8.2% over the ten year period. Within Warwickshire, Rugby Borough is expected to experience the highest rates of population growth, with an 11.1% increase between 2011 and 2021.

Whilst this review is primarily concerned with forecast increases in voter numbers, general population rises are relevant to councillor workload as councillors represent all those living and working within their communities.

Warwickshire County Council first introduced a new political management structure in 2001 - a Leader and Cabinet System - following extensive local consultation. In June 2009 the Council reinforced this commitment by adopting a Strong Leader model. At the time of the last review 2002-2003 the political management structure of the county included 7 overview and scrutiny committees, 8 policy advisory groups and 5 area committees. On average there were 4.48 seats per councillor on formal member bodies.

However the Council recognizes that it is facing times of austerity and by 2018 will have had to make savings of £150 million since 2009. This can be compared to our base budget of £448 million for the financial year 2014/15. As part of its strategy to meet the challenges posed by the scale of the savings, the Council has over the last 4-5 years taken steps to streamline its internal political management arrangements to ensure that there continues to be a reasonable balance between member time spent on their formal council role and their local role.

The Council has over this period abolished its 5 area committees and enhanced the role of the 30 Locality Forums which operate in partnership with other bodies. These forums meet around four times a year. It has abolished the former 8 policy advisory groups relying instead on a variety of arrangements using overview and scrutiny task and finish groups and more ad hoc member working parties. In addition it has reduced the number of overview and scrutiny committees from 7 to 4. Since the last elections in 2013 the Council has also reduced the number of Cabinet members from 10 (with an additional 5 dedicated support Cabinet members) to a Cabinet of 9 (with 3 dedicated support Cabinet members).

Over the same period the Council has been required to take on new responsibilities for example in relation to public health functions and establish various partnership bodies in particular the following:

- Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Police and Crime Panels
- Local Transport Board

The allocation of new functions continues with for example responsibility for children's public health commissioning transferring to local authorities on 1 October 2015.

Alongside these changes the Council has also reviewed the number of formal appointments it makes to outside bodies resulting in a reduction of some 40 to 50 plus appointments to a more manageable 84 appointments in 2013 (this excludes appointments to school governing bodies).

A simple reduction in the number of internal member bodies does not of course mean that there has been an equivalent diminution in the responsibilities of the remaining bodies.

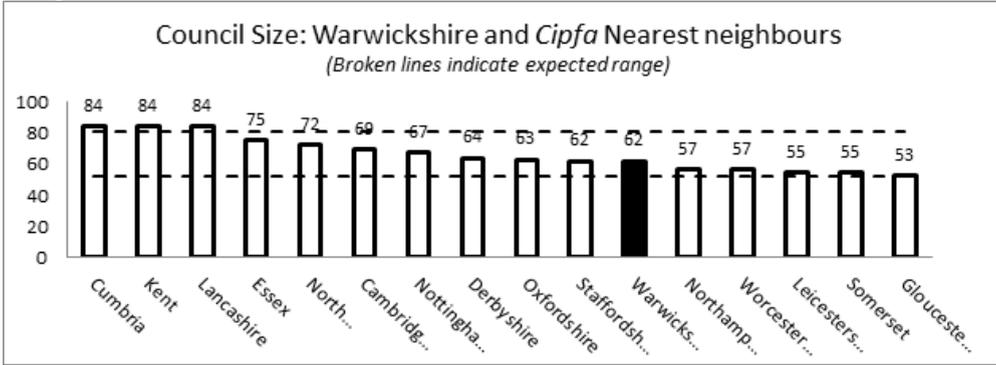
For example the remaining overview and scrutiny committees have had to take on the responsibilities of the previous 7 committees together with any new responsibilities or obligations the Council has been given over the period. New requirements to establish crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committees have had to be combined with other roles within the existing overview and scrutiny committees. Health scrutiny has been combined with adult social care. All overview and scrutiny committees have wide ranging areas of responsibility and challenging work programmes. Limitations have had to be placed on the number of in depth scrutiny reviews that can be supported through task and finish groups, which though involving a smaller number of members can require a commitment of anything between 8 and 20 days to complete depending on the subject matter.

Roles and responsibilities previously carried out by the former Area Committees have been distributed between Cabinet members, Regulatory Committee and Locality Forums.

Having balanced a number of competing factors which are described in more detail in the following paragraphs the Council wishes to propose an overall council size of 57. This represents an 8% reduction in the overall size of the Council and would mean the loss of one councillor in each of the 5 borough/district administrative areas. This would even out the impact of such a change in terms of electoral equality across the county.

The Council considers that reducing the overall size below this figure would adversely impact on the ability of members to fulfill their various roles without imposing unreasonable time investment demands on councillors. It should be remembered that councillors are volunteers and are already juggling many competing priorities between home, work and political life. The Council would be concerned that any further reduction in size would inhibit people coming forward as candidates for future elections and the diversity of those candidates.

An overall council size of 57 would sit within the expected range for our CIPFA Nearest Neighbours.



The forecasts show the following expected changes in the number of electors within each district/borough administrative area by 2020.

District/Borough	2013 Electorate	2020 Electorate	Percentage Change
North Warwickshire	49,984	50,554	1.1%
Nuneaton & Bedworth	96,642	99,661	3.1%
Rugby	76,389	81,146	6.2%
Stratford-on-Avon	97,753	103,976	6.4%
Warwick	103,807	108,095	4.1%
Warwickshire	424,575	443,432	4.4%

Currently each member represents on average 6848 electors based on the present electoral registers provided by the District Councils. A council size of 57 based on the 2020 forecasts would increase the number of electors per councillor to a county average of 7780.

The number of councillors for each district and the average number of electors in each area are set out below. The population shifts and impact on electorate numbers over the period are reflected in the 2020 forecasts.

Administrative Area	Council size 62 No. of councillors	2013 average electors per councillor	Council size 57 No. of councillors	2020 forecast average electors per councillor
North Warwickshire	8	6248	7	7222
Nuneaton and Bedworth	14	6903	13	7666
Rugby	11	6944	10	8114
Stratford on Avon	14	6982	13	7998
Warwick	15	6920	14	7721

The current Political Management Structure

The full Council of 62 members meets six times a year, with extraordinary meetings as necessary. Most Council meetings take the best part of a day to complete their business.

The Cabinet comprises 9 members including the Leader and the Deputy Leader. Individual members hold portfolios and take decisions individually and collectively. The Cabinet Members are publicly and politically accountable for the development and performance of services within their portfolio. Cabinet meets formally every month and there are scheduled dates each month on which individual Cabinet members may take decisions. These are 'on-line' but there is an option to hold the decision in public if

there is particular public/other member interest. The Cabinet also meets informally at least once a month and meets monthly with the Corporate Board. They also meet collectively and as individuals with the cabinet members in authorities with whom partnership work is underway (including Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, and the districts/boroughs within Warwickshire). In some instances these are through formal channels (such as the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and in some it is informal sharing of interests or exploring possible future joint opportunities.

There are four Council overview and scrutiny committees each of which meets six-eight times a year. Each committee has 10 county councillors. The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which undertakes the scrutiny of health services in Warwickshire, also has five co-opted district councillors. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee also has 2 parent governor and 2 church representatives.

These committees monitor the actions of the Cabinet and the other committees and may call them to account. They also undertake wider reviews of policy development and of the performance of services provided for Warwickshire by the Council and other public bodies, either on their own initiative or at the request of the Cabinet. These reviews are either undertaken by select committee or by task and finish groups (usually comprised of 5-6 councillors). Formal role profiles for members in their various roles have been developed and are included in the Council's constitution.

On average Scrutiny meetings last about two and a half hours. Meetings are longer (up to a day) if undertaking reviews using the select committee format. Extra meetings for Task and Finish Groups Reviews are needed between the scheduled Committee meetings. Reading time is needed between meetings. This is for the agenda papers but also for government briefing and consultation papers and related documents, which are circulated to members as and when necessary (e.g. national changes to health services for example). Depending on the subject areas and national changes this reading can be extensive. On average anywhere between 6-10 task and finish groups may be taking place during a municipal year.

There are three committees dealing with regulatory and non-executive functions:

- Regulatory Committee – dealing with development control & planning applications, various licensing and registration matters and public rights of way functions, appointments to outside bodies. This committee meets nine times a year with a membership of 12 councillors. The Council receives between 60-70 planning applications a year.
- Audit and Standards Committee – monitors the risk, control and governance arrangements within the Council and is responsible for promoting high standards of conduct by members and officers. This committee meets six times a year with a membership of six councillors and two co-opted members including the Independent Chair. The Council has combined the responsibilities of 'audit committees' with those of 'standards committees' as part of its approach to streamlining its political management arrangements.

- Staff and Pensions Committee – dealing with the arrangements for the appointment and dismissal of senior staff, associated staffing policies and oversight of the pension fund for employees of the County Council and other participating organisations and authorities. Meets four times a year with a membership of six councillors.

In some cases these committees appoint sub-committees to deal with specific matters such as the pension fund, appointments, dismissals, appeals and other types of hearings. The table below sets out the seats on the main member bodies.

Member Bodies	Seats	Member Bodies	Seats
Council	62	Corporate OSC	10
Cabinet	9	Leaders Liaison Group	6
Audit and Standards Committee	6	Pension Fund Sub-Committee	5
Regulatory Committee	12	Appointments and Appeal Sub-Committees	23
Staff and Pensions Committee	6	Corporate Parenting Panel	6
Adults & Health OSC	10	School Admissions Forum	3
Children & Young People OSC	10	SACRE	5
Communities OSC	10	Health and Wellbeing Board	4
ESPO Management Committee	2	Police and Crime Panel	5
Joint Negotiating Bodies for Teachers and Staff	8	Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Board	2
Adoption and Fostering Panels	2	Coventry and Warwickshire Local Transport Board	2

In total there are 208 seats on the above member bodies which need to be allocated between the current 62 members giving an average of 3.35 seats per member. A reduction in Council size to 57 would increase that ratio to 3.56 seats per member. If the places occupied by Cabinet members are excluded there are approximately 171 seats which must be occupied by non-cabinet members giving a ratio of 3.35 seats for each non-cabinet member on the current council size. This would increase to a ratio of 3.5 seats if the overall council size is reduced to 57 members. Currently around 65% of the county councillors sit on 3 or more member bodies.

The roles of councillors on the above bodies only represent a part of their formal council role. It does not reflect the significant number of other bodies to which the Council appoints formal representatives. Nor does it reflect the additional involvement of members in ad hoc committees, Task and Finish Groups or other internal Working Groups with officers, usually on specific projects or issues such as the Electoral Review Member Working Group.

Roles and Functions of all Councillors

The Council's Constitution is clear about the roles which Warwickshire County Councillors are expected to fulfill:

- represent the people of Warwickshire, the interests of their electoral division and of individual constituents;
- provide community leadership and contribute to the good governance of the area;
- actively encourage community participation and citizen involvement in decision making;
- collectively be the ultimate policy makers and participate in the governance and management of the Council;
- promote and maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics in the conduct of council business.

More detailed role profiles for members in a variety of roles have been developed and these are included in the Council's constitution. These are currently under review following the latest review of member allowances.

Members are expected to take up appropriate training to enable them to carry out their roles. For example the Council ran an induction programme following the elections involving some 15 sessions, each requiring the equivalent of a half day commitment. This programme ran from May to July 2013. Between September and December 2013 a further 13 sessions of similar length were held. Members of Regulatory Committee are expected to gain at least 12 hours of relevant training on planning matters over a 24 month period. Each Regulatory Committee meeting is preceded by 1 hour training sessions to ensure members remain up to date.

Members' Representative Role

In addition to undertaking a variety of roles within the political management structure, all members undertake a significant representative role: representing the authority in its relationships with other bodies, representing their divisions and their constituents.

Leading the community and working with local stakeholders

This has placed an emphasis on partnership working and there are various major partnership bodies operating in Warwickshire on which the Council is represented (and takes a lead role). Representation is through both Cabinet and non-Cabinet members. These include:

- Joint committees and joint working/partnership arrangements (e.g. Health and Wellbeing Board, Police and Crime Panel, Coventry and Warwickshire LEP, community safety partnerships, bilateral meetings with district councils etc.)
- Over 70 outside bodies (involving some 84 seats) ranging from major national and regional bodies to those of a more local nature.
- Youth and community organisations.
- School governing bodies.

Divisional representatives

This is a key role for all councillors, whether in rural or urban areas. Warwickshire has a mix of very rural areas and growing urban areas, some divisions can cover large geographical areas which include a large number of parish councils. All councillors are expected to keep in touch with parish/town councils and community groups within their division. The Council has identified the “attendance by a member in the capacity of county councillor at parish and town council meetings within the relevant member’s division” as an approved duty under the Members’ Allowances Scheme. There are 222 civil parishes in Warwickshire with only the administrative area of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and the town of Rugby being unparished. A total of 40 county councillors cover the parished areas of the county meaning that on average each member is covering @5.5 parishes. This creates pressures on members’ time in travelling and attending parish/town council meetings, community groups and contacting their constituents, particularly in the rural area.

Councillors Workloads

Since the last review in 2002/03 the Political Management arrangements have evolved, taking account of legislative changes and local circumstances. The changes are outlined in more detail above.

During a national survey of councillors (The 2010 National Census of Local Authority Councillors for England), undertaken during October-November 2010, 55% of respondents indicated that on average they spend 10-20 hours a week on their formal council role, with 20% spending between 30-39 hours a week i.e. Cabinet Members, Group Leaders etc. Also 63% of councillors indicated that on average they spend 10-20 hours a week on their local role. This demonstrates overall that over half of the councillors spend between 20 – 40 hours a week on their councillor role. See Annex A for an extract from the national survey results 2010. A further national survey is currently being undertaken, however the results of this survey are unknown at the time of writing.

Consultation with our current county councillors indicates that non- Cabinet members estimate they spend on average 11-12 hours per week (upper range 20-24 hours) on their formal council role and a further 14 -15 hours per week (upper range 20-30 hours) on their local role. Cabinet members estimate they spend an average 30 hours per week on their formal council role and a further 10 hours per week on their local role. This does not include any time spent campaigning. For a large number of councilors the time spent is the equivalent of a full-time job or more.

It should be remembered that councillors are volunteers, many are balancing home life and work commitments with their representative role. A significant number of councillors also hold positions as district/borough councillors. Currently the Council has 32 dual hatted members.

There has been considerable national debate about the ability to attract candidates for local elections. The 2010 National Census of Local Authority Councillors for England showed how many struggle to maintain a reasonable politics/life balance, and that the workload is likely to put good potential candidates with jobs and families off standing for election. The Council believes that reducing the Council size below 57 would be seriously detrimental to its ability to attract candidates in the future and in particular candidates from a broader range of backgrounds to reflect more accurately the diversity

of Warwickshire.

Conclusion

Changes in the local government climate with a greater emphasis on localism and partnership working do have implications for the appropriate council size. So too does the current Cabinet-Scrutiny model, which envisages responsibility for decision-making in fewer hands yet with robust scrutiny. The Council is also mindful of the current financial climate and the need to ensure the cost-effectiveness of its democratic arrangements.

After taking account of Warwickshire's local arrangements for statutory decision-making functions (i.e. Cabinet, Regulatory, Staff and Pensions, Audit and Standards, Committees etc.), the need for robust scrutiny and effective representation and partnership working, the County Council considers that the overall council size should be 57 councillors. This will ensure that the executive and non-executive functions of the Council can be fulfilled, together with the requirements of effective scrutiny and joint working. This also ensures that there is a reasonably sustainable level of representation across the County to meet the expectations of communities/constituents and the business of the Council.

The evidence suggests that a reduction in council size to 57 members would be manageable and enable members to maintain their formal council roles and discharge the council's statutory functions, whilst still ensuring a meaningful level of local representation. Viewing this alongside the evidence that currently councillors are working significant hours in their role, there are therefore significant risks in reducing the council size too drastically. Therefore based on the evidence above the Council proposes a council size of 57.

Date 14 February 2014

Annex A – Extract from 2010 Councillor Survey

Table 6 No. hours/week spent on council and political business (decimalised hours), England 2004–2010

	2004		2006		2008		2010	
<=5	921	4.9	720	3.9	618	3.3	622	3.5
06-10	3460	18.5	3424	18.4	3354	17.8	3013	17.1
11-15	3245	17.4	3141	16.9	2982	15.8	2691	15.3
16-20	3731	20.0	3852	20.7	4025	21.4	3769	21.4
21-25	1937	10.4	1909	10.3	2117	11.2	1906	10.8
26-30	2093	11.2	2356	12.7	2326	12.3	2113	12.0
31-35	704	3.8	675	3.6	742	3.9	842	4.8
36-40	1032	5.5	1147	6.2	1203	6.4	1211	6.9
41-45	336	1.8	263	1.4	342	1.8	313	1.8
46-50	543	2.9	563	3.0	586	3.1	509	2.9
50+	676	3.6	546	2.9	556	2.9	590	3.4
Average no. of hours	22		22		22		23	
Base (respondents)	18678	95.0	18596	94.4	18850	96.1	17579	97.0
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%

Table 7. Distribution of hours/week of how time spent (decimalised hours), England 2006–2010

Fewer councillors were able to accurately provide this detailed information and there is, therefore, a minor discrepancy with the total average calculated.

	2006		2008		2010	
Attendance at council meetings, committees	10		10		10	
Engaging with constituents, surgeries, enquires	7		8		8	
Other, external meetings, seminars, training	6		6		6	
Average	22		22		23	
Base (respondents)	16837	85.5	18143	92.5	17040	94.0
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%

Warwickshire County Council – Provisional Pen Portrait

Introduction

Current Review timescale		
Stage	Date start	Date finished
Preliminary period	September 2013	April 2014
Preliminary meetings with Group Leaders, full Council, parish and town councils and officers	17 December tbc	
Council size LGBCE mtg	8 April 2014	
StagE! 1 consultation start	15 April 2014	23 June 2014
Tour	July 2014	
LGBCE analysis and deliberation	August 2014	
Draft recommendations consultation	9 September 2014	3 November 2014
Tour	November	
LGBCE analysis and deliberation	January 2015	
Final recommendations published	February 2015	