



# Electoral Matters Committee

Mon 18 Oct  
2021  
2.00 pm

Council Chamber  
Redditch Town Hall

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL

*making  
a  
difference*

[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)

**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact  
Jess Bayley-Hill**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
Tel: (01527) 64252 (Ext. 3072)  
e.mail: [jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)**

## ***GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS***

---

**Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Redditch Borough Council will be applying social distancing arrangements for holding face-to-face meetings.**

**Please note that this is a public meeting and is open to the public to attend**

**If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.**

### **GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON**

In advance of the Committee meeting, Members are strongly encouraged to consider taking a lateral flow test, which can be obtained from the NHS website. Should the test be positive for Covid-19 then the Member must not attend the Committee meeting, should provide their apologies to the Democratic Services team and should self-isolate in accordance with national rules.

Members and officers are strongly encouraged to wear face masks during the Electoral Matters Committee meeting, unless exempt. Face masks should only be removed temporarily if the Councillor or officer is speaking or if s/he requires a sip of water and should be reapplied as soon as possible. As Councillors may remove their masks from time to time during the meeting, seating will be placed two metres apart, in line with social distancing measures to protect meeting participants.

Hand sanitiser will be provided for Members to use throughout the meeting.

The meeting venue will be fully ventilated, and Members and officers may need to consider wearing appropriate clothing in order to remain comfortable during proceedings.

### **GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Members of the public will be able to access the meeting if they wish to do so. However, due to social distancing requirements to ensure the safety of participants during the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be limited capacity and members of the public will be allowed access on a first come, first served basis. Members of the public in attendance are strongly encouraged to wear face masks, to use the hand sanitiser that will be provided and will be required to sit in a socially distance manner at the meetings. It should be noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

In line with Government guidelines, any member of the public who has received a positive result in a Covid-19 test on the day of a meeting must not attend in person and must self-isolate in accordance with the national rules.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when the Committee might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items.

# **Electoral Matters**

**Monday, 18th October, 2021**

**2.00 pm**

**Council Chamber Town Hall**

## **Agenda**

### **Membership:**

**Cllrs:**

Matthew Dormer  
(Chair)  
Gemma Monaco  
(Vice-Chair)  
Aled Evans

Andrew Fry  
Mike Rouse

**1.** Apologies for absence and named substitutes

**2.** Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

**3.** Minutes of the Last Meeting (Pages 1 - 4)

**4.** Local Government Boundary Commission for England Preliminary Stage Boundary Review for Redditch - Council Size Submission (Pages 5 - 42)



# Electoral Matters Committee

Tuesday, 22nd October,  
2019

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Mike Rouse (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Michael Chalk, Greg Chance and Bill Hartnett

### Officers:

Melissa Bassett, Sue Hanley and Darren Whitney

### Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

## 9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Members were advised that the Chair was running later. Prior to his arrival the Vice Chair, Councillor Mike Rouse, chaired the meeting.

## 10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Michael Chalk advised that he had suggested that the scout hut located off Feckenham Road should be used as a polling station in Headless Cross. Whilst Councillor Chalk was involved with the Redditch Scouts he confirmed that he did not have a pecuniary interest in the matter.

## 11. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 12. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019

The Electoral Services Manager explained that following the previous meeting of the Committee a consultation exercise had

.....  
Chair

# Electoral Matters Committee

Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019

---

been held in respect of the proposed locations for polling stations and the review of polling districts. Some feedback had been received and this had been recorded in the report for Members' consideration.

No changes were being proposed to polling district boundaries. However, Members were invited to consider feedback in respect of potential locations for polling stations and to determine where these should be situated.

In Church Hill, as requested by Members, Officers had investigated the potential to introduce a temporary polling station in the vicinity of Maismore Close and Jersey Close. Three potential locations had been identified which had been highlighted on a map for Members' consideration. One of these locations was not overlooked by houses and there was additional room available in which a temporary polling station could be installed and parking would be available as it would be on the site of a former playground area. The second site was located on the eastern side of Maismore Close, but had restricted parking options. The third option was again located on Maismore Close but was considered to be less desirable as it was overlooked by houses.

As requested at the previous meeting of the Committee Officers had contacted Abbeywood First School, the current location of the polling station in the area, about the potential for the school to fund a temporary polling station in the area. No response had been received from the school by the date of the meeting.

Members discussed the position in respect of the polling station currently located at Abbeywood First School. Concerns were raised that the school had not responded in relation to funding a temporary polling station and it was noted that this station would therefore cost the Council £1,500 which would be a budget pressure. Furthermore, it was noted that at the previous meeting Members had suggested that the polling station would not move if the school was not prepared to fund the costs of the temporary polling station. However, concerns were also raised about the impact that school closure could have on both students and their parents.

During consideration of this matter Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed that the polling station in Church Hill polling district CHB should continue to be based in Abbeywood First School. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

On being put to the vote the proposal was lost.

# **Electoral Matters Committee**

**Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019**

---

Members subsequently agreed that the polling station at Church Hill polling district CHB should move to a portable polling station in the Jersey Close and Maisemore Close vicinity and that Officers should write again to the school to request that the school cover the costs of the temporary polling station. Officers explained that should the school not agree to provide financial assistance to fund the temporary polling station the costs of this temporary polling station would need to be included as a budget bid in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

In Headless Cross polling district HOA Officers had investigated the potential for a polling station to be based in the scout hut off Feckenham Road. The Council had received confirmation that the scout hut could be used as a polling station. The building had been assessed and appeared suitable and there were sufficient parking spaces available at the venue which could be used by voters. However, the scout hut was not in the relevant polling district, though this did not preclude it from being used as a polling station for the polling district. There would be a small cost implication to moving the polling station from the Vaynor First School to the scout hut but Officers confirmed that this could be covered by existing budgets. Members agreed to move the polling station in Headless Cross polling district HOA from Vaynor First School to the scout hut off Feckenham Road.

The location of the polling station in Lodge Park polling district LPA, which had been located in Oakhill First School at recent elections, had also been reviewed as requested by Members. Lodge Park Social Club had confirmed that the polling station could be accommodated on the premises. The Committee was advised that the financial costs arising from this change could be covered within existing budgets. Members agreed that the polling station at Lodge Park polling district LPA should move from Vaynor First School to Lodge Park Social Club.

Members considered proposals received at the previous meeting to move the polling station for Lodge Park polling district LPC to Harry Taylor House, the polling station venue for Lodge Park polling district LPB. Concerns were raised that by moving the polling station from Beoley Road West Communal Room to Harry Taylor House some voters, particularly elderly people, might struggle to access the polling station. However, it was noted that people could apply for postal votes and that only 70 people out of a possible 400 had voted at Beoley Road West Communal Room during the local elections in 2018. At the end of the debate Members agreed that the polling station in Lodge Park polling district LPC should move from Beoley Road West Communal Room to Harry Taylor House.

# **Electoral Matters Committee**

Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019

---

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the final proposals in respect of Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places be approved, subject to the inclusion of the following changes:
  - a) the polling station at Church Hill polling district CHB should move from Abbeywood First School to a temporary polling station on Jersey Close and Maisemore Close;
  - b) Officers write to Abbeywood First School to request that the school covers the financial costs of the temporary polling station at Church Hill polling district CHB;
  - c) the polling station at Headless Cross HOA should move from Vaynor First School to the scout hut off Feckenham Road;
  - d) the polling station at Lodge Park LPA should move from Oakhill First School to Lodge Park Social Club;
  - e) the polling station at Lodge Park LPC should move from Beoley Road West Communal Room to Harry Taylor House; and
- 2) the decisions of the Committee in respect of recommendation 1 above take effect from the date of poll of any election or referendum held or on publication of the Revised Register of Electors on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 whichever is sooner.

The Meeting commenced at 6.40 pm  
and closed at 7.07 pm



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Electoral Matters Committee    18 October  
2021****Local Government Boundary Commission for England preliminary stage  
Boundary Review for Redditch – Council Size Submission**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Darren Whitney Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Not Applicable
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1.    RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Electoral Matters Committee **RECOMMEND** that:-

- 1) Council put forward the Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England including any amendments made.

**2.    BACKGROUND****3.    FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 None at this stage other than officer time, the cost of the review is borne by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). Any future changes in council size will have a direct impact on the member allowance budget in 2024. The current basic allowance is £4,437.

**4.    LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is a statutory body accountable to Parliament that conducts reviews of local authority electoral arrangements in England. Its statutory obligations are set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## **Electoral Matters Committee    18 October 2021**

---

- 4.2 One of the objectives of the LGBCE is to provide electoral arrangements for English principal local authorities that are fair and deliver electoral equality for voters.

### **5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 As the review will affect the number of Councillors in the future it will have a bearing on all Strategic Purposes. The results of the review will not be implemented until 2024.

### **6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 No direct impact at this stage.

#### **Operational Implications**

- 6.2 Redditch Council has not been reviewed since 2002, and the LGBCE has a policy to review all authorities from time to time. The LGBCE added Redditch to its current review programme after concluding that at 19 years since the last review it was time to revisit the borough. This will also allow the boroughs and districts in Worcestershire to all have a recent review before the next county council review.
- 6.3 The LGBCE will seek to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.
- 6.4 The electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority. These are:
- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council: council size.
  - The names, number and boundaries of wards.
  - The number of councillors to be elected from each ward.

This report only relates to the first bullet point of Council size.

- 6.5 The LGBCE will come to a conclusion on council size after hearing the council's views during the preliminary phase.

## **Electoral Matters Committee    18 October 2021**

---

- 6.6 The draft Council Size Submission is included at Appendix 1 and Committee Members are invited to make any amendments they see fit before recommending the Submission to Council.
- 6.7 In February 2022 the LGBCE will decide on the Council size and will then start a consultation regarding warding patterns.
- 6.8 The LGBCE will publish draft recommendations regarding warding patterns in July 2022. A consultation on the draft recommendations will run from August to October and final recommendations will be made in December 2022.
- 6.9 The legal order will be made in 2023 and be implemented at the 2024 elections.

### **7.    RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The LGBCE makes the decision on council size and any delay in agreeing the Council size document may result in the LGBCE not taking the Council's submission into account.

### **8.    APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1: Draft Council Size Submission

Background papers:

LGBCE – Electoral Review of Redditch

**Electoral Matters Committee    18 October  
2021**

---

**9.    REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services	James Howse Executive Director of Resources	5 October 2021
Legal Services		

# Council Size Submission

Redditch Borough Council – December 2021

## Contents

How to Make a Submission.....	2
About You .....	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only) .....	2
Local Authority Profile .....	9
Council Size .....	11
Other Issues.....	23

## How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

## About You

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

*This will be completed upon final submission and will include details of the decision-making process.*

## Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

## Current size and effectiveness

Following the last Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) which took place in 2002, Redditch Borough Council has 29 councillors across 12 wards serving an electorate of 63,778 as of 01 September 2021. Since then, there has been little change in the governance arrangements for the council with no changes to electoral arrangements during this period. The possibility to moving to all-out elections for Redditch was discussed as part of the considerations moving forward but it is felt that electing councillors by thirds ensures clearer political leadership and accountability.

The council has been met with notable financial challenges in recent years. Whilst more recently finding itself in a more stable place financially due to putting in place a series of measures and recommendations to ensure the stability of the council's finances, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact in Redditch, as it has in all other local authorities nationally. The council is committed to making robust decisions when needed, to balance its finances whilst delivering its core services and ensuring that the needs of its residents are met.



## Views of Councillors regarding their workload

In order to provide a complete picture of the council's current size and effectiveness, a survey of all councillors was conducted electronically in September 2021. The survey was undertaken in order to provide a complete picture of councillor workload. 18 of the 29 councillors responded to the survey providing a response rate of 62%. A full copy of the results is provided in Appendix 1.

To summarise:

- Councillors were asked how they felt about the current number of councillors in Redditch Borough Council. Of the respondents, 89% (16 councillors) felt that the number was about right, 6% (1 councillor) felt it was too few and 6% (1 councillor) felt that it was too many.
- Councillors were asked about how they felt about their current workload as a councillor. Of the respondents, 78% (14 councillors) felt that their workload was about right, 17% (3 councillors) felt their workload was too large and 6% (1 councillor) felt they could take on a larger workload.
- 78% of councillors who responded manage their role as a councillor alongside some form of other employment; with 34% working full time and 22% either employed part-time or self-employed.

## Strategic Purposes

Redditch Borough Council has set out its [Council Plan 2020-2024](#) guided by five strategic purposes. The Council's vision is to enrich the lives and aspirations of residents, businesses and visitors through efficiently run and high-quality services as well as ensuring that all those in need receive help, support and opportunities. The plan sets out the council's priorities for the community which include economic development, housing growth, skills and improved health and wellbeing as well as community safety. It also sets out the organisational priorities of financial stability, sustainability, and the delivery of high-quality services. The council plan has a 'green thread' throughout and highlights additional considerations to ensure the operate operates sustainably with improved energy efficiency. The Council Plan is currently being reviewed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Electoral Ratios at Ward Level

As of July 2021, the data analysed shows three wards which vary by more than 10% from the average for the borough. The Electoral Ratio per councillor in Redditch is 2199.

Ward	No of Councillor	Electorate at 01 July 2021	Electorate Per Councillor	% Variance from the Average (2199)
Abbey	2	4996	2498	12.0
Astwood Bank & Feckenham	2	4758	2379	7.6
Batchley & Brockhill	3	6460	2153	-2.1
Central	2	4480	2240	1.8
Church Hill	3	5881	1960	-12.2
Crabbs Cross	2	4463	2232	1.5
Greenlands	3	6810	2270	3.1
Headless Cross & Oakenshaw	3	6529	2176	-1.0
Lodge Park	2	3803	1902	-15.6
Matchborough	2	4535	2268	3.0
West	2	4866	2433	9.6
Winyates	3	6197	2066	-6.5

As shown above 3 of the 12 wards (Abbey, Church Hill and Lodge Park) are +/- 10% of the average with West ward also very close. A further 2 wards are +/- 5% of the average.

### Future Electorate

Worcestershire County Council's statistics show that there is no population growth expected in Redditch from 2021- 2028<sup>1</sup>. However, there are some large housing developments due to take place between now and 2024 which will have an impact on the electorate of Redditch at a ward level. The biggest sites for housing development are currently in the stage of acquiring planning permission and are outside of the Redditch Borough Council border. Further information on these developments can be found in the Housing Development Data and Electorate Forecast which will be submitted alongside this document.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20044/research/795/population\\_statistics\\_and\\_projections](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20044/research/795/population_statistics_and_projections)

Ward	No of Councillors	Estimated Electorate at 01 July 2028	Electorate Per Councillor	% Variance from the Average (2199)
Abbey	2	5196	2598	15.4
Astwood Bank & Feckenham	2	4758	2379	7.6
Batchley & Brockhill	3	6982	2327	5.5
Central	2	4766	2383	7.7
Church Hill	3	5881	1960	-12.2
Crabbs Cross	2	4463	2232	1.5
Greenlands	3	6898	2299	4.4
Headless Cross & Oakenshaw	3	6529	2176	-1.0
Lodge Park	2	3803	1902	-15.6
Matchborough	2	4535	2268	3.0
West	2	4866	2433	9.6
Winyates	3	6549	2183	-0.7

The table above shows the impact of large developments at a ward level and the change this could bring to the electorate. However, it is generally accepted that there will not be a large variation in the electorate for Redditch as a whole, by 2028. Housing Development was therefore a contributing factor in the decision to either increase or decrease the number of councillors when analysing the effect of the council size at ward level and will become relevant at a ward patterning stage.

## Shared Services

Redditch Borough Council shares its services, including its management team, with Bromsgrove District Council. It is also part of various other sharing arrangements with other councils in Worcestershire. For example, Worcestershire Regulatory Services, North Worcestershire Economic Development Regeneration, and North Worcestershire Building Control.

## Comparison against neighbouring authorities – Electoral Ratio

As part of the council's analysis of its current size, the electoral ratios of neighbouring authorities were reviewed and are given in the below table. It is important to note that both Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils are currently in the process of an electoral review and will be reducing their number of councillors.

Authority	Electorate	Number of Councillors	Electoral Ratio
Bromsgrove District Council	75,335	31	2430
Wyre Forest District Council	77,686	33	2354
Wychavon District Council (Current)	101,805	45	2262
Wychavon District Council (New)	101,805	43	2367
Worcestershire City Council	77,109	35	2203
Malvern Hills District Council (Current)	62,304	38	1639
Malvern Hills District Council (New)	62,304	31	2009

At 2199, Redditch Currently has one of the lower electoral ratios within Worcestershire County.

### Comparison against 'Nearest Neighbours' – Electoral Ratio

The nearest neighbour model is created by the CIPFA and calculates which councils are similar demographically using a wide range of social-economic indicators. The electoral ratios for Redditch's nearest neighbours are below: (Worcester City Council is also one of Redditch's 'nearest neighbours')

Authority	Electorate	Number of Councillors	Electoral Ratio
Tamworth Borough Council	59,517	30	1983
Gloucester City Council	91,739	39	2343
Stevenage Borough Council	71, 526	39	1834
Cannock Chase District Council	76,585	41	1867

Currently, Redditch would be ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> when ranking electoral ratios from highest to lowest.

### Consultation and discussion regarding proposals

*To be completed at final submission. This submission will go to Electoral Matters Committee before being discussed at Full Council. Details of discussions at these meetings will be included in this section of the council size submission.*

## Proposed changes and Impact

Early discussion of the electoral review and council size showed that there was a consistent agreement across all political parties that the council should continue to elect by thirds as opposed to moving to all out elections. Whilst the commission can propose 1,2 or 3 member wards, it is felt that Redditch would operate best with three member wards. With councillors often having other commitments and the age of members lowering over time, it allows for communication with residents, officers and organisations to be shared and adequate coverage of the ward. Having 3 member wards would also allow for a range of skills and expertise which would reflect the diversity of the local population. Many members sit on multiple committees and three member wards would ensure that councillor workload is manageable. The possibilities put forward were therefore options that were divisible by three.

The council considered two possibilities in formulating this submission:

Authority	Electorate	Number of Councillors	Electoral Ratio
<b>Redditch Borough Council (Current)</b>	<b>63,778</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2199</b>
Redditch Borough Council (Proposed 1)	63,778	27	2362
Redditch Borough Council (Proposed 2)	63,778	30	2125

When analysing the electoral ratio for each proposal, it is evident that both options still places Redditch within the electoral ratio ranges in the County and just above that of its nearest neighbours. It was decided that whilst this should be considered that neither proposal had enough of an impact to warrant concern and that a more in-depth analysis of the council's structure (as seen below) would be needed to identify the best council size moving forward.

### **Proposed 1: A decrease of two councillors taking the overall number of councillors for Redditch to 27.**

Councillors in Redditch already currently play an active role in committees, and it is expected that this can be managed with a council size of 27.

This size would enable the 12 existing wards to be re-organised into 9, three member wards. These would allow for a combined approach to engagement with constituents providing for more evenly distributed work for each councillor. In addition, it will ensure that councillors are able to carry out their councillor role alongside other commitments and encourage others to be a councillor.

Technological progress has made communication more effective and streamlined processes for engaging with residents. With the streamlining of communication and no expected population growth, it is felt a council size of 27 will be enough to communicate effectively with residents and represent their interests.

In addition, although not a key driver financial savings would be made by a reduction in the number of councillors.

It is believed that a council size of 27 will achieve the right balance to support the efficient discharge of all necessary functions in accordance with the councils current and future governance arrangements.

## **Proposed 2: Increasing size by one member to 30.**

When analysing the current committee structure of the council there was no obvious need for an additional member.

In the councillor's workload survey, concerns were expressed regarding the costs of an additional member. Whilst it could not be said that an additional member would have a detrimental effect on the council, it was difficult to identify a specific benefit during the process of this review. Balancing this against the financial burden of an additional member, the council doesn't feel that a council of 30 would mean that it is operating at it's most effective.

The issue of an even number of councillors was also raised from a political balance perspective, and it was noted that governance issues could arise if a council were to be evenly politically balanced. This could be an issue within Redditch with a council size of 30 members.

## **Local Authority Profile**

**Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics.** This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

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

Redditch is located in the West Midlands Region and is 15 miles south of the city of Birmingham. It borders Warwickshire County to the east and southeast. It is surrounded by Bromsgrove District to the west and north, Stratford-on-Avon District to the east and southeast and Wychavon District to the southwest. The Borough is situated at the outer edge of the Green Belt boundary for the West Midlands. Redditch offers easy access to the countryside and prominent local areas. It covers an area of approximately 85 square kilometres. Redditch is predominately urban, with 96.9% of the population living in urban areas<sup>2</sup> surrounding the Redditch Town Centre. The remaining 3.1% of the population reside in the small rural part of Redditch within Astwood Bank & Feckenham ward, in the parish of Feckenham (the only parished area in Redditch).

Redditch has a population of 85,165<sup>3</sup>. Currently, 36% are aged under 30 (compared to 37% nationally), 46% aged 30-64 (compared to 45% nationally) and 18% aged 65+ (compared to 18% nationally). These figures are largely in line with the national average. However, Redditch does have one of the younger populations within Worcestershire County. Redditch Borough also has a significant black and ethnic minority population (5.2% of the overall population) compared to other councils within Worcestershire County, as well as a considerable Eastern European community. These groups contribute to the diversity and culture of Redditch.

In Redditch, 85.2% of the population are economically active which is higher than the average across Great Britain. According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Redditch ranked at 107 out of the 317 local authority areas in England<sup>4</sup>, showing that deprivation occurs within Redditch. Average gross weekly pay in Redditch is £460.00, much lower than the average in Great Britain at £587.10<sup>5</sup>. The main industries for employee jobs in Redditch are manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade and health and social care activities<sup>6</sup>. Redditch Borough Council adopted its local plan 2011-2030 in 2017. The plan identifies the need for 6380 additional residential dwellings by 2030. As presented in the local plan, the council has designated several strategic sites in order to achieve the local plan's vision as well as developing cross boundary development zones due to lack of capacity in Redditch (further details are provided in the Housing Development Data pack and shape files). The plan also identifies the need to provide employment land for economic well-being and development as well as maintain Redditch's historic and green environment. There are no neighbourhood plans in place in Redditch.

---

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics Rural Urban Classification (2011) of Lower Layer Super Output Areas in England and Wales. Retrieved from gov.uk website: [2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities and other geographies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264242/2011_Rural-Urban_Classification_of_Local_Authorities_and_other_geographies_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018) Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: Table 2, Retrieved from Office for National Statistics website: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics (ONS) NOMIS Labour Market Profile – Redditch. Table: Earnings by place of residence (2018). Data source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings. Retrieved from NOMIS website: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157195/report.aspx?town=Redditch#tabearn>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid



## Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.**

Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

## Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority.

Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
<b>Governance Model</b>	<div data-bbox="443 794 616 863">Key lines of explanation</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></li> </ul>
	<div data-bbox="488 1182 616 1219">Analysis</div> <p>Redditch Borough Council operates a strong leader cabinet (executive committee) model. There are currently 29 councillors who are elected 'by thirds', meaning a third of the Council members retire each year in rotation. They then have a four-year term of office. The Council currently has 24 Conservative Councillors, 4 Labour Councillors and 1 non-aligned Councillor.</p> <p>All councillors are members of full council which is responsible for appointing the leader, the committees of the council (excluding executive committee). The Council holds around 7/8 meetings per year including annual council and these are well attended. The leader is appointed at the annual meeting of the council and the initial appointment is for a four-year term.</p>



		<p>The executive committee comprises of 9 councillors including the leader and deputy leader. The Leader determines the number of areas of political responsibility or “portfolios” and their allocation to members of the Executive Committee. Currently, of the 9 Cabinet members, 7 hold portfolios. The Leader appoints portfolio holders each year at the Annual Council meeting as well as deciding their remit. Changes can be made to Portfolio Holders and their remits mid-year and any changes would be reported at a meeting of full Council. The Leader has determined that the Executive Committee will take decisions collectively. No individual members of the Executive Committee have delegated powers to take decisions on behalf of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee takes decisions on all matters relating to the functions of the Council except those which –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are reserved to the full Council (such as the Budget and Policy Framework, Members' Allowances and Code of Conduct)</li> <li>• are ones which by law the Executive Committee cannot take (such as deciding Planning applications and Standards matters)</li> <li>• by choice may not and have not been allocated to the Executive Committee. In general terms, it is therefore the Executive Committee which will take the main political decisions in relation to services.</li> </ul> <p>Membership on all other council committees and groups (outside of council and cabinet) is determined once a year at annual council. They may also be reviewed mid-year if there are any changes made to political balance.</p> <p>Under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 Committee meetings were held virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic up to 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Since 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the council has returned to holding committee meetings in person for formal committees. However, this legal requirement does not apply to informal meetings, such as task group meetings and Chairs’ briefings and we are therefore continuing to hold informal meetings with members remotely.</p> <p>At this time, the council is not aware of any further major change in legislation that would give the Executive Committee greater or fewer responsibilities and would justify the need for a review in the size of the Executive Committee. Given the experience of running an executive committee of 9 members, it is felt that this number and the division of portfolio responsibilities enables effective and convenient leadership of the authority and the number of councillors on the Executive Committee provides an option for balanced decision making within the Executive.</p>
--	--	--

Portfolios	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ How many portfolios will there be?</li> <li>➤ What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</li> <li>➤ Will this be a full-time position?</li> <li>➤ Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The number of portfolios is considered appropriate at this time. This is because each Portfolio on the Executive Committee represent subject areas which are aligned with the Council's strategic purposes and the current structure of the council allows for effective management of its services. As stated above the portfolios are kept under constant review and changes can be made at any time and reported at full council.</p> <p>The seven portfolios are as follows:</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships</b> - aligned to run and grow a successful business – covering planning and land use, economic development, commercialism (including local authority trading companies), asset management, key partnerships, grants and the lottery and 5G infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Finance and Enabling</b> – Aligned to Enabling Services covering Finance, Audit, Revenue and Benefits, governance, human resources and customer services.</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Community Services and Regulatory Services</b> – aligned to communities which are safe, well maintained and green and aspiration, work and financial independence – community safety, crime and disorder, safer communities, regulatory services, public transport, children, youth, children's centres, corporate parenting and health, emergency planning and enforcement.</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Environmental Services</b> – aligned to communities which are safe, well maintained and green – covering Licensing impacts, better environment, cleansing and waste management, landscaping including trees, woodland and grounds maintenance, sustainability and bereavement services.</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Leisure</b>– aligned to living independent, active and healthy lives– covering culture and recreation, management of facilities including sports centres, theatres and community centres, parks and open spaces strategy including allotments, playing pitches and play areas, sports, arts, physical activity and development, community training, education, learning and skills and IT.</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Housing and Procurement</b> – aligned to finding somewhere to live - covering Housing Services (delivery and development), procurement and Council contracts.</p> <p><b>Portfolio for Climate Change</b> – covering the green thread that runs throughout the Council Plan. This is an overarching portfolio due to the implications of climate change in a range of service areas.</p>

		<p>Council service areas have been listed under the strategic purposes to which they most directly relate and Portfolio Holders will be responsible for these services. However, each Portfolio Holder works with the other Portfolio Holders to ensure most effective use of resources and achievement of strategic purposes.</p> <p>Decisions are made by the Executive Committee collectively. Portfolio Holders do not have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Committee.</p> <p>The remits of the portfolios and what they consist of is kept under review to ensure alignment with the council's strategic purpose and structures. Many of the councillors assigned a portfolio manage this in conjunction with external employment and have sometimes also been elected as County Councillors or Parish Councillors.</p>
<b>Delegated Responsibilities</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>➤ What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</p> <p>➤ How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</p>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has a well-developed and comprehensive Scheme of Delegation to officers which sets out where the responsibility and extent of delegation lies. The full scheme of delegation can be found in the council's constitution published on its website in line with The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014. This can be viewed <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

### Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
<b>Internal Scrutiny</b>	<p>The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>

Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ How will decision makers be held to account?</li> <li>➤ How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</li> <li>➤ How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</li> <li>➤ How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</li> <li>➤ Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</li> <li>➤ Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</li> </ul>
Analysis	<p>The Council currently has 29 councillors. The 9 councillors who sit on the Executive Committee are exempt from serving on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprises of 9 councillors and can be any councillors who do not sit on the Executive Committee. However, no member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved in. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be a member of a political group not forming part of the ruling administration. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee holds the decision-making body of the Council (the Executive Committee) to account. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee performs five key functions within the Council that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• holding the Executive Committee to account;</li> <li>• reviewing the Council's performance;</li> <li>• conducting policy reviews;</li> <li>• contributing to policy development; and</li> <li>• undertaking external scrutiny of other organisations and partnerships.</li> </ul> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed scrutiny arrangements in 2019 in response to the 'Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities' published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in May 2019. However, Members concluded that their arrangements were already compliant with best practice and therefore no changes were made. There are no further changes proposed at this time. However, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews its performance and the outcomes of the scrutiny process each year by submitting an Overview and Scrutiny Annual report to Council, which is presented by the Chair of the Committee. The latest Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 was considered at the April meeting of Council.</p>

	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to authorise policy reviews and can scrutinise any issue of internal Council procedure as well as issues that are of general interest to the public. The Committee has the option to commission subject reviews from smaller groups of councillors in the form of task groups. The last Task Group commissioned an investigation in respect of Dementia Services in the Borough, which was completed in September 2021.</p> <p>There is also a Performance Scrutiny Working Group, which is a permanent scrutiny working group established to monitor the performance of Council services. In recent years the group has focused on monitoring data provided on the Council’s measures dashboard and has invited officers to provide evidence and answer questions about the performance of services based on the data provided on the dashboard.</p> <p>In addition, there is a budget scrutiny working group. This is a permanent scrutiny working group established to monitor the council’s budgets. In recent years the group has scrutinised financial monitoring reports, proposed fees and charges and proposals from the administration of the medium-term financial plan.</p> <p>The Council has a crime and disorder scrutiny panel which is a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The role of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel is to hold the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to account for the work it delivers in the Borough. This panel meets once per year.</p>	
<b>Statutory Function</b>	This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?	
<b>Planning</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li><li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li></ul>
	Analysis	The Planning Committee consists of 9 members and is politically balanced. Members are appointed at annual council each year and all members are required to undertake compulsory training in order to sit on the Committee. The Chair and the Vice-Chair of

the planning committee, if members of the controlling Party Group, cannot be members of the Executive Committee. The constitution advises that the Leader of the Council and the relevant Portfolio Holder for Planning should not ideally sit on the planning committee. However, there are members of the Executive Committee who sit on the Planning Committee either as main or substitute members.

The Scheme of delegation to council officers means that the majority of planning applications are determined without the need for consideration by the committee. In the last two years, 61 of the 531 applications determined were considered by the planning committee which represents 11%.

In November 2020 the Scheme of Delegations for Development Management, which covers delegations in respect of planning applications, was reviewed and several changes were made.

In 2020 the public speaking rules for the Planning Committee were temporarily amended to enable the public to participate in meetings virtually or to have written statements read out on their behalf. In May 2021 the rules were permanently updated to enable the public to speak at meetings in person, remotely (via Teams) or to have a written statement read out on their behalf. As the scheme of delegations was reviewed in 2020, there are no further changes anticipated at this time.

The planning committee meets at least once per month and most meetings are limited to around 4-6 applications for consideration due to time restraints. A reserve meeting is scheduled for each month should it be needed for any additional application which need consideration or for a 'special meeting'. There is only a single, council wide planning committee. Redditch does not have any area planning committees and there are no plans to do so.

Special meetings are scheduled to consider any particularly large or controversial planning applications, or applications that would attract significant public interest. The actual time spent considering applications varies depending on the number of public speakers and objections etc. Most applications which reach planning committee take around 30 minutes to be considered. However, smaller more straightforward ones can take around 10-15 minutes.

		<p>The time commitment for councillors who are on the planning committee is considerable. As well as attending the meetings themselves, time is also taken by members of the committee to review reports prior to meetings and carry out site visits when required.</p>
<b>Licensing</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has one overarching licensing committee which is politically balanced and comprises of 11 members. The Committee meets approximately three times a year. The primary role of the Licensing Committee is to provide a pool of Councillors to sit on Sub-Committees that consider licensing applications and conduct hearings relating to taxi licensing and related matters.</p> <p>The Licensing Sub-Committee A for matters within the scope of the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005 (i.e. premises licenses, personal licenses, reviews of existing licenses and so forth) are established on an ad hoc basis and comprise three Councillors.</p> <p>The Licensing Sub-Committee B (Taxis) comprises three councillors and 1 reserve member and meets monthly. Only those Councillors who have undertaken appropriate training may sit on the Licensing Sub-Committee.</p> <p>In the last 12 months many of the licensing committee meetings have been cancelled in light of government restrictions. However, licensing sub-committee meetings have resumed since October 2021. Prior to this there was a temporary delegation in place for officers to make decisions on taxi licensing applications during the covid-19 pandemic</p>



<b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require?</li> <li>➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</li> </ul>
	Analysis	Redditch is one of the partners in the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board. The board has provision to operate and manage shared services.
<b>External Partnerships</b>	Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.	
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</li> <li>➤ How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</li> <li>➤ What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</li> </ul>	
Analysis	<p>Council Members are appointed to many external organisations, including partnerships, as ‘Outside Bodies’. Member appointments to outside bodies are agreed at a meeting of full Council, usually the Annual Council meeting held in May. Where Members are appointed to an external partnership’s Committee, they can participate in the decision-making process of those committees on behalf of the Council. In some cases, the partnership Committee may not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of partner authorities and would instead make recommendations back to the Council.</p> <p>The number of Councillors appointed to each partnership varies according to the requirements of each outside body and the number of Committees relating to that partnership. The number of Councillors in general appointed to external partnership bodies is quite significant and the workload varies between the different partnerships and the roles of their varying Committees.</p> <p>A significant number of outside body appointments, including to partnerships, involve Portfolio Holders acting in an ex officio capacity, or as a result of their status as Portfolio Holders. This may be because there is a requirement in the partner authority’s constitution/terms of reference for the relevant Portfolio Holder to be appointed. In addition, sometimes Members are appointed to an external body because the work of that partnership relates to their portfolio, though it is not a requirement of that body.</p> <p>A full list of the external partnerships and bodies can be found in Appendix 1. The council has a significant membership of external bodies and recognises that this is a significant aspect of the role of councillor in Redditch Borough Council.</p>	



--	--

## Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>There are a range of options available to Members in terms of liaising with the residents living in their wards and a lot of this would come down to personal choice as well as the direction of their political groups.</p> <p>All Members attend full Council meetings, and some are appointed to committee meetings at which they are effectively representing their electors as well as acting on behalf of their groups.</p>

		<p>Most Councillors carry out casework but the amount of casework they undertake on behalf of residents and the way they approach this varies according to their personal preferences. The need to be able to communicate with residents in a variety of ways has become more prevalent during the pandemic and taking a less prescriptive approach has assisted with access to Councillors for residents.</p> <p>Some members may also represent their wards on particular outside bodies, to which they may be appointed by Council, in cases where the work of that outside body has implications for their wards.</p> <p>In addition, there can be occasions where Members may choose to represent their ward/residents at particular Committee meetings. For example, the Council's Planning Procedure Rules in the constitution make provision for ward Councillors to register to speak at Planning Committee meetings on planning applications for developments in their wards.</p> <p>The council does not have any area committees. However, there may be area committees which councillors attend hosted by other organisations such as the PACT meetings (Police and Communities Together) in some wards, but these meetings are organised by the Police and not the council.</p> <p>The way in which councillors engage with residents is not prescribed by the council and varies between Councillors depending on their personal preferences. Some prefer to engage with residents via email or on the phone. Others hold regular surgeries in their wards or may maintain their own written communications in some other form.</p> <p>There is no formal requirement from the Council for Councillors to attend community meetings or residents' association meetings. However, Members often choose to attend such meetings in order to have contact with their residents. They would organise this independently from the Council.</p> <p>There is only one Parish Council in the Borough, Feckenham Parish Council. Whilst there is no formal requirement from the Council for the two ward Councillors for Astwood Bank and Feckenham ward to attend meetings of the Parish Council they often choose to do so. There is also a Redditch Community Forum which councillors are invited to attend.</p> <p>The Council engages with its one Parish Council and invites Parish Councillors to attend Member training and offering a co-optee position on the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee so that they have a chance to speak on changes to the Code of Conduct. The council accepts that there have been some challenges in terms of encouraging the Parish Councillors to participate in these processes. It would be</p>
--	--	---

		helpful to the decision making process to achieve a position where Parish Councillors engage more in these areas moving forward.
<b>Casework</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The council does not have a formal casework management system. If Councillors are unable to resolve the query directly then they are able to contact a link officer at the council or key people in other agencies (the council provides a list of key contacts within partner agencies). Members are responsible for undertaking their own casework. There are no political assistants in Redditch and Democratic Services do not help Members with their casework. However, any officer who is approached for advice about an issue, such as who the lead officer might be for a particular service area or for clarification on a particular area of legislation, would try to provide the information requested.</p> <p>Members are offered Council IT equipment (though can opt to use their own device) and are provided with a Council email address. In Redditch, Members are also provided with the opportunity to apply to receive a Council phone to use for Council business. Members can apply for stationery (business cards and headed paper) from the Council to help them undertake their work.</p> <p>The political groups are provided with group rooms in the Town Hall, which they can use as premises to host meetings with groups or individuals. (Group rooms are only provided to political groups of 2 or more Councillors so there is currently one non-aligned councillor who does not have access to a group room).</p> <p>All Members receive at least a basic allowance of £4,437 per annum which they can use to cover expenses incurred in the course of their Council work. Those Members who are appointed to particular positions, such as Chairs of Committees, may also be eligible to receive additional Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) on top of the basic allowance, which varies in value according to the role of the Member.</p> <p>Members can claim travel expenses for attending Committee meetings and meetings with officers organised by the Officers, though this does not cover expenses for ward work.</p>

Over the last 18 months computer technology has revolutionised the way that committee meetings have been held. Under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 councils were able to hold committee meetings virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic up to 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Since 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, councils were legally required to return to holding Committee meetings in person for formal Committees where the meetings would usually be held in public. However, this legal requirement does not apply to informal meetings, such as task group meetings and Chairs' Briefings and we are therefore continuing to hold informal meetings with Members remotely. Consequently, the skills members (and officers) have built up over the last 18 months in terms of participating in virtual meetings have changed the way the Members participate in a lot of informal council business. Technology, particularly in light of the pandemic has had much influence on the way in which councillor's work.

As part of the council workload survey, councillors were asked how they feel technology has influenced the way in which they work and interact with the electorate. Many respondents said that it has helped streamline communication and provide a range of different opportunities and ways to connect with their constituents. The use of virtual meetings has also helped councillors communicate with officers and organisations in an easier and more accessible way. Whilst many of the implications of technology were positive it was also noted that it can raise the expectations on councillors from their constituents in regards to their availability to communicate.

### Other Issues

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

### Rubicon Leisure

Rubicon Leisure Limited is Redditch Borough Council's LATC. The leisure company runs some of Redditch's leisure services such as the Redditch Palace Theatre, the Abbey Stadium, Pitcheroak Golf Course, Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey, as well as some of the town's community centres.

Rubicon Leisure delivers its services in line with the council's strategic purposes, underpinned by a set of service specifications designed by the council. It is required to conduct most of its business on behalf of the council, and it has some room to provide extra services.

Its business plan is approved by the council each year. It is governed by a board of directors including four non-executive directors and councillors are appointed by the borough council as sole shareholders to the Shareholders Committee to influence its strategic direction.

## Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

The Council is recommending a decrease of two councillors taking the overall number of councillors for Redditch to 27.

The council feels that 27 councillors is enough to provide a strong council in terms of Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership.

The Councils case for this decrease in size is as follows:

- 1) This would enable the 12 existing wards to be re-organised into 9, three member wards. Three of the current wards are at -5% or below the electoral ratio for the borough
- 2) Options are available under the Constitution to review numbers sitting on the Executive Committee and still maintain the same number of portfolio holders. It would also enable the appropriate number of councillors to sit on the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit, Governance and Standards Committees.
- 3) Councillors in Redditch currently play an active role in committees, and it is expected that this can be managed with a council size of 27 when analysing the number of seats.
- 4) This would allow for some financial saving in comparison to an increase in council size. Whilst this is not a key driver for change, it contributes to the efficient running of the council.
- 5) Three member wards would allow for a combined approach to engagement with constituents providing for more evenly distributed work. This would ensure that councillors are able to carry out their role as councillor alongside other commitments and encourage a wide range of councillors.

- 6) There is no population growth projected in Redditch and therefore no clear need for additional members. Technological progress has made communication more effective and streamlined processes for engaging with residents. With the streamlining of communication and no expected growth, the council feels that 27 will be enough to communicate effectively with residents.

With this decrease the council believes it will achieve the right balance to support the efficient discharge of all necessary functions in accordance with the councils current and future governance arrangements. Further information on the analysis of the council size proposal can be found in the Context section of this submission.

#### Appendix 1 – List of External Partnerships and Outside Bodies

Organisation	Appointment Requirements
Local Government Association	1 Representative (usually Leader) must be a Councillor Term : 1 year No liability issues identified.
West Mercia Police and Crime Panel	1 representative (Relevant Portfolio Holder) and 1 substitute Term: 1 year No liability issues identified
Assembly of the District Councils' Network	1 Nomination To represent the Council on the Assembly of this body which is a voice for District Councils within the Local Government Association. The Assembly of the DCN comprises the Leaders of the Member Authorities or equivalent. Term : 1 year No liability issues identified.

Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) <b>[Also referred to as the LEP Board]</b>	1 (plus 1 Substitute) representing the 3 North Worcestershire District Councils.
GBSLEP – Joint Committee (Local Supervisory Board)	1 Member (Leader) from each constituent Authority plus substitute
GBSLEP - Local Enterprise Partnership - EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy Committee (ESIF)	1 Representative and 1 Substitute from the three North Worcestershire Districts.
Worcestershire Local Transport Board (WLTB)	2 representatives from North Worcestershire Councils plus one substitute. 2 representatives not to be drawn from the Council supplying the “main” representative on Worcestershire LEP
Corporate Parenting Board (Worcestershire County Council)	1 RBC Representative (elected) <u>Must be relevant Portfolio Holder</u> Until next RBC Annual Meeting. (Monthly meetings – approx. 2 hrs each time – generally Friday mornings – 9.30a.m. start) No liability issues identified.
Redditch Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership)	1 Member Representative Leader Term : 1 year No liability issues identified.
Redditch Partnership Business Leaders Group  (formerly an Economic Theme Group)	Following changes this group is now operating under a new title and promoting greater links with local business leaders. For 2020/21 representatives required, by office: Leader Economic Development Portfolio Holder
Redditch BID Limited (Company number 11964088)	1 RBC Representative to act as a Director of the company  Term: to be confirmed  No liability issues identified

North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership	1 representative and one named substitute Term: 1 year Terms of Reference indicate the representative should be the relevant Portfolio Holder. Each district Council has a place on the Partnership Board as an Invitee to Participate. No liability issues identified.
Waste Management Board (Lead Officer – Guy Revans)	1 representative Representative must be a Councillor and relevant Portfolio Holder Term : 1 year <u>Note: Meets Friday mornings</u> - 4 times per year No liability issues identified
Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board	1 representative and 1 substitute from North Worcestershire Councils
Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership	1 representative on behalf of the 3 North Worcestershire authorities  Plus substitute(s)
Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership - European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy Committee (ESIF)	1 representative from the North Worcestershire Councils and 1 substitute
Health Improvement Group	1 RBC Representative (Elected) Relevant Portfolio
West Midlands Combined Authority Board	1 nomination and one substitute Leader by office
West Midlands Combined Authority Housing and Land Delivery Board	1 RBC Representative (Elected) Relevant Portfolio <u>Must be relevant Portfolio Holder (function to include Housing and/or Land Use</u>
West Midlands Combined Authority Audit Committee	1 nomination and one substitute Must be members of the majority group



West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1 nomination and one substitute Must be members of the majority group and ideally members of O&S
Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) – Joint Scrutiny Board	1 representative and 1 substitute Term: 1 year
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Worcestershire County Council)	1 representative <b>(Must be a member of Redditch Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee).</b> Term: 1 year. Comprises 8 County Councillors and 6 District Councillors who scrutinise the local NHS and are consulted by the NHS on any proposed substantial changes to local health services.
Redditch Highways & Transportation Forum Members Discussion Group (Worcestershire County Council)	Up to 2 Representatives (Must be Councillors) Term: To RBC AGM Role is that of non-voting observers only. No liability issues identified.
Worcestershire Local Access Forum (Worcestershire County Council)	1 nomination from north Worcestershire District Councils (must be a Councillor) Term : 1 year ( <u>Note</u> : Would be beneficial if the representative had a keen interest in countryside access and recreation issues.) No liability issues identified.
Redditch Eastern Gateway Steering Group (Contact Officer Simon Jones)	1 Representative to be a ward member for Winyates Ward Term : 1 year Group of local stakeholders set up by Stratford on Avon District Council to consider proposals regarding the Eastern Gateway Development as to reserved matters and routing strategy/survey. No liability issues identified.
PATROL Traffic Penalty Tribunal (Civil Parking Enforcement)	1 Representative plus 1 Deputy (must be Councillors) Term: AGM to AGM No liabilities identified / unlikely to be any liabilities.

'Where Next' Association	<p>2 Representative must be Councillors – 2 <i>places variation previously agreed</i> Term: 1 year to Council's AGM Nature of representation: to represent the Borough Council. Liability appears to be limited.</p>
Eadie Mews Trust	<p>1 representative. Term: 4 years (current term of office expiring in May 2021) This organisation is registered as a charity and governed in accordance with the Charity Commission Scheme.</p>
Tardebigge Relief in Need and Sickness Charities	<p>2 representatives. One new appointment is required to replace the vacancy left by the late Cllr Pattie Smith Term: 4 years</p> <p>This organisation is registered as a charity and governed in accordance with the Charity Commission Scheme.</p>

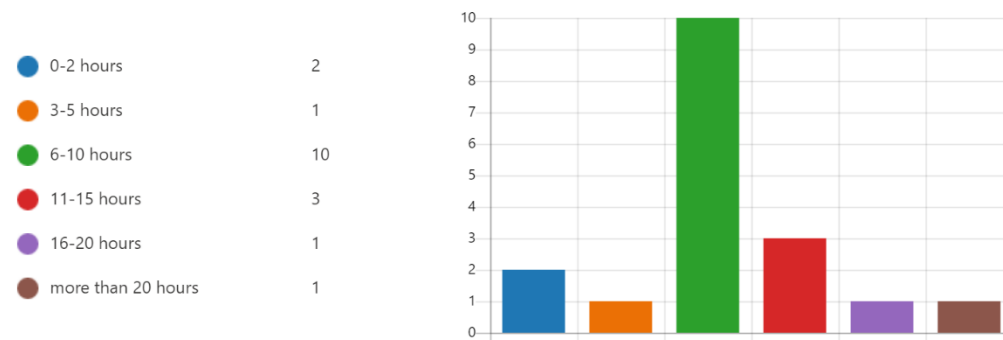
## Appendix 2 – Summary of Councillor Survey Results

### Survey of Councillors

18 of the 29 Councillors responded to a recent workload survey. An overview of the results follows:

1. How many hours per **month** do you spend at official Council meetings (such as scrutiny and planning meetings)?
2. How many hours per **month** do you spend reading reports and preparing for official Council meetings (such as scrutiny and planning meetings)?

[More Details](#)

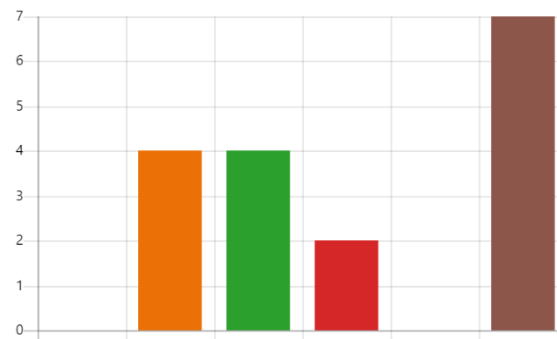


4. How many hours per **month** do you spend communicating with residents? (this could be via telephone, email or in person)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

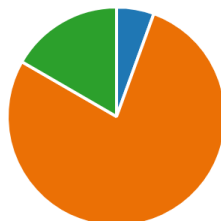
0-2 hours	0
3-5 hours	4
6-10 hours	4
11-15 hours	2
16-20 hours	0
more than 20 hours	7



7. Which statement best describes the way you feel about your current workload as a councillor?

[More Details](#)

I could take on a bigger workload	1
I feel my workload is about right	14
I feel my workload is too large	3



8. Do you feel that the number of councillors in Redditch Borough Council is:

[More Details](#)

too few	1
about right	16
too many	1

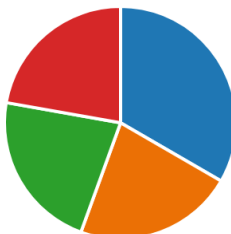


10. What is your employment status (outside of your role as a councillor)?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

working full time	6
working part time	4
retired or not working	4
self employed	4



Other relevant comments:

The Council can't financially afford to have more councillors.

I feel that the way it's structured is fine at present. New housing developments will add to certain wards, potentially creating more workload, which I think most of us will have capacity to buffer.

Three councillors to a ward for Borough matters is too much. Add to this the County Council and you've got 5 Councillors active in one ward across two

councils. It's too much. Redditch Borough Council does not need to be as large as it currently is and could operate effectively with 1-2 members per ward.
Politically, I would say the numbers are satisfactory.
I think the amount of Councillors should be increased by two because the population in Redditch is increasing all over the town.
I think you could have less councillors if they were able to give more hours - however this might result in people of working age or with young families not coming forward.
My worry if it is decided to reduce the number of councillors in Redditch is that the role of councillor will require almost full-time effort. We are supposed to be volunteers (agreed, we receive a modest allowance) and capable of pursuing careers, if still of working age. At least having 29 councillors spreads the load a bit, from the frustration perspective
The current size is adequate for both official functions like meeting but also being present in the ward.