The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

Council Size Submission: Template

Cheltenham Borough Council

Contents

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.

By law, the LGBCE have to take account of three main considerations when conducting an electoral review as set out in Schedule 2 of the Act:

• Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents

• Reflect community identity

• Provide for effective and convenient local government

Electoral reviews are initiated primarily to improve electoral equality. This means ensuring as far as is reasonable, that for any principal authority the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral ward or division is approximately the same. Under the criteria adopted by the LGBCE, there are two conditions considered to warrant a review, if the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period:

• Any local authority with an electoral division or ward that has an electoral variance of 30% or over. This means a division or ward having 30% more or fewer electors per councillor than in average for the council as a whole, and;

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

Cheltenham Borough Council:

This is a submission made by Cheltenham Borough Council and was approved at a full meeting of the Council on 21st March 2022. The proposal received (TBC after Council meeting) support.

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 if its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

The commission has identified CBC as requiring an electoral review as we have not had a review since 2000/01 and there are some distinct variations in our wards.

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?

Background

The council has 40 councillors across 20 wards which in pairs align to the 10 county council electoral divisions. Elections are held every two years with one seat in each ward up for election. These arrangements have been in place since 2002.

The council has in the past considered whether it would wish to move to four yearly elections but this has been dismissed following workshops with members.

In a recent Member survey carried out in March 2022 to support this electoral review, 69% of respondents thought that 40 Councillors is the appropriate number for the borough.

The council has a cabinet system and is currently Liberal Democrat controlled.
- Liberal Democrats – 30 (group leader Cllr. Rowena Hay)
- Conservatives - 7 (group leader Cllr. Tim Harman)
- People against Bureaucracy – 2 (group leader Cllr. John Payne)
- Non-aligned - 1

The Council has a civic mayor that is selected on an annual basis. The current mayor is Cllr. Steve Harvey and the Deputy Mayor is Cllr. Sandra Holliday.

There are two MPs for the borough. Alex Chalk is the Conservative MP covering most of the borough and Lawrence Robertson who is the Conservative MP covering two wards to the north of the borough, Prestbury and Swindon Village, the main part of his constituency being Tewkesbury.

LGA peer challenge 2018

In terms of reviews of our effectiveness, the council participated in a LGA peer challenge in 2018.

https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/19/corporate_priorities_and_performance/1431/lga_peer_review_2018

The key messages from the review were as follows:
- The Council is performing at a high level with great ambition
- CBC is moving into a new phase: defined by new approaches to modernisation, customer access, finance and partnership working

- Growth – The Golden Valley Development (Cyber Park) at west Cheltenham and proposed development at north west Cheltenham are game changers. It is critically important to ensure benefits are achieved for all parts of the community
- Need to gain more benefit from partners and contracted services – clarify what you expect
- Match your resource and capacity to your ambition

In terms of feedback on our governance arrangements, the peer review team concluded:

As part of the revised organisational structure it would be beneficial to review member portfolios and senior officer roles to provide dedicated political and managerial leads in relation to key priorities, for example on the Golden Valley Development (Cyber Park) and deprivation. It will also be important to develop a stronger awareness of the distinctive roles and responsibilities of officers and members. In addition, reviewing the role of backbenchers could add political capacity.

Agreed actions from the Peer Challenge:
1. The need to strengthen the role of backbenchers through recruiting champions for particular areas of work and building an understanding of their skills and professional knowledge.
   Update: The council has six member champions appointed for the following topics that are of great interest to member; Cycling and Walking, Safeguarding, Mental Health and Armed Forces

2. The role of scrutiny needs strengthening
   Update: In 2019, the committee commissioned Campbell Tickell to assess the current arrangements and ways of working in the context of the Statutory Guidance and make recommendations about how the committee could be more effective and how resources could be better focussed or increased. Campbell Tickell presented initial findings in January 2020 before submitting their final report, including a range of recommendations, in February 2020. The committee accepted the recommendations and established a task group to devise an action plan in response to the recommendations.

3. Cabinet member portfolios
   Update: The Cabinet was increased from 7 Members to 9 in February 2020 to provide specific leads to support the growing environmental / climate change agenda and the economic development / growth agenda. These two new portfolios are generating considerable additional workloads and are of growing local and national importance.

Covid response:
The council has just been through the sternest test of its governance arrangements as a result of its response to the pandemic. The attached report notes how well the council coped

https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s39041/2022_01_17_OS_covid%20response.pdf

Support for our communities
At the height of the pandemic, to ensure the most vulnerable were supported, we rapidly established a community 'help-hub', working with Gloucestershire County Council, supported by Cheltenham Borough Homes and The Cheltenham Trust (TCT). We re-deployed 25 staff to support hundreds of vulnerable residents to ensure they had the essentials of food, their prescriptions, as well as to hear a friendly voice. With TCT, we established an additional innovative food service to provide more support to local people:
 https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/news/article/2394/

With our well-established community connections and councillor insight, we quickly gathered intelligence from across the town, swiftly realising that local food banks were struggling to meet demand. Therefore, the Mayor's Foodbank fund was established and raised thousands of pounds - https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/news/article/2415/

November 2020: Local Government Association (LGA) – Renewal & Recovery Review:
To assess our Covid response, we took part in a LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel with the Deputy Leader and CEO of Exeter City Council, looking at our emergency response and identifying ways to improve our recovery efforts; snapshots include:
- "External stakeholders in particular, value the Council's ability to adapt at pace to meet the needs of residents and businesses in a dynamic and complex environment"
- "CBC was one of, if not the first council to publish a Recovery Strategy. That early publication and consultation enabled the council to clearly signal recovery aims and objectives, which in turn informed the thinking and work of others including Gloucestershire County Council"
- "Both internally and externally the enhanced communications put in place by the council are recognised and hugely valued as transparent and timely, in particular the council's social media channel has helped to maintain visibility for the council and keep people informed"

June 2021: Internal Audit Finding: Response to Covid-19:
In 2021, SWAP Audit Services undertook an audit on the following areas to provide assurance that the response to COVID-19 was robust and responsive to the needs of staff and customers, and in line with national Government guidelines:
- ICT: equipment, Data Protection considerations and arrangements to allow staff to work from home
- H&S of staff: arrangements allowing staff to safely WFH
- Key service delivery: arrangements in place to ensure customer access to previous face-to-face services
- Staff wellbeing arrangements
- Community response

- Emergency response and liaison with appropriate agencies
- Emergency decision-making arrangements

Assurance Opinion: "A sound system of governance, risk management and control exist, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited"

The council can be rightly proud of how it coped with the pandemic, not only in the way it kept its governance structures and services running but also how well it supported local communities and businesses deal with the impact of the pandemic.

Other areas of context
Elected members who took part in the working group also wished for two other issues to be considered as part of the context for our electoral review:

The drive for a more diverse and representative set of councillors:
Our elected members have noted that with any proposed decrease in their numbers would see a rise in the workloads – already 92% of our councillors are spending over 15 hours a week on council business. And almost a quarter feel that time spent on council business is unmanageable. They feel that increased workloads would deter younger people of working age from becoming councillors. Therefore our elected members have a strong desire to not reduce the number of councillors so that workloads do not deter working age people from becoming councillors.

Community needs
Our elected members have noted just how much time they are spending dealing with community needs within their wards. From the member survey, nearly three quarters of members are spending 20% of their time on community issues, with a quarter spending over half their time on community issues. The pandemic illustrated just how important all of our members are in supporting their communities – and community needs remain high across the borough with many of our residents facing challenges with fuel, food and transport costs all impacting on household budgets.

Elected members also noted that in more deprived wards – there are particular needs and issues that require particular attention and time. Being aware that Cheltenham has the greatest extremes between our most deprived communities and our least deprived communities in the county, our Overview and Scrutiny committee has agreed to set up a specific scrutiny task group that will review whether CBC's policies and service delivery are targeted at working with communities to help them address the causal factors of multiple deprivation that it can influence and it should be working with other stakeholders to ensure that their efforts are similarly targeted

https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s39542/2022_02_28_OS_tackling%20deprivation_presentation.pdf

Elected members were concerned that any proposed decrease in their numbers would lead to a loss in the connection between ward councillors and their ability to properly understand and support the community that they represent.

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?

From its humble medieval origins to today's buzzing borough of 116,043 people (2020 mid-year estimate), Cheltenham is a place that has thrived through centuries of change. It is a place we are proud of and passionate about, and as a council we are committed to helping it grow and prosper in years to come.

Although a predominantly urban authority we have five parish councils which cover the villages which historically were outside of the town itself – Charlton Kings, Swindon Village, Prestbury, Up Hatherley and Leckhampton with Warden Hill.

We know that Cheltenham is about to enter a period of significant change; Our Joint Core Strategy, approved in December 2017 and developed over a number of years with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Gloucester City Council, sets the reality of the growth challenge for the area up to 2031

Of particular note is our commitment to the Golden Valley development – a 200-hectare development that straddles the boundary of Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough which will be a world-class, multi-use development with 3,700 homes and the UK's first cyber focused campus, Cyber Central. This will complement other developments which will see a potential 10,917 new homes built over the lifespan of the JCS.

So for Cheltenham, we are not only entering a decade of growth we are also on the cusp of a development opportunity that comes but once in a lifetime for a local authority of Cheltenham's size and one which will, when achieved, truly act as game-changer not just for Cheltenham but its wider economic and social hinterland.

Harnessing the opportunity for growth in its wider context is therefore absolutely critical for our town's future success and if we want to deliver our vision of Cheltenham being a town in which everyone thrives, we need to recognise the challenges our town faces and take action.

Cheltenham has some of the wealthiest areas in the UK, and yet two areas fall within the nation's 10% most deprived and 6 within the 20% most deprived. We also know that child poverty is an issue in Cheltenham; once housing costs are factored in; there are four wards where over 30% of children are growing up in poverty. Supporting all our young people and attracting and retaining incoming young people is absolutely critical. Forecasts tell us that by 2029 there will be proportionately fewer under 18s than over 65s living in Cheltenham. This is partly due to the high cost of housing and the lack of affordable, quality rented accommodation on secure tenancies, as well as access to jobs. In recognition of the fact that Cheltenham needs housing that is affordable, accessible and brings about security of tenure to support the growth in employment, the council is preparing a review of options for a step-change in the pace of the delivery of housing (including housing that is affordable).

CBC Councillors

Elections are held every two years. The Council does not play an overly active role in attracting new Councillors but does offer information via its website on standing as a candidate.

There have been no instances where the Council has been unable to discharge its duties due to a lack of Councillors.

The Council provides learning and development support to Members through a comprehensive Member Induction Programme and ongoing Member development opportunities via service specific Member seminars or Local Government Association training.

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.**

In relation to Governance, it is assumed that Cheltenham Borough Council will continue to operate with most of the existing governance structure. However, it is expected that Members would explore and review options for committee and meeting structures as part of the normal Council processes as required.

Topic		
Governance Model	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?* ➢ *The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?* ➢ *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.* ➢ *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?* ➢ *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.*
	Analysis	The Council has had leader and cabinet arrangements in place since 2001 and pursuant to Schedule 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 the Council adopted the new Stronger Leader and Executive Model in 2010 which took effect in May 2012. The Leader is appointed for a four year term of office and the Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Council together with at least two, but not more than nine Councillors. The Cabinet was increased from 7 Members to 9 in February 2020 to provide specific leads to support the growing environmental / climate change agenda and the economic development / growth agenda. These two new portfolios are generating considerable additional workloads and are of growing local and national importance.

| | | The Cabinet carries out all of the Authority's functions as set out in <u>Part 3E of the Constitution</u>, i.e. all key decisions and other policy/decisions except those that are the responsibility of the Council; the responsibility of the Regulatory Committees or decisions that are delegated to officers.

A Key Decision means any decision in exercise of an Executive Function which:

• requires a budget expenditure or saving of £100,000 or more;

• relates to the acquisition or disposal of land or an interest in land with a value in excess of £250,000;

• is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough

A Significant Decision means any decision in exercise of a non-Executive Function which:

• requires a budget expenditure or budget saving of £100,000 or more;

• is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough.

The Cabinet meet monthly. It is collectively responsible for all of its decisions and actions taken with each Cabinet Member given an area of special responsibility. Each Cabinet Member works closely with the Executive Directors and Service Managers and develop an in-depth knowledge of their special responsibility area. This knowledge and ongoing oversight is shared with the other Cabinet Members and supports the decision making process for developments and decisions required by the Cabinet in their areas.

The Council considers 9 Members to be the appropriate number for the Cabinet to effectively cover the breadth of service areas and deliver the leadership role required. There has been no incidence of Cabinet having insufficient Members to hold a meeting.

There is sufficient evidence to show that the current structure is both efficient and effective, and should be maintained and so the model of governance is expected to continue. |
| --- | --- | --- |

Portfolios	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *How many portfolios will there be?* ➢ *What will the role of a portfolio holder be?* ➢ *Will this be a full-time position?* ➢ *Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?*
	Analysis	As stated above the nine Members of the Cabinet are collectively responsible for all decision the Cabinet make and actions taken. Each Member has an area of special responsibility covering numerous service areas. To view a breakdown of the service areas for each Cabinet Member please see the CBC website. The role of a Cabinet Member is not considered to be a full time position but the role demands considerable time. Councillors on the Cabinet are also appointed to other appropriate committees, including the Appointments and Remuneration Committee. Cabinet Members can also be Members of external partnerships and outside bodies and informal meetings representing the Council. Councillors on the Cabinet cannot be Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S). A Cabinet briefing is a standing item on each O&S agenda and Cabinet Members are often required to attend meetings. The Leader also attends quarterly meetings with other Gloucestershire Leaders and Chief Executives to facilitate and drive county matters to shape and deliver the ambition and vision for Gloucestershire.
Delegated Responsibilities	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?* ➢ *How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?*
	Analysis	Article 7 of the Council's Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the Cabinet and Article 4 sets out the responsibilities of Council. Part 3E of the Council's constitution outlines the delegated decision making powers allocated within the political structure and to officers in the Scheme of Delegation. A review of the Constitution has just commenced.

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	
Internal Scrutiny	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.
Key lines of explanation	
Analysis	The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprised of 10 Members (and 5 reserves), with a quorum of 4 Members attending and entitled to vote. The membership constitutes a quarter of all councillors, and enables cross-party representation while retaining political proportionality (with seven Liberal Democrat members, two Conservatives including the Chair, and one from the People Against Bureaucracy group). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertakes its role in accordance with the provisions of Part 3 of the Constitution (Responsibility for Functions) and Part 4D (Overview and Scrutiny Rules). Its functions include establishing standing or ad hoc sub-committees, as well as scrutiny task groups to carry out in-depth reviews of a particular issue. The group also considers call-ins, receives councillor calls for action, gathers evidence from external persons or organisations, and contributes to the

	monitoring, review and improvement of services provided either directly by or on behalf of the authority.
	Further to this, it makes reports and recommendations to Cabinet and Council, promotes good practice across the authority and promotes the development of member skills and competencies in O&S. Underpinning this, the O&S workplan sets out its activities over the coming months, taking into account corporate priorities, the forward plan, issues of local concern and available resources.
	More broadly, the committee seeks to: • Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge to the executive; • Amplify the voices and concerns of the public; • Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; • Drive improvement in public services in Cheltenham. As of March 2022, there are currently no scrutiny task groups in progress, although one will be set up on the topic of Tackling Multiple Deprivation after the May 2022 elections. Scrutiny task groups tend to have around 4 Members and last between 3 and 6 months.
	In 2019, the committee commissioned Campbell Tickell to assess the current arrangements and ways of working in the context of the Statutory Guidance and make recommendations about how the committee could be more effective and how resources could be better focussed or increased. Campbell Tickell presented initial findings in January 2020 before submitting their final report, including a range of recommendations, in February 2020. The committee accepted the recommendations and established a task group to devise an action plan in response to the recommendations.
Statutory Function	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?

	Key lines of explanation	
Planning	Analysis	The Planning Committee comprises 11 elected Members and 4 substitutes. Cabinet Members do not sit on this committee. Planning Committee was reduced from 15 to 11 Members in July 2020 in order to increase the effectiveness of the decision-making process and reflect best practice. 85 % of respondents to the recent Member Survey considered the current committee size for Planning Committee was appropriate to its function. It is important to highlight that the work of the Planning Committee has increased quite markedly over recent time and the knowledge required to fulfil the role is becoming increasingly more complex as a result of the evolving legislation and the need to keep informed of changes to the local plan, the Joint Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. A structured site visit organised by planning officers called 'Planning View' provides Members with an opportunity to view and enter application sites (and neighbouring sites where necessary) and also consider the surrounding context in advance of the Planning Committee meeting. Planning View has been suspended during the pandemic but will be resurrected in the coming months. All Members of the Council were invited to attend mandatory Planning training following the May 2021 elections to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to understand planning applications (some major) in their wards.

Planning matters can take up a considerable amount of time for a ward member.

The number of applications determined by Councillors has remained relatively consistent over the last four years and is shown in the table below. The level of delegation is not expected to change significantly in the short term.

Year	Number of planning applications	Number determined by Officers	Number determined by Members
2018	1305	1251 (96%)	54 (4%)
2019	1318	1270 (96%)	48 (4%)
2020	1216	1165 (96%)	51 (4%)
2021	1512	1460 (97%)	52 (3%)

Licensing

Key lines of explanation

> *How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?*
> *And what will be the time commitment for members?*
> *Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?*
> *Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?*

Analysis

The Council has a Full Licensing Committee comprising 10, politically balanced, Members and two Licensing sub committees - Licensing Miscellaneous and Alcohol and Gambling. The latter deals exclusively with applications for alcohol and gambling licensing and the former taxi, sexual entertainment and other miscellaneous licensing types (street trading, obstruction of the highway etc.) The full Licensing Committee principally meets to consider policy issues, act as lead consultee to the relevant Cabinet Member and respond to local and national licensing consultations.

		The full Licensing Committee meets 4 times a year, Licensing Miscellaneous sub-committee scheduled monthly, and the Alcohol and Gambling sub-committee on an ad-hoc basis.
		All the licensing committees have core Membership although the Alcohol and Gambling sub-committee operates a panel of three chosen from a group of 5.
		Member's time commitment includes:
		reading the officer's report and accompanying document
		familiarisation with corporate licensing policy, guidance and legislation
		attending site visits prior to the committee hearing
		attending a pre-briefing session on the day of the committee
		attending the committee hearing
		mandatory licensing training
		The Licensing committee is entrusted with dealing, at times, with very sensitive and serious matters. This includes matters relating to licence holder's conduct that has fallen far below the expected standards, sensitive medical and criminal information, immigration matters and sensitive operational matters. These are usually dealt with as exempt and restricted items.
		The chair and vice-chair commits more time pre- and post- committee meetings. This will include meetings about issues arising from licensing issues, additional research and preparation for chairing committee's and supporting policy development. In addition, the chair and vice-chair spend time outside of formal committee business to address and respond to contentious issues arising from committee business. Recently, this included meetings to address concerns around taxi licensing safeguarding issues, licensing and regulation of sex establishment licensing, public concern about the impact of big horse racing events in Cheltenham.
		Decisions made by the Licensing Committee is subject to legal recourse for aggrieved applicants. In most cases, there is a right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court. Decisions that are appealed is dealt with by officers who are summoned to attend and give evidence.

		Cheltenham has a large, vibrant and award winning evening and night-time economy (ENTE). The Licensing Committee plays an active role in matters affecting the ENTE. This includes both policy development impacting on the management of the ENTE but also individual applications for businesses operating in the ENTE. The Licensing Committee chair also acts as ENTE Champion. Cheltenham is a Purple Flag town. Purple Flag is an international accreditation programme, externally assessed, that aims to reward ENTEs that are shown to be safe, inclusive, welcoming and innovative in its approach. Delegated powers are allocated to officer for licensing application decisions in the majority of cases. Applications that attracted objections and/or does not comply with adopted policy are referred to the relevant licensing committee. Officers also retain the discretion to refer any application to the relevant licensing committee as circumstances dictate. The recent Member survey results show high levels of support for the size of the Licensing Committee (85 % of respondents) so the structure is considered appropriate for this function.
Other Regulatory Bodies	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What will they be, and how many members will they require?* ➢ *Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.*
	Analysis	The Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee is an independent group of seven councillors (political proportionality applies)whose main responsibility is to oversee the council's governance arrangements and the effectiveness of its system of internal control. Internal audit provide formal assurance to the audit committee twice a year, an interim report in September and an annual report in June. The audit committee also receive assurance from external audit on :

	• the council's annual accounts and annual governance statement • on the effectiveness of the corporate governance framework • on the effectiveness of the corporate risk management processes The Appointments and Remuneration Committee comprises 9 Members (political proportionality applies)and is responsible for : • Considering the appointment and dismissal of any Executive Officers • Determine the conditions on which the Executive Officers hold office, including deciding matters relating to the early retirement of those officers. • Consider the Pay Policy Statement and refer it to Council for approval • Determine polices relating to employee remuneration Determine policies relating to local government pensions and discretionary compensation. • Deal with any other appointments, dismissal or remuneration matters referred by Council or Head of Paid Service The Standards Committee comprises 7 Members (political proportionality applies)and 2 Independent Persons and its role is to exercise the Council's functions in matters relating to standards of conduct within the Council, promote and maintain high standards of conduct at Borough and Parish Councils, review/ monitor the effectiveness of the Code, prepare, monitor & review Protocols, determine applications for dispensation, receive reports from the Monitoring Officer on complaints which have been determined
External Partnerships	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	➢ *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?*

	Analysis	Following each Selection Council, and at other times when vacancies arise, the Leader/Cabinet takes the opportunity to nominate and, in limited cases, appoint persons to various roles within bodies external to the Council. Also the opportunity is taken to nominate persons to other bodies such as Joint Committees. Examples of such nominations are to the board of Cheltenham Borough Homes, the council's arms length management organisation, the Cheltenham Trust and Gloucestershire Airport. The full list of outside bodies to which Members are nominated can be found on our webpage. 73% of respondents to the recent Member Survey told us that they spend 10% or less of their council time on attending meetings of an outside body or partnership with 27% spending 15% or more of their time.

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*	*➢ In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?* *➢ Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?* *➢ How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?*

		Analysis	Councillors are actively involved within their wards and most consider themselves to play a pro-active part in the communities they represent. The approach taken varies from councillor to councillor but all are involved in some or all of the following as part of their engagement with constituents: • Holding surgeries – dealing with queries, providing advice and engaging with constituents face-to-face • Constituency matters – emails, written, telephone responses • Community / Resident meetings • Working with and / or offering support to community groups and local organisations • Attending Town and Parish Council meetings • Contact with parish/town councils • Articles for parish/village magazines and newsletters, blogs and/or websites and social media The Council does not have any area committees in the District and there is no Ward Member delegated budget. In the recent Member Survey approximately 92% of respondents told us that they spend more than 15 hours a week on council duties. Of this time, 27% of respondents were spending 30% or more of this time in reading papers in preparation for a borough council meetings with 50% being spent on constituency issues. 77% of respondents to the survey considered that their time spent on council activities was manageable. 50% of respondents to the survey did not receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). Approximately, 50% of those who were in receipt of a SRA spend fewer than 5 hours on the additional workload, and 50% spent more than 15 hours on this additional workload. 9 Cheltenham Borough Council Councillors are also Members of Gloucestershire County Council (5 Liberal Democrat and 4 Conservative). This does naturally give rise to an increased workload for those dual hatted Councillors. Additionally, Borough Councillors play a signposting role where residents approach them on county council (such as highway or on-street parking matters).

DISTRICT COUNCILS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE 2021

Name	Estimated Population mid-2020	Number of Councillors	Residents per Councillor
Cheltenham	116,043	40	2,901
Cotswold	90,264	34	2,655
Forest of Dean	87,107	38	2,292
Gloucester	129,709	39	3,326
Tewkesbury	96,624	38	2,543
Stroud	120,903	51	2,371

Casework	Key lines of explanation	➢ *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?* ➢ *What support do members receive?* ➢ *How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?* ➢ *In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?*
	Analysis	In our recent Member survey 100% of respondents told us that they dealt with casework directly (rather than referring to a CBC officer to respond on their behalf). Our Members told us that casework does vary depending on the demographic of the wards, respecting that there are wards with different needs and services. In May 2021, 20 new Borough Councillors were elected to CBC. An induction training programme was provided to all Councillors in the months following the election. There are ongoing learning opportunities in the form of member seminars. The Democratic Services Team provides a first point of contact for Member enquiries and signposting and offer a Buddy system, aimed at newly elected Members. Technical and professional support is available from specific officers.

		Technology, in the form of laptops and Blackberry Work have been incorporated into the Councillor role to enable a more mobile, responsive and interactive service as well as reduce unnecessary paper consumption. The majority (90%) of Councillors accept a corporate laptop to use for borough council business. All meeting agendas, minutes and communications are sent electronically. Wherever possible all information and documentation from Officers is sent to Councillors electronically. A fortnightly e-newsletter is emailed to all Councillors keeping them up-to-date with current news going on throughout the Council. Since the pandemic all Member general briefings are held on a quarterly basis virtually and recorded for those who cannot attend.

Other Issues

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

The Council has an excellent record of financial management and is proud to have effectively maintained the high levels of service provision despite an environment of challenging financial circumstances for all local authorities. The Medium Term Financial Strategy provides the funding framework within which the Council will achieve its aspirations and achieve its corporate priorities.

The national restrictions which have been in place, across the country or locally here in Cheltenham, have created a huge amount of financial uncertainty. With the emergence of the Omicron variant, the uncertainty continues to impact customer behaviour which may have further financial impact on our commercial income and on the town's economy. Changes to customer behaviour and the way our services are accessed has changed with no certainty as to whether this will be permanent or temporary and what this means for how we fund and operate our services. It also means we need to continue investing in technology, in particular the digital platform to meet the changing requirements of our residents and service users.

Since its adoption in 2018 the key mechanism driving our response to funding challenges has been the commercial strategy. This has driven an innovative and enterprising mind-set and we have adapted to generate income in different ways to support our general fund budget and deliver against our Corporate Priorities. Recovery from the pandemic and re-opening of the town has meant the contribution of some of these initiatives are providing to the general fund may now be permanently lower than we had assumed in previous budgets.

The 2022/23 budget has re-set our baseline position against our Corporate Priorities and prepared a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 and beyond which ensures we continue to be financially sustainable whilst continuing to support economic recovery and growth and our climate change ambitions for the town.

The Council continues to be committed to working with our partners such as Cheltenham Borough Homes, The Cheltenham Trust Ubico Limited and Publica to improve the quality of life for residents and businesses in Cheltenham.

Changing electoral ratio

The current average ratio of councillors to electorate for CBC is 1:2288 electors. Based on planning application data, it is estimated this will be 1:2373 electors per Councillor by 2025. This increase is considered to be manageable with the existing number of 40 Councillors and would not introduce an unacceptable burden on Councillor workload. The proportion of the eligible adult population registered on the Electoral Register impacts on the variation of the councillor electoral ratio across different local authorities. CBC has a high rate of 98% of eligible adult population currently registered on the Electoral Register.

In comparison with councils in the CIPFA nearest neighbour comparison group, the Councillor count of 40 for CBC, places it 5th out of the 16 comparator local authorities within the group between values of 1,865 and 3,793 Residents per Councillor. All Members were invited to complete an online survey to enable the Council to establish what size the Council should be in the future.

Considerations if reduced council size:

• A reduction in Councillor numbers would result in a financial saving of Councillor allowances and expenses. However, it was acknowledged there would be a likely increase in workload by the fewer remaining Councillors due to attending more meetings;

• Any reduction in number would result in an unacceptable increased workload for Councillors across both governance arrangements and constituency engagement and casework. With continued population growth the level of constituency casework is expected to remain the same or increase placing a significantly higher demand on a fewer number of Councillors;

• All governance arrangements would be required to be reviewed with a higher number of committee appointments for Councillors;

• Fewer Councillors with higher volume of casework could also result in increased demand on officer time with more assistance required;

• A reduction in Councillor numbers would limit diversity and inclusion as the increase in workload would limit the ability of those who undertake full-time employment or childcare responsibilities.

Considerations if increased council size:

• Increasing Councillor numbers would place additional demands upon the Council's limited budgetary resources for allowances and expenses;

• Increasing Councillor numbers would place additional demands on the officer support available particularly on resources in Democratic Services and many other teams within the authority such as housing, planning, environmental services;

• Increased number would reduce the electoral ratio and potentially lower casework demand on Councillors, although equally could make it marginally easier for some members by reducing caseload;

• Increased number of councillors would result in more councillors available to fill the governance posts. An increase is not deemed to be necessary to deliver the existing governance arrangements. Survey results showed strong support for the current number of Councillors appointed to panels and committees.

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 has considered carefully the question of the Council's future size and concluded that the current number of 40 Councillors would be appropriate. Since 2002, Cheltenham Borough Council has operated with 40 Councillors elected to 20 wards across the Borough. In the last 10 years the Council has evidenced it is a high performing council with a strong reputation for quality service provision and financial management. There has been a consistently high standard of service from CBC Councillors in delivering effective strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership. There are no significant changes to the Council's regulatory Committees.

During the course of the deliberations the implications of reducing or increasing the number of Councillors were considered. A reduction of any number of Councillors was not considered acceptable and would not allow the Council to continue to provide the present level of representation and service to residents. An increase in Councillors was not felt to be appropriate or necessary with the Council's current membership effectively and consistently delivering a high level of services and Councillor workload to be manageable.

Given the Council's responsibilities it is considered that a continuation of 40 Councillors will give the Council sufficient capacity to effectively operate its current governance and decision-making arrangements. This number allows sufficient Member numbers to ensure the proper and timely consideration and making of decisions as well as guarantee sufficient representation on Committees and Sub-Committees to ensure that any debate is informed by a range of views and opinions. The membership of 40 Councillors also ensures there is sufficient capacity to ensure that absences or unavailability could reasonably be accommodated without significant detrimental impact.