

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Council Size Submission

Guildford Borough Council

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How to Make a Submission

1. It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should 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.
2. 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.

About You

3. 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, or an individual.

The full Council approved this submission at its meeting held on 8 December 2020.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

4. 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.*

N/A

Local Authority Profile

5. Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description may cover all, or some 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?
 - Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

The Borough of Guildford was formed in 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972 from the former Guildford Borough Council and the former Guildford Rural District Council. It has borders with five other Surrey Boroughs/Districts and one Hampshire Borough.

Guildford has its origins growing up where the River Wey flows through the North Downs ridge. This constrains development and creates a clear sense of separation between the town and outlying settlements, protecting the highly valued environment that is a distinctive part of the borough's character. The western border of the borough lies within the Blackwater Valley.

Situated in the south west of the county, Guildford is the county town of Surrey and the urban areas of Ash and Tongham in the west of the borough are home to many of our residents, with further communities in village settlements across the borough. We are within commuting distance from London and about 70 kilometres from the south coast.

Guildford is Surrey's second largest borough in the county in terms of area, covering approximately 269 square kilometres.

We are also the second most populated borough, with 151,300 residents (with a population density of 5.6 people per hectare) and an electorate of 105,000. The population is steadily growing and is predicted to reach 161,000 by 2031, and 167,000 by 2034. The population has increased by 25% since the last review in 1998. The borough's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population is currently 14% overall (9% in 2011).

The borough has 24 parished areas, of which 23 have a parish council. The Guildford town area is unparished.

There are 56,064 households in the Borough. This is an increase in households of 3.9% since 2011. The average household size is 2.7 people (2.43 in 2011).

Guildford is a busy town with a wide influence on its surrounding area. The M25, A3, A31 and A331 are the principal routes that connect Guildford to the rest of the Strategic Road Network. The A3 trunk road cuts through the borough and provides a direct link to London and the south coast.

The borough benefits from twelve rail stations, including Guildford railway station, the busiest in the county, which provides access to, and interchange between, four lines. These rail lines fan out to serve our other stations and destinations beyond including London Waterloo, Woking, Reading, Redhill and Gatwick Airport.

The south of the borough lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and surrounding land is designated as Areas of Great Landscape Value. There are Special Protection Areas (SPA) (particularly surrounding Ash), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), local Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and nature reserves across our borough. Approximately 89% of the borough is currently located within the Metropolitan Green Belt which, taking account of anticipated development envisaged in the Local Plan, is expected to reduce to 83.5%.

Our borough has a particularly rich and varied architectural heritage with 1,200 listed buildings and 38 conservation areas. It contains 151 designated Areas of High Archaeological Potential, 37 County Sites of Archaeological Importance, 35 scheduled monuments and 10 registered parks/gardens. The borough is also home to a series of great historic country houses set within designed landscape and parklands.

Guildford is known for its historic buildings and landscapes, cultural associations and the picturesque town centre. Guildford Cathedral, the University of Surrey, the Hog's Back and Surrey Hills are dominant landmarks of our borough. We are one of the safest parts of Surrey and part of one of the safest counties in England.

Guildford town centre is a principal regional shopping centre, with a vibrant night-time economy.

Our residents are largely healthy and enjoy well above average life expectancy. The electorate is generally well educated, articulate, highly skilled, and well paid.

House prices are high, sustained by high demand, and are considerably above the national average (average house prices are currently £231,205 across England and Wales, £439,509 in Surrey and £445,524 in Guildford). This in turn has led to a vibrant private rented sector that provides housing for those who cannot afford to access the private sale market. There is an ongoing shortage of affordable housing, particularly for first time buyers, which in turn contributes to skill shortages in the borough. The total Guildford Borough Council housing stock is 5,210 units, with 65 new units having been added since the Housing Strategy was adopted in 2015 and planning permission for a further 103 units.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 provides a measure of deprivation based on factors such as income, employment, health, education, housing and crime. The Index ranks our borough amongst the least deprived 10 per cent of boroughs in England. Despite the borough's relative affluence, pockets of deprivation exist.

The local economy is one of the most competitive in the UK with a total gross value added (GVA) of over £5 billion and the number of jobs continues to grow in line with our role as a regional administrative and commercial centre. A growing cluster of high-tech industries, at the cutting-edge of innovation, continues to create new employment opportunities.

Our rural economy accounts for 25% of all jobs and, with the improved coverage of superfast broadband, this is likely to increase. However, we do have skills shortages in some sectors and many people are unable to afford homes close to their workplace.

The borough attracts around three million visitors each year, generating an estimated £330 million in tourism income for local businesses and directly supporting around 4,500 jobs. It has an active and diverse cultural scene with established venues and organisations sitting alongside a growing fringe and festival programme.

We are fortunate that the level of unemployment in Guildford is low. Approximately 3.4% of working age adults in the borough are unemployed compared to 4.8% of working age adults nationally. However, we do have a skills shortage in some sectors and many workers are unable to afford homes close to work. This creates additional pressure to make sure that adequate provision is made for housing.

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 years. 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 impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

This submission sets out the Council's proposal to seek a small reduction in the number of Borough Councillors from 48 to 44, representing a reduction of nearly 10%. In reaching this conclusion, the Council has taken into account a number of factors:

- the Strong Leader and Executive arrangements introduced since the last review
- the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers extended since the last review;
- changes in the Council's functions, and the manner by which it delivers its services since the last review;
- the technological advancements in communications and the changing way in which residents access information and services;
- increasing population of the borough and concomitant increase in electorate; and
- the financial position of the Council, and the country as a whole, particularly in the context of the coronavirus pandemic

At member level, the Council has been operating executive arrangements (leader and cabinet model) since 2001 and, following the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, adopted the so-called 'strong' leader and cabinet (England) model. Although there has been no express desire to move away from these arrangements, the Council decided in 2014 *to review all available decision-making models and to make recommendations to scrutiny, Executive and full Council on improvements to the governance arrangements.*

This review took place in 2015, which resulted in the establishment of a hybrid model of executive arrangements comprising a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee, together with two new Executive Advisory Boards (EABs) to advise and make recommendations to the Leader and Executive. The EABs' respective remits were based on the fundamental themes of the then Corporate Plan, providing an opportunity for non-Executive councillors to have a greater input in decision making and shaping, at a very early stage, key projects and policies most closely aligned to the Council's strategic priorities. In many respects, the EABs effectively perform pre-decision challenge and scrutiny of the issues prior to consideration of those issues by the Executive.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible primarily for post decision review of Executive decisions and wider external scrutiny, including the commissioning of task and finish groups. The review envisaged the Committee seeking to increase public engagement on matters of public concern through its topic selection and mode of working.

The revised governance arrangements were introduced in January 2016.

In May 2016, the Council received a valid petition for a referendum as to whether the Council should be run in a different way by a directly elected mayor. The referendum was held in October 2016. Voters rejected the proposal by 4:1 on a turnout of just under 25%.

The Council has very recently reviewed the operation of the EABs and has agreed to retain the two EABs whose remits have been realigned to the current directorate arrangements that have been put in place as a result of the Future Guildford transformation programme (see below). Executive portfolios have also been aligned so that there is a clearer link with the directorates.

At officer level, the Managing Director instigated a fundamental transformation programme in 2018 ("Future Guildford"), which is the most far-reaching and comprehensive approach to reorganisation that this Council has seen, involving changes to systems, structures, services, culture, and head count.

The phased (two-year) programme seeks to:

- Improve our services and customer care
- Future proof our organisation
- Modernise our services and systems
- Make us more efficient
- Deliver savings and address our financial challenges
- Create an environment where there are better development opportunities for staff
- Develop our culture into one that collectively adapts and changes to address the various challenges and issues facing us

Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?

No

What impact on the Council’s effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

The Council, as an organisation, has recognised that it cannot be complacent and must constantly strive for improvement in how it operates at all levels, including at officer and member level. The Council acknowledges the importance of training and development for both officers and councillors. The Council is accredited under the South East Employers Charter for Member Development. A cross-party steering group of councillors oversees the training and development of councillors.

There has been, and still is, a perception that the executive arrangements adopted, leave backbench councillors disaffected and disengaged with the decision-making process. That feeling led to the governance review described above. However, it is clear that the levels of disaffection and disengagement would not be so acute if there were fewer councillors overall.

Council Size

6. The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation 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

7. 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.

Topic		
Governance Model	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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>

	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Guildford Borough Council operates under the 'Strong Leader' and Cabinet (England) model in line with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. In common with all councils operating executive arrangements, the Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive members, are the busiest councillor roles within the Council's governance structure.</p> <p>The Leader is elected for up to a four-year term of office at the first Selection Council meeting following the four yearly borough elections. Under the strong leader arrangements, the Leader of the Council determines the membership and portfolios of the Executive, and normally holds their own portfolio of responsibilities.</p> <p>This model of governance is expected to continue.</p> <p>Following the Borough Council elections in 2019, the Council moved politically from Conservative control to no overall control. The political balance on the Council is currently:</p> <p>Guildford Liberal Democrat Group: 17 Residents for Guildford and Villages Group: 16 Conservative Group: 4 Conservative Independent Group: 4 Guildford Greenbelt Group: 3 Labour Group: 2 Independent: 1 Vacancy: 1</p> <p>Up until September 2020, the Leader was a Liberal Democrat member. On 6 October, the Council elected a new Leader (a member from the Residents for Guildford and Villages group).</p> <p>The Council's approach to formulating strategic and operational policies has traditionally been consultative and collaborative. In general terms, councillors determine strategic policy and officers develop the operational policies that will deliver those strategic outcomes.</p> <p>Following the Borough Council elections in May 2019, the new Executive gave an indication of their future strategic priorities for the Council. From the ideas and proposals submitted and following further discussions with councillors, a list of draft priorities was developed across the four following strategic themes:</p>
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		<p>Climate Change and Environment Housing and Community Economy and Regeneration Improved Council</p> <p>The themes and draft priorities formed the basis of discussions at a workshop for all councillors held in November 2019. The workshop focussed on defining the outcomes and impacts that the Council would most wish to deliver.</p> <p>In January 2020, the views of a joint meeting of the EABs were sought in respect of the proposed new draft corporate priorities and the outline timetable for developing a new corporate plan in order to support the Council with the development of new corporate priorities and a corporate plan to provide the strategic framework for managing its business and resources effectively. The Executive considered those views and made an appropriate change to one of the draft priorities as a result and agreed a process and timetable for the production of a new corporate plan involving a councillor working group to oversee the process, which included public consultation and stakeholder engagement. However, the Covid pandemic has prevented us from moving this process forward.</p> <p>The governance review of 2015 referred to above explored <i>all available decision-making models</i>. The Council was not convinced by the case for formal governance change away from the leader and cabinet model. The Council supported a mixed-model or hybrid approach that essentially combined the leader and cabinet system with two EABs and a streamlined overview and scrutiny function. The advantages of a mixed-model approach included achieving desired outcomes through a relatively quick route that also retained flexibility to introduce further change if and when needed (and left open the option of a formal change if desired).</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Since 2001, the size of the Executive at Guildford has fluctuated irregularly from between eight and ten members. The Executive currently comprises a total of eight lead councillors (including the Leader and Deputy Leader), four each from the two largest groups.</p> <p>Their portfolio titles and areas of responsibility are as follows:</p>

Councillor	Areas of Responsibility
Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Service Delivery	Customer Service, Governance including corporate Health and Safety, Future Guildford, Human Resources, Partnerships, Web Services.
Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing and Development Control	Housing, Homelessness, housing standards (HMOs, private rented sector), Development Control and Enforcement, Public Relations and Communications
Lead Councillor for Resources	Finance, Commercial Asset Management, Procurement
Lead Councillor for Climate Change	Innovation, Strategic Planning, Sustainable Transport, Housing Delivery
Lead Councillor for Community	Health, Wellbeing, Access and Disability, Safety, grants and voluntary services, Careline, Handyperson, Care and Repair
Lead Councillor for Economy	Economic Development, Social Enterprise, Rural Economy, Heritage and Community Assets
Lead Councillor for Regeneration	Town Centre MasterPlan, Infrastructure, Major Projects, Strategic Asset Management
Lead Councillor for Environment	Waste, Licensing (including Health and Safety regulation), Parking, Parks and Leisure, Arts and Tourism, Bereavement, Environmental Health and Protection.

The Lead Councillor's role is not considered to be full time. However, it is necessary for all Lead Councillors to make a substantial time commitment to properly carry out their roles. Lead Councillors have established panels and working groups to progress key issues/projects, which include non-Executive councillors. There are currently 15 working groups. During the last review of councillors' allowances (2019), we surveyed all councillors on various matters including an approximate indication of the number of hours they spent each month on their various duties as a councillor. On average, Executive members spent 88 hours per month on their duties.

The Executive meets formally on a monthly basis, with each meeting preceded by an informal Liaison meeting with the Corporate Management Team for the purpose of briefing the Executive on forthcoming business and matters of a strategic nature. Lead Councillors also hold monthly meetings/briefings with relevant directors and service leaders

In addition to the formal Executive meetings, the Lead Councillors are expected to represent the Council on bodies outside of the Council. As senior representatives of the Council, Lead Councillors are called upon to participate in partnership and regional bodies, as well as certain voluntary organisations. The demands made by these bodies vary but are nevertheless a significant call upon the time of Lead Councillors.

		<p>Importantly, Lead Councillors are expected to attend meetings of EABs whenever matters coming within the areas of portfolio responsibility are being discussed and at most Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings a Lead Councillor attends to answer questions on any matters within their portfolio.</p> <p>Most executive decisions taken by councillors are dealt with collectively by the Executive. However, there is a small number of powers delegated to individual Lead Councillors, as set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>The Executive has established the Executive Shareholder and Trustee Committee specifically to discharge the shareholder and trustee functions of the Council. The Committee generally meets on an ad hoc basis, but at least once annually to receive an annual report and annual accounts from the Council's Companies (Guildford Borough Council Holdings Ltd and North Downs Housing Ltd) and a number of Charities. The Committee comprises five Executive councillors including the Leader, who is the chairman.</p> <p>In 2016, the Council established and wholly owns the holding company which, in turn, owns North Downs Housing Ltd (see page 24 below for details of NDH's objectives). The board of the housing company currently includes two councillors and the board of the holding company includes one councillor. Both boards meet approximately 5-6 times each year.</p> <p>What does this mean for future Council size? The Council will continue to operate a Leader and Cabinet model, with up to ten Councillors forming the Executive. The Leader and Executive Portfolio Holder roles are substantial and require the Councillors to contribute significant time and effort. These roles need to be factored into the future size of the Council.</p>
<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The functions and responsibilities of the full Council, Executive, the Council's committees, and officers are set out in Part 3 of the <u>Council's Constitution</u>:</p> <p>The scheme of delegation to officers is a mix of both executive and non-executive powers. All matters outside of the remit of officer delegations are determined collectively by the Executive (or by lead councillors in a very small number of cases) in respect of all executive functions; and by full Council, or certain committees and sub-committees in respect of non-executive functions. In addition, a limited number of executive and non-executive functions are</p>

delegated to the Guildford Joint Committee, which comprises ten borough councillors, and the ten county councillors representing the ten county divisions in the borough.

Up to 10 Executive councillors may be involved in taking major (key) decisions. Major decisions involving the budget and policy framework are reserved to full Council. The number of councillors on each of the committees and the number of meetings each year are currently as follows:

Committee	No. of Councillors	No. of Meetings p.a.
Service Delivery EAB:	12	6
Strategy and Resources EAB:	12	6
Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	12	7
Corporate Governance & Standards:	7	6
Licensing Committee:	15	6
Planning Committee:	15	13
Employment Committee:	3	Ad hoc (average: 4)

There are 86 committee seats in total (excluding the Executive but including the Joint Committee), which currently averages at 1.8 seats per councillor. However, at any given time, the range of committee memberships per councillor can range from 0 to 4 dependent on individual circumstances. Substitutes are permitted on all committees, except the Executive and the Licensing Committee. We acknowledge that a small reduction in the number of councillors to 44 will mean that the average number of seats on committees per councillor will increase marginally, but manageably to just under two.

All meetings (with the exception of the Employment Committee and the Licensing sub-committees) meet during the evening. However, a significant number of task group/working group meetings and group leaders' meetings are held in the daytime, which means that certain councillor roles require greater flexibility in terms of time commitment.

Accountability

8. 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.

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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>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?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	<p>The Leader/Executive is responsible for the discharge of the executive functions of the Council, with the remaining councillors responsible for setting the budget and policy framework within which the Leader/Executive must operate, supporting policy development, and scrutinising the performance of the Leader/Executive. All councillors may be involved in non-Executive functions.</p> <p>As mentioned above, we currently have one Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, comprising 12 non-Executive councillors, which is able to hold decision makers to account by performing its statutory scrutiny role of calling in decisions taken by the Executive for review. The functions of the Committee are set out in Article 8 of the Council's Constitution</p> <p>The establishment of the two EABs following the governance review in 2015 referred to above, also provided a means by which backbench councillors can exert pre-decision scrutiny of matters prior to consideration by the Executive. The functions of the EABs are set out in part 3 of the Council's Constitution.</p>

The O&S Committee and EABs ensure that their level of activity is manageable through their joint bi-monthly work programme meetings, following which the O&S Committee and EABs approve their respective updated work programmes. The O&S Committee and EABs are able to set up their own task and finish groups, although in the past three years only the O&S Committee has done this, examples of which are:

- Air Quality Monitoring
- Food Poverty
- Implications of Changes to Policing in Surrey
- Older people's services
- On-Street Parking

Any councillor may suggest topics for review by an O&S task and finish group. Dependent on the complexity of the topic selected for review by a task and finish group, each group may need to meet on up to five occasions in order to gather and assimilate sufficient evidence on which to base recommendations in a final report to the Executive/Council, or other decision-maker.

Membership of O&S task groups is determined by the O&S Committee after it has scoped a review. Such groups tend to comprise up to six councillors.

The O&S Committee is chaired by a councillor who is not from the majority political group, or a chairman of any other committee. The volume of work considered by the O&S Committee is expected to remain manageable for the foreseeable future.

The 2015 governance review also acknowledged that the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee undertook, as part of its terms of reference, significant monitoring and reviewing of the Council's corporate governance and audit and accounts activities. The review recognised the importance of this committee to the Council, particularly in the way in which it supported the overview and scrutiny function through ongoing scrutiny of financial matters, including an expanded remit on the treasury management function and budget monitoring.

What does this mean for future Council size?

We anticipate that the Council will continue to operate with one O&S Committee and two EABs for the foreseeable future. Although there is currently a total of 36 seats on the O&S Committee and the two EABs, on the basis that councillors normally expect to be appointed to more than one committee, we believe that provision for up to 20 councillors performing these roles, needs to be factored in to the future size of the Council.

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?																																			
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i> 																																		
Planning	Analysis	<p>The Council has a single, borough-wide Planning Committee comprising 15 councillors. Prior to May 2017, the membership of the Committee was 23. The functions of the Committee are set out in part 3 of the Council's Constitution. Details of the total number of planning applications received each year since 2016, the number determined in each of those years by the Planning Committee, the percentage of applications determined by the Committee and the average number of applications dealt with at a meeting are set out in the table below:</p>																																		
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total No. of applications received</th> <th>No. determined by Planning Committee</th> <th>% of applications determined by Planning Committee</th> <th>Average no. of applications considered at each meeting (no. of meetings in year)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>2,015</td> <td>98</td> <td>4.9</td> <td>5.4 (18)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>1,983</td> <td>77</td> <td>3.9</td> <td>5.1 (15)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>1,962</td> <td>58</td> <td>3</td> <td>4.8 (12)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>1,710</td> <td>73</td> <td>4.3</td> <td>5.6 (13)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020 (to 30/09/20)</td> <td>1,225</td> <td>43</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>4.3 (10)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Total No. of applications received	No. determined by Planning Committee	% of applications determined by Planning Committee	Average no. of applications considered at each meeting (no. of meetings in year)	2016	2,015	98	4.9	5.4 (18)	2017	1,983	77	3.9	5.1 (15)	2018	1,962	58	3	4.8 (12)	2019	1,710	73	4.3	5.6 (13)	2020 (to 30/09/20)	1,225	43	3.5	4.3 (10)				
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		<p>There are no plans to introduce area planning committees.</p> <p>Executive councillors have served, currently serve, and we anticipate will continue to serve, as members of the Planning Committee. The number of Executive councillors serving on the Planning Committee has varied from between two and four on the Committee in the past.</p>																																		

Ward councillors, who are not members of the Planning Committee, can speak at meetings on planning applications and, in common with other committees, members of the public are also allowed to address the Committee. There have been no occasions when a meeting has not been quorate.

The Council currently operates a 4-weekly cycle for the Planning Committee in order to meet statutory timescales for determining planning applications. Major applications are required to be determined within 13 weeks and all other applications need to be determined within 8 weeks. The Government closely monitors the speed of decision-making for every Local Authority and is able to place Authorities which fail to make decisions within the statutory timescale into special measures.

The borough's residents, who are generally well-educated and very articulate, have always taken a very keen interest in the work of the Planning Committee, which is by far the committee with the highest levels of public attendance at meetings and webcast views.

Planning is a matter of considerable importance for both councillors and residents. There is often a high degree of sensitivity attached to planning applications and many give rise to distinct and polarised opinion. Planning Committee Members are also aware that an erroneous decision can see substantial costs awarded against the Council and know that litigation is an option open to aggrieved parties. In these circumstances, the Council expects a high level of professionalism from all councillors serving on the Planning Committees, and extensive and thorough training is provided for all members and refreshed regularly. No councillor can sit on the Planning Committee unless they have completed at least the basics training. Membership of the Committee brings with it significant responsibility.

While the Council operates a comprehensive scheme of Officer Delegation in relation to development management, the applications referred to Committee are invariably controversial locally, which means that the work of councillors serving on the Committee is onerous. Planning matters and enquiries make up a significant proportion of work for Ward Members.

For the future, the Development Management service and the Planning Committee are likely to face more pressure in particular when applications in respect of the strategic sites identified in the Local Plan come forward and, more generally, when the economic outlook improves.

The Council has invited the Local Government Association to conduct a peer review of the operations and procedures of the Planning Committee (which took place in November 2020). The review explored a number of aspects of the Committee, for example, the size of the committee including ward representation and the voting rights of councillors for applications in their wards; and various probity, procedural, and conduct issues.

Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i> 																	
	Analysis	<p>The Licensing Committee comprises 15 councillors and is scheduled to meet six times each year and is responsible for all functions of the licensing authority as prescribed by the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, together with other relevant licensing and registration functions (e.g. taxi and private hire licensing). The functions of the Committee are set out in part 3 of the Council's Constitution. There have been no occasions when a meeting has not been quorate.</p> <p>The Committee has two Sub-Committees, which meet during the daytime on an ad hoc basis. The Licensing Sub-Committee considers contested applications for premises licences, club premises certificates, temporary events notices and personal licences in the Borough in respect of the sale and/or supply of alcohol and the provision of regulated entertainment and late-night refreshments, where relevant representations have been made.</p> <p>The Licensing Regulatory Sub-Committee determines contested licensing applications (other than those that are referred to the Licensing Sub-Committee) and disciplinary matters within the purview of the Licensing Committee in accordance with the Council's policies. The bulk of the work of this Sub-Committee deals with errant taxi and private hire drivers.</p> <p>Both Sub-Committees comprise three councillors, who are drawn on a panel basis from the membership of the parent Licensing Committee, as required. The Council appoints the membership of the Committee in May each year and also a number of designated sub-committee chairmen, from the committee membership. Details of the number of occasions both Sub-Committees have been convened since 2016 are set out in the table below.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Year</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Licensing Sub-Committee:</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Licensing Regulatory Sub-Committee:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020 (to date)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Licensing Sub-Committee:	Licensing Regulatory Sub-Committee:	2016	6	5	2017	1	4	2018	4	7	2019	4	6	2020 (to date)	4
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2016	6	5																	
2017	1	4																	
2018	4	7																	
2019	4	6																	
2020 (to date)	4	3																	

Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has established the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee, which meets on six occasions annually and comprises seven councillors, and three co-opted independent members, and three co-opted parish council representatives. The Committee's main areas of responsibility are Audit and Accounts; Corporate Governance; and Ethical Standards activities. The Committee's role, functions, and terms of reference are set out in Article 10 and in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>Only one Lead Councillor may be appointed to the Committee (except the lead councillor with portfolio responsibility for finance/resources), and that Lead Councillor cannot be elected chairman or vice-chairman.</p> <p>The Committee has two sub-committees – Assessment Sub-Committee and Hearings Sub-Committee which meet on an ad hoc basis; the former to conduct an assessment as to whether a code of conduct complaint should proceed to formal investigation, informal resolution, or no further action taken, and the latter to conduct a hearing to determine complaints following completion of a formal investigation which has found that the subject member has breached the code of conduct.</p> <p>The Sub-Committees each comprise five councillors who are appointed on a politically balanced basis from the parent committee by the Monitoring Officer. The Sub-Committees have each met on three occasions.</p> <p>The Council has also established an Employment Committee, comprising three councillors, at least one of whom must be an Executive member. The Committee's terms of reference are also set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. The Committee meets on an ad hoc basis and has met on 22 occasions since 2015.</p> <p>What does this mean for future Council size?</p> <p>The Planning Committee has a higher level of business than any other Regulatory Committee. This volume of business, combined with the requirement to attend site visits and deal with a significant number of enquiries and representations from residents, make this a high volume of work for councillors. It is therefore important to allocate Councillor capacity to complete this role within the proposal.</p> <p>The level of activity within Licensing Committee (and its Sub-Committees) is not expected to change in the future. The majority of decisions will continue to be determined under delegated powers, with only a small number of Sub-Committee</p>

		<p>meetings required to deal with contested applications. As a result, it is proposed that these functions can be undertaken alongside other Member roles.</p> <p>The limited number of councillors directly involved in the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee and Employment Committee means that these functions can be undertaken alongside other councillor roles.</p> <p>Although, the total number of seats on the Regulatory Committees is 40, on the basis that councillors normally expect to be appointed to more than one committee, we believe that provision for up to 24 councillors performing these roles, needs to be factored in to the future size of the Council.</p>
External Partnerships		<p>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.</p>
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>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?</i> ➤ <i>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?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
Analysis		<p>The Council, along with Surrey County Council, established the Guildford Joint Committee in 2018 (see above) involving ten borough councillors, at least one of whom must be an Executive member (currently three). The decisions taken by the Joint Committee in respect of borough council functions delegated to it are binding on the Council. The Joint Committee has met formally on a quarterly basis, and meets informally in between formal meetings. It is not expected that the workload of the Joint Committee will change in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>The Leader represents the Council on the Surrey Leaders' Group, which provides a political forum where leaders can come together to discuss strategic issues and act as a strong representative body for local government in Surrey. The Leader also represents the Council on the following bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership Board and Programme Management Group • Local Government Association • South East England Councils • Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board <p>One councillor represents the Council on the Surrey Police and Crime Panel, which meets on six occasions per annum.</p>

Outside Bodies:

In 1998 when the Council was last reviewed, we appointed councillors annually to a total of 74 external organisations, ranging from local charitable, educational, cultural, environmental, sports/recreational, and statutory organisations. In many cases, up to three councillors would be appointed a single organisation. Following a review in 2017, we now appoint councillors to a much lower number of local external organisations, but for a four-year term, with a single councillor being appointed to each of them. In 2019, following the borough council elections, there were 34 such appointments in various capacities, for example as director/board members, governors, trustees, or in an advisory capacity. These organisations range from charitable organisations, hospital trust, local authority partnerships, sporting and cultural organisations.

The workload associated with the appointments varies considerably, though would normally involve the attendance of the Councillor at between 4 and 6 meetings a year at different venues in the Borough/County. As part of the 2017 review, the Council agreed to appoint one councillor to such external organisations that:

- Support the Council's Corporate priorities, and/or
- Assist in delivery of Council services, and/or
- Are using Council facilities

Each external organisation is asked to complete a 'person profile' to ensure that the appointment is a suitable match to the requirements of the organisation and the capacity of the individual councillor in terms of skills, experience and time commitment.

In addition, at the invitation of the Surrey Leaders' Group, the Council submits annual nominations for appointment of district/borough council representatives on various external Surrey wide organisations. Such appointments are normally for a period of three years.

There are also organisations to which Portfolio Holders are appointed such as the Surrey Waste Partnership.

Community Involvement

9. 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?

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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>
	Analysis	<p>The Council operates in a three-tier local government structure, with Surrey County Council as the upper tier authority, and 23 Parish Councils representing our local communities. Of our 48 councillors, 4 are also county councillors and 7 are parish councillors, and one is "triple hatted".</p> <p>We do not have any area committees.</p> <p>One of the key reasons individuals become a Councillor is the role they can play in the community, seeking improvements for local residents. It is therefore understandable that a significant proportion of their time is spent on engaging with their residents and issues within their ward. The actual time commitment will vary significantly between Councillors, dependent on their other responsibilities, the nature of the area they represent and the number of Councillors for that ward.</p> <p>Most Councillors are proactively involved within their wards as opposed to simply responding to case work and consider that they play an active part within their communities. The approach they take varies from member to member, but most Councillors are involved in some or all of the following:</p>

- Holding surgeries – dealing with queries, providing advice and engaging with residents;
- Attending Parish Council meetings.
- Attending meetings of residents' associations/local community groups within their wards;
- Working with, and/or offering support, to community groups and local organisations;
- Engaging on social media (22 councillors have social media accounts).

The level and methods of community engagement and leadership undertaken is at the discretion of each Councillor. The main purpose of the Ward Councillor in these settings is to listen to the views of the parish council, residents' group, or individual residents and, where appropriate, represent those views within the Council.

In addition, the Council appoints three 'Champions' to act as a positive focus for the local community at elected Member level in respect of the following:

- Armed Forces
- Historic Environment and Design
- Older Persons

This requires an additional time commitment by these Members in addition to their community representative role and as members of committees, panels and working groups.

The Council provides a range of support to Councillors to assist them with their role. Following the Borough Council elections in 2019, all new and returning councillors were provided with:

- A portable lap top device to allow them to access Council systems and applications
- Mobile telephones for The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Executive members, chairmen, and group leaders
- a handbook Guide to Being a Councillor; and
- a full induction programme, followed by ongoing training and development opportunities, including briefings on various matters, through their four-year term.

	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
Casework	Analysis	<p>During the last review of councillors' allowances in 2019, councillors were canvassed on their workload. Thirty councillors responded (63%). The responses showed that most backbench councillors reported working an average of 50 hours per month on their range of duties, with Executive councillors spending an average of 88 hours per month on their range of activities and responsibilities. For ward/casework, all councillors averaged at around 22 hours per month.</p> <p>It is clear that councillors deal with their caseloads in a variety of ways. Overall, councillors seek to assist their residents directly though will seek the assistance of officers where necessary. In the majority of cases, the councillors will remain engaged until the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the resident.</p> <p>Councillors feel the public are more aware of them and their role along with a greater expectation of assistance and more opportunities for people to contact them. Email and social media provide the public with much greater access to them and there is a consequent expectation of immediate response to complaints/enquiries. Advancements in technology since the last electoral review have brought about significant efficiencies for dealing with casework.</p> <p>It is also important to reflect that councillors are seen more and more as advocates for their community and can get involved in issues that are not directly related to council services but serve and are of benefit to a wider public interest.</p> <p>The widespread use of ICT and other channels of communication have reduced the need for residents to rely on Councillors for information about council services – for example, residents no longer need to contact their Councillor to find out about meetings as minutes and agendas are published online. Information about council services is available 24/7 through the Council's website and the public can carry out a wide variety of transactions with the Council online.</p>

Other Issues

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

When the Council was last reviewed in 1998, we operated the committee system of decision making, which involved three programme committees¹ together with an overarching Policy and Resources Committee². Each of the committees, which comprised of 20 councillors each on the Arts & Recreation and Housing & Health Committees, 17 on the Building & Works Committee, and 16 on the Policy and Resources Committee, had their own delegated powers and budgets. However, in certain cases, decisions required multiple reports to various committees in order to consider all aspects of service and resource implications. In most cases, the types of decision those committees took then were decisions that, today, would be taken by an Executive comprising of a maximum of ten councillors.

The Local Government Act 2000 was introduced in order to address the silo approach to decision making under the committee system, to make the decision makers more accountable for their decisions, and to streamline and speed up decision-making generally by involving fewer councillors in the process.

It is clear then, with a maximum of ten councillors involved in making key decisions under executive arrangements, we do not need as many councillors as we did under the former committee system.

Alongside the Leader and Cabinet model, the Council adopted a new Constitution to support efficient and effective decision making. The Council's Constitution was based upon the model Constitution produced by the Secretary of State at the time the Local Government Act 2000 was enacted. This included an expanded scheme of delegation to support streamlined decision making. As well as a different governance structure, the size and shape of the Council's services have changed since the last review:

- We have outsourced a number of services – for example, leisure management, and G Live (our entertainment venue)
- Although we have retained our housing stock, we have sought alternative means by which we can deliver affordable housing. For example, in 2016, we established North Downs Housing Limited to be the housing trading arm of Guildford Borough Council, whose objectives are to identify housing need in the borough; increase provision for lower income households; generate a financial return, accelerate development of brownfield land in the borough and deliver homes for rent and sale. As at 31 March 2020, NDH owned 40 residential properties.
- We are currently undertaking a fundamental transformation programme (Future Guildford) to redesign the manner in which we deliver services to our residents
- New legislation introduced since the last review has also changed how we deliver services and the councillors' role in that regard, for example the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005

¹ Arts & Recreation, Building & Works, and Housing & Health

² together with the usual regulatory committees

In proposing a reduction from 48 to 44 councillors, the Council has recognised the need to make its contribution towards the challenging savings required over the next three to four years and beyond. This is important not only in itself, but as a positive signal to staff and to the public. Identifiable savings that could be achieved through a reduction in Council size to 44, would be in the order of £30,000 p.a. whilst the level of engagement and representation is maintained.

Finally, it is important to recognise the changes in wider society. Service and communication technology has changed dramatically. The internet and social media have created new opportunities for residents to self-serve, access information and request services. Electronic communications have replaced letters as the main communication channel for residents contacting their councillors.

Summary

11. 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 number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate any 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.

Alternatives:

In considering a Council size smaller than the 44 that we are suggesting, we have looked at the implications of reducing the number of councillors further to 42 but, on balance, feel that this would not provide sufficient Councillor capacity to undertake the range of roles set out in this proposal or offer sufficient community leadership. It is also recognised that the Borough will continue to see population growth and, therefore, an increase in electorate.

In considering a Council size larger than the current 48, we have looked at the implications of both the status quo and increasing the number of councillors to 50 but feel that the existing Council size had been established for a very different governance structure. There is a significantly more streamlined decision-making process in place now and the Council's structure and services have also undergone, and are currently undergoing, significant change. Whilst there has been an increase in population and electorate since the 1998 review, it is not felt that these governance and structure changes justify the status quo or an increase in Council size.

Given that the aims of the review are to enable the Commission to recommend electoral arrangements, including council size, which are appropriate for Guildford, and ensure that the Council has the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business of the council in an effective way now and in the future, the Council has concluded that the small reduction in the Council size to 44 would achieve these aims but without:

- adversely affecting the needs of constituents or councillors' ability to fulfil their roles as strategic or community leaders, or
- impacting on the Council's ability to deliver its services or to deliver effective scrutiny, regulation and partnership working.

The Council also wishes to continue with all-out elections every four years.