Appendix A

North Northamptonshire Council

Council Size Submission: Template

[North Northamptonshire 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.

This submission is made following resolution by Full Council of North Northamptonshire Council. The submission was recommended to Council following consideration by the Democracy and Standards Committee which is able to address electoral arrangements within its Terms of Reference. The Committee formed a cross-party Member Working Group which undertook the work to complete this template. Members were assisted in their work by senior officers of the Council.

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 will be aware that following local government reorganisation it was both the ambition of the new unitary Council and the expectation of the Ministry of Housing & Local Government (now Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities) that an Electoral Review would commence in the first year of the new Council.

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.

i) **When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?**

North Northamptonshire Council was formed on 1 April 2021 following local government reorganisation and it has no plans to change these arrangements at this juncture.

ii) **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?**

Unitarisation has brought with it both opportunities and challenges. The opportunity to create a new single tier authority to work with residents, businesses, and other partners to help strengthen the local economy, create jobs, improve infrastructure and transport links, protect vulnerable people and improve life chances through education and training – supporting greater resilience within families and communities. Financially, the new Council could benefit from economies of scale, and, through the aggregation of the previous sovereign councils, it had the opportunity to streamline processes, consolidate and reduce the number of contracts, better manage assets for the benefit of the area and improve end to end service delivery.

Transformation plays a key part in maximising those opportunities, helping to reimagine the shape of the Council and how it interacts with the community and other stakeholders whilst recognising the need to ensure the Authority can demonstrate value for money, improve services and achieve efficiencies. Over time transformation can deliver real positive change, however, there is a need to first stabilise and create a solid foundation on which to build. Inevitably this takes time and is one of the major challenges facing new Councils such as North Northamptonshire.

For the time being the incomplete aggregation and rationalisation of council services is generating additional workload, in addition to the established norm across the country. This work is likely to completed over the next 5 years. However, overall, it is considered that North Northamptonshire councillors on NNC will continue to have a greater workload than in other councils with much lower growth, based on the 2011-2031 and 2019-2041 projected growth figures referenced later in the submission.

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

A second OFSTED monitoring visit was conducted in November 2021 covering the local authority's children's services. The report summarised that "Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior leaders have continued to focus on improvement. This has resulted in steady progress in improving services for care leavers and 16- and 17-year-old children in care" [1]

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[1] Children's services monitoring visit - OFSTED

iv) What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?

Locally, the Council still shares a number of its services with West Northamptonshire Council which are in the process of being disaggregated. This has already led to the decision to have separate Directors of Public Health and Children's Services, having initially been provided on a joint basis.

Nationally, the funding regime is currently on a one-year basis, so any significant changes to the level of grants received, taxation and legislation in the near and medium future may require the Council to review its organisational processes going forward. Furthermore, the reduced funding envelope for local government means the ability to transform services effectively is hampered.

v) What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

We are already stretched to the limit over committee membership across the council due to the number of councillors and who can serve on which committees. I.e. Executive cannot serve on Scrutiny and do not have the capacity to serve on regulatory committees. We already have daytime meetings in order to accommodate business and to enable efficient use of officer and member time and availability.

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?

1   North Northamptonshire Council

1.1   North Northamptonshire Council was created on 1st April 2021 and replaced the legacy councils of Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council, Borough Council of Wellingborough and Northamptonshire County Council.

1.2   Covering 986.5 km^2 the area is situated within the valleys of the Rivers Welland and Nene. It is characterised by a broadly rural landscape interspersed with a number of historic market towns and new urban areas including the main centres of Corby, Kettering,

Rushden and Wellingborough, as well as the A6 towns of Rothwell, Desborough, Burton Latimer and Irthlingborough and those along the A45/A605 at Thrapston, Raunds, Oundle and Higham Ferrers.

1.3   There are 106 parishes within the North Northamptonshire Council administrative boundary, however it is important to note that there is a wide variance in the distribution and size of parishes situated within the current 26 unitary wards. A number of the smaller parish areas either do not have a parish council or are grouped or warded into larger parish council areas. In total there are 13 town councils, 76 parish councils and 17 parish meetings. The full list of parish areas including the frequency of their meetings (which has a direct impact on councillor workloads) is attached at Appendix 1.

1.4   Thrapston Ward is a clear example that demonstrates the range of variances in community size and representation. Covering a total of 25 parish areas ranging in size from around 40 electors in the hamlet of Pilton (which is grouped with the parishes of Stoke Doyle and Wadenhoe) to nearly 5600 electors in the market town of Thrapston.

1.5   From 1st April 2021, the newly formed town councils of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough extended the local community tier of governance to the non-parished urban areas previously administered by the legacy local authorities. These newly created parish areas adopted the warding patterns of the previous legacy districts and boroughs with their geographical areas spanning multiple unitary wards.

1.6   There are a number of ecologically important wildlife sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the area including the ancient woodland of Rockingham Forest, and the internationally recognised wetland site of The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits which extends across the area from West Northamptonshire and on into Cambridgeshire. In addition, the Irchester Old Lodge Pit has identified connections to the middle Jurassic period and has been categorized as a site of national importance.

2   Economy, Education and Training

2.1   Benefitting from exceptional rail and transportation networks, including the A14 'Trans European Route' and the Midland Mainline railway to cities including Nottingham and Leicester in the north, London St Pancras in the south, and on into mainland Europe via Eurostar, North Northamptonshire has a prosperous and diverse economic base which includes high performance technologies, logistics, manufacturing, agriculture, food and drink, tourism and retail.

2.2   Situated at the centre of the national distribution network, North Northamptonshire provides a hub for the distribution of goods throughout the country and into Europe. Since the collapse of the local boot and shoe industry and the closure of the Corby steel works, the area has become particularly attractive to logistics companies which benefit the local economy, however, this can result in additional burdens. The volume of road haulage and freight transport has a significant impact on highway maintenance, underground utilities and the throughflow of traffic. There are competing tensions between improving efficiency of freight transport, tackling the impact of road haulage on local communities and reducing environmental impacts and village intrusions. The pressures from out-commuting (around 31% of the employed labour force living in North Northamptonshire) into surrounding economic centres such as Northampton and further afield to Bedford, Milton Keynes, London, Cambridge, Oxford, Leicester and Birmingham also places a significant pressure

on the road and rail networks, as does the lack of an east-west rail-link and an inadequate rural bus network.

2.3   The 2011 Census shows that East Northamptonshire residents travel an average 19.3 km to work compared to 15.4 km for Corby, 15.8 for Kettering and 16.3 km for Wellingborough residents. The average for England is 14.9 km and for Northamptonshire 16.5 km.

2.4   In addition, the North Northamptonshire Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 reflects the ongoing development of enhanced partnership working with bus service operators to address issues around the provision of bus services across the council area. Less than half of bus service use is on urban services. Whilst the majority of passengers travel on interurban and rural services linking the main towns and surrounding villages, in some areas issues around a lack of linking services geographically both within and between urban centres still exist.   There are many villages that do not have access to a bus service and in some areas (including the larger centres) there is a heavy reliance on voluntary transport services.

2.5   Data from the Office for National Statistics (Oct 2019 to Sept 2020) shows that North Northamptonshire has high levels of economic activity. The most recent data suggests that Kettering and Wellingborough experience over 76% of residents (aged 16 to 64) that are employees compared to 66% across the East Midlands and 65% across England as a whole. East Northamptonshire has a significantly higher proportion of self-employed individuals at 16% compared to the national average of 10%, however approximately 60% of East Northants working persons are those that commute to their jobs, out of the area. There is also a correlation between the level of economic inactivity which is mainly as a result of a higher proportion of those economically inactive residents being retired.

2.6   The variances in diversity across the area also extend to the average household income and the proportion of qualified residents. England as a whole has an average of 27% who have gained a higher education degree or professional qualification; however, the majority of the area is below this average. The East of the area has the greatest proportion of Level 4 qualified residents at 24%.

2.7   The proportion of residents with no qualifications is greatest in Wellingborough with 28% and Corby with 26% compared to 25% across the East Midlands and 22% across England.

2.8   In terms of income, the regional average is £36,120, however there is a disparity of approximately £10,000 between the highest earning areas in the East (£41,027) and Corby (£32,014) in the North.

2.9   When income is measured against house prices, the average affordability ratio for North Northamptonshire Council is around 7.15 compared to Northamptonshire at 7.73 and England at 7.84.

2.10   HM Land Registry statistics show house prices in North Northamptonshire saw a 14.6% increase between December 2020 and 2021 from £219,375 to £251,477.   Information specific to the previous district and boroughs prior to amalgamation showed that between January and October 2020, East Northamptonshire saw the biggest annual house price growth of 8.3 per cent, with an average house price of £251,174 according to Land Registry figures. Property prices in Kettering during the same period saw growth of 6.8 per cent with the average price of a house at £216,829.

3 Population and housing

3.1 Situated in the southern part of the East Midlands, the area forms part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area and has one of the fastest growing populations in the country. Corby, Kettering, Rushden and Wellingborough have all been identified as growth towns in the Growth Area Strategy and North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

3.2 The North Northamptonshire Variant Migration Model and Joint Core Strategy estimated that 40,000 additional homes would be delivered across the council area which translates into a 23% increase in population between 2011 and 2031. With this additional population comes significant additional infrastructure pressures in terms of considering planning and housing development schemes, other housing issues, school provision, provision of health and leisure facilities, additional mineral extraction from quarries, and environmental concerns and issues associated with flood alleviation.

3.3 The table below shows the Office for National Statistics population forecasts from 2021 to 2041. North Northamptonshire shows a growth rate of 13% over this period of the next 20 years. This is higher than the growth in the East Midlands of 9.2% and England 7.11%.

ONS 2018-based subnational population projections

AREA	2021	2031	2041	Increase	% increase in population
Corby	74,467	83,138	89,610	15,143	16.9
East Northamptonshire	97,429	106,357	112,680	15,251	13.53
Kettering	104,797	113,984	121,208	16,411	13.53
Wellingborough	81,290	85,218	88,486	7,196	8.13
North Northamptonshire	357,983	388,697	411,985	54,001	13.1
Northamptonshire	770,276	824,281	863,771	93,435	10.82
East Midlands	4,917,711	5,219,026	5,446,988	529,277	9.72
England	56,989,570	59,389,102	61,353,965	4,364,395	7.11

3.4 During the Joint Core Strategy period, large scale housing developments are planned as follows:

Corby – 14,200 homes
East Northamptonshire – 8,400 homes
Kettering – 10,400 homes
Wellingborough – 7,000 homes

3.5 Population estimates suggest the highest percentage increases in population will be in the Corby urban area with an estimated growth rate of around 17% between 2021 and 2041.

3.6   Looking forward to 2041, North Northamptonshire is expected to see a 13% increase in population from 2021 equating to an additional 54,000 people. Approximately 28,000 properties are anticipated to be built during the period 2021-2031. Sustainable Urban Extensions are already planned/underway in the following areas:

North East Corby - Priors Hall and Weldon Park

Corby West

East Kettering - Hanwood Park

Rushden East

Rothwell North

Irthlingborough West

Wellingborough East - Stanton Cross

Wellingborough North - Glenvale Park

In addition to the SUEs listed above there is the development of the Tresham Garden Village [2] of 1,500 homes and there are also a number of smaller developments either in progress or allocated in local and neighbourhood plans.

3.7   North Northamptonshire is also expected to see an increase in life expectancy rates with a greater proportion of the population in the 0-19 and 65-year-old age ranges. In the 0-19-year-old age range the anticipated increase for Northamptonshire is expected to be 7.22% compared to 6.00% for England as a whole leading to greater pressure on school places particularly in North Northamptonshire where the increase is projected to be greatest. The increase in the over 65 population is expected to be greater with a 25.89% increase across Northamptonshire compared to 19.38% for England as a whole over the next 10 years. It is anticipated that by 2041 an estimated 26% of the UK population will be in the 65+ age group.

3.8   In Northamptonshire 68.8% of people live in urban areas. With a growing proportion of the population in North Northamptonshire being in the over 65s age group and living in the more rural areas there will be increased pressures in terms of health services and the provision of social care. Poor transport links in the rural areas may add to the isolation of vulnerable groups leading to a greater reliance on voluntary transport services, and an increased need for public open spaces and the provision of more accessible spaces and services.

3.9   Across North Northamptonshire there is a wide variance in the ranking score in the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Whilst some areas demonstrate a level of affluence this is in contrast to other parts of the area which show much higher levels of deprivation. A link to the IMD 2019 profile prepared by the historic Northamptonshire County Council can be found below. [3]

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[2] Our Proposals – Tresham Garden Village (treshamvillage.uk)
[3] IMD Profile NORTHAMPTONSHIRE - Oct 2019.pdf

3.10 Corby area has the highest concentration of the most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) being ranked 70th in the national tables, compared to Kettering and Wellingborough ranked 161st and 124th respectively. The area previously covered by East Northamptonshire shows the lowest levels of deprivation being ranked 226th in the table.

In 2021, North Northamptonshire Council's Scrutiny Commission highlighted Avondale (Windmill Ward), Kettering, Kingswood and Hazel Leys, Corby and Queensway, Wellingborough as areas of North Northants which require attention, arising from the Government's Levelling Up White Paper. A community-based walk around followed by workshops led by community leaders took place to address the work that needs to be done to improve the communities' standard of living.

3.11 In the Government's Levelling up the UK white paper published in February 2022 North Northamptonshire is identified as a local authority to benefit from the new Education Investment Areas fund which aims to drive school improvements through funding directed at intervening in underperforming schools, supporting growth of strong trusts, and retaining high quality teachers. In addition, North Northamptonshire has also been highlighted to benefit from the Community Renewal Fund whilst Corby was identified as one of 15 towns in the East Midlands to benefit from a share of the £346m Towns Fund.

3.12 The data also shows that 3 LSOAs have also become more deprived moving from decile 3 into decile 2:

Wellingborough: Ruskin Avenue, Goldsmith Road

Irthlingborough: High Street

Corby: Primrose Close, Dumble Close, Bernshaw Close, Catchpole Close, Waver Close area

Some rural areas have also seen a negative shift towards deprivation including the parishes of Pytchley and the area of Church Street in Broughton with a move from D6 to D4 and the parishes of Ecton, Sywell and Mears Ashby seeing a move from D9 to D7.

3.13 The most common type of tenure across North Northamptonshire is owned households. The table below shows the most recent breakdown of housing tenure as at 2020 (note: the figures do not include temporary accommodation homes).

Area	LA (incl owned by other Las)	Private Registered Provider (previously Housing Association or Registered Social Landlord	Other public sector	Private Sector	Total
Corby	4615	1176	0	24422	30213
East Northamptonshire	1	5334	6	35363	40704
Kettering	3625	2842	4	39219	45690
Wellingborough	0	6311	0	29257	35568

Corby area has the highest proportion of social rented homes at 19%. [Statutory] Homelessness[4] across North Northamptonshire is generally low although the rate is above the England average. The highest rate of homelessness of 6.4 per 1000 households is found in the Wellingborough area (2017/18 data), of which 85% of households fall within the White ethnic group, compared with other ethnic groups.

4   Demographic Profile

4.1   According to ONS data, the population structure is divided fairly equally between males and females with 49.3% of the population being male and 50.7% being female.

4.2   60.8% of the population is in the 16-64 age group with 22.9% in the 0-17 age range and 18.7% in the 65+ age group.

4.3   The table below shows a breakdown of the ethnicity of the population in North Northamptonshire. Within this figure there are significant regional variances. Wellingborough has a very diverse and multi-cultural population with a strong sense of community with black and minority ethnic groups representing around 11% of the population of the town.   The main minority ethnic groups are Indian and African-Caribbean, whilst other groups include Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Irish, Polish, Romanian, and other Eastern European nationalities.

Office for National Statistics LA population profile (as a % of each ethnic group)

Area	Asian or Asian British	Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	White	Other ethnic group
Corby	1.3	1.6	1.4	95.5	0.2
East	1.3	0.7	1.2	96.6	0.2
Kettering	3.2	1.1	1.4	93.9	0.4
Wellingborough	5.9	3.6	2.9	87.3	0.3
North Northamptonshire	2.9	1.7	1.7	93.4	0.3
East Midlands	6.5	1.8	1.9	89.3	0.6
England	7.8	3.5	2.3	85.4	1.0

5   Electorate Forecasts

5.1   The forecasts produced for this electoral review have been made using the methodology set out in the LGBCE guidance for Polling District Forecasting Tool. In addition, local

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[4] https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/statutory-homelessness/latest

Note: - A household is considered statutorily homeless if a local authority decides that they do not have a legal right to occupy accommodation that is accessible, physically available and which would be reasonable for the household to continue to live in.

knowledge and intelligence has also informed some of the estimates, considering anticipated housing developments and future growth.

Statistics drawn from the following sources: -

Office for National Statistics, Population Profiles for Local Authorities

Office for National Statistics, Subnational estimates of population

Office for National Statistics, Subnational estimates of dwellings by tenure

Northamptonshire County Council – Homelessness in Northamptonshire, JSNA Insight Pack August 2019

North Northamptonshire Bus Services Improvement Plan Oct 2021

Northamptonshire County Council – Demography Update JSNA Insight Pack Sept 2019

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Table 100, Live tables on dwelling stock

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – IoD2019 Interactive Dashboard

Northamptonshire County Council, IMD Profile Northamptonshire Oct 2019

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy Government Offices for the South East, East Midlands, East of England

North Northamptonshire Joint Planning and Delivery Unit, Joint Health Study January 2018

Levelling up the UK February 2022 Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by Command of Her Majesty

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.
These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
Governance Model	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?*
		The Council has adopted hybrid governance arrangements. Although these are legally a Leader and Executive form of governance, it includes the addition of cross-party advisory panels which recommend items to the Executive and promote a more open and inclusive form of decision making. The Council believes that this provides clear leadership and efficient decision making whilst still ensuring cross party involvement in policy formulation and decision making. It is likely that this governance structure will remain in place and is the best governance model for North Northamptonshire. A

diagram of the council's full governance structure can be found at Appendix 2 to this submission.

> *The Executive model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?*

The Executive is made up of the Leader and up to nine other Executive Members. These will include a Deputy Leader who is chosen and appointed by the Leader. Considering the size of the authority and the breadth of services, it is likely that the maximum number of the members will be appointed to the Executive (as is currently the case).

The Leader may also appoint Assistant Executive Members to advise and assist Executive Members in the discharge of their duties within their portfolios (there are currently three Assistant Executive Members).

Authority is not delegated to officers for Key Decisions and therefore they must be made by the Leader or the Executive. An Assistant Executive Member is not authorised to make any decision normally made by an Executive Member.

> *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?*

Strategic policies are driven and approved by the Executive. There is not an Executive Delegation Scheme in place to individual Executive members however in order to make decision making as efficient as possible it is likely that this may change in the future. For context, the new authority is still stabilising, and the Executive is made up of members from the predecessor councils who, whilst working closely together on a shadow basis, were not formally working together in a sovereign capacity. It is therefore sensible that decisions are taken through the Executive at this time.

The Executive is advised by five cross party Executive Advisory Panels that are chaired by the relevant Executive Member, with other Executive Members attending as necessary. They are able to discuss important reports and policies prior to the Executive considering them. They are able to provide recommendations to the Executive to inform their decision making. They may also help with the formulation of policy allowing cross party involvement in the strategic direction of the authority.

The five Executive Advisory Panels cover the following areas: -

		i) Health and Wellbeing & Vulnerable People ii) Climate Change, Environment and Growth iii) Education, Skills and Employment iv) Service Delivery, Performance and Customers v) Planning Policy The Scrutiny function of the Council is essential to holding the Executive to account and is described in more detail in the relevant section below. The Council has two Scrutiny Committees, one which focusses on finance and resources and the other which is overarching and can scrutinise all other matters. The Committees have the ability to call in any executive item on the Forward Plan (Key Decisions). They focus on key priorities for the Council and make recommendations to the Executive/Council in relation to those areas. Strategic Policy is a likely outcome of recommendations which will then go through the Executive Advisory Panel and Executive as outlined above. As the governance of the Council matures, it may be necessary to increase the number of Executive Advisory Panels and Scrutiny committees for the future, however based on the current number of councillors and workloads, this is not viable at present and considered unrealistic. Chief Officers have delegated authority to approve operational policies and they may sub delegate authority further. Executive members are consulted prior to approval. These are however regularly approved by the Executive. It is noted that this is an interim approach due to the nature of the new organisation and the distinction between Executive Members driving strategic policy and Officers within those parameters putting in place operational policy will be more present as the authority stabilises. The Council has delegated certain non-executive functions which are not reserved to the Council as a whole to Committees listed below and to officers as described later in the relevant section below. The Council considers that the committee structure is appropriate at the moment for the type and scale of the Authority and in keeping with other similar local authorities. However, the Council is in its infancy and so this may be subject to change in the future and will be kept under review. Some of the Committees are statutory and therefore they are essential to upholding legislative requirements. Some of the Committees are not statutory but are considered to be essential to effective decision making and ensure good governance for the Council.

| | | The Executive has established two Executive Committees which are joint committees with West Northamptonshire Council. The Shared Services Committee reviews services that are delivered jointly by the authorities and the arrangements for delivering them. This will continue in place until the authorities have disaggregated all services. It is possible that services will not disaggregate and therefore appropriate oversight through the Committee will always be required. The Children's Trust Committee manages the relationship between North and West Northamptonshire Councils in relation to services delivered by the Children's Trust. For context, in 2019 Northamptonshire County Council children's social care services were placed under a "Direction" by the Department for Education for the Council to work with the Secretary of State for Education and/or the Children's Services Commissioner towards the establishment of a council wholly owned Children's Trust. It was formed in November 2020 and now delivers children's social care and targeted early help services on behalf of both North and West Northamptonshire councils.

The Council utilises Task and Finish Groups, Working Groups and Boards to assist with advisory and operational matters. These include the Member Transformation Board, Constitution Working Group and the Boundary Commission Working Group.

Other working groups which would normally be listed as internal to the organisation or included on a separate list of Outside Bodies where this is delivered externally, for example are the

- Corporate Parenting Board
- Adoption and Fostering Panels
- Pension Committee
- Local Pension Board
- (Local Pension) Investment Subcommittee
- Health and Wellbeing Board

Additional committees are also in development and will need to be supported, including The Greenway and Destination Nene Valley Boards.

Children's Services functions are currently carried out by the Children's Trust externally but could be returned in-house in three years' time.

It should be noted that the new authority made the decision to implement a lean committee structure to exercise functions. Although the workload of the new authority was unknown at the time of its first annual meeting in May 2021, we will be looking to increase the number of committees with |

| | | a new Grants Committee, a Strategic Grants Committee and a Greenways Committee that will add additional workload to the current councillor membership. There will also be a requirement for a further committee to deal with formal companies and to make key strategic decisions in these areas.

The Council and the Executive have a very high workload, which is to be expected of a new authority where decision making is in its infancy and appropriate levels of officer delegation are still being developed.

In terms of whether the Committees could be streamlined any further, due to the overload of the committees this is not an option and even investigating a merger of the Democracy and Standards Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee is not considered viable as both committees have different remits and skill sets required.

The Council considers it imperative that members have clear focus and skills to consider the matters brought to the Committees and the workload for the Democracy and Standards Committee is already substantial and has led to an increase in its membership from 7 to 13 members to cope with its increasing workload. By not merging it with another committee, this will ensure a strong governance framework is retained. If the review was to determine that council size should be reduced, the Council considers it would be unable to reduce the Committees which demonstrates that it is as lean as possible at the current time.

The Planning Committees are considered in the relevant section of the submission.

In addition to Members' attendance at meetings, Members who act as chairs (and vice-chairs) to contribute to agenda setting, attend conferences, attend additional training and briefings, liaising with lead officers in the service area.

The total average time commitment for training alone, to date across all 78 members, is on average 26 hours per councillor.

Members will also on occasion need to take a place on a committee for which they are a substitute. Depending on the frequency of substitution, this could significantly impact on the level of commitment required of those Members. Substitutions are arranged in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the each of the Committees set out in the Councils Constitution. Named substitutes are appointed to Committees and each recognised political group is able to appoint the same amount of substitutes as substantive |

members. Further detail regarding the extensive time commitment required by Members is addressed in the accompanying Options Paper with an analysis of the impact of a smaller or larger cohort of Members on that commitment.

The Council also appoints Members to a number of outside bodies. As a result of unitary transition, there were many instances of duplicate membership of Outside Bodies arising from predecessor council arrangements. The Scrutiny Commission undertook work to ensure that the list of outside bodies was appropriate for North Northamptonshire and that membership added value to the area, approved by the Leader or Council, as required. Representation on outside bodies is therefore at an appropriate level and will be maintained through requirements for members to report on added value from their representation. The list may change further as a result of reporting mechanisms and as a result increase and put further pressure on members. Outside bodies range in frequency, location and complexity, with some appointments more onerous than others. It should be noted that outside of the formal Outside Body process, a number of councillors, both Executive and ward councillors, will also sit voluntarily on local boards, committees and working groups in contributing to the local area. A full list of the Outside Bodies appointed to is available at Appendix 3 to the Submission.

> ➢ *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.*

The Council's hybrid governance arrangements were adopted following formulation and debate by the former sovereign councils which formed the Shadow Authority, prior to local government reorganisation on 1 April 2021 and have been in effect for less than 12 months.

These hybrid arrangements provide for effective and streamlined decision making whilst allowing for significant cross-party involvement in aiding decision making and allowing for policy formulation. This is at a time of necessary development and change in service provisions being provided to communities following workforce amalgamation and disaggregation and as the Council supports the local economy in reinvigorating itself following the covid pandemic and its need to adapt to longer term societal impacts, such as climate change.

In operating a hybrid governance arrangement, a key benefit to the Executive and the council as a whole of cross-party

		input is that it is able to represent the wide demography of North Northamptonshire across its towns, villages and countryside.
Portfolios	*Key lines of explanation* Analysis	• *How many portfolios will there be?* The Leader has appointed the maximum number of Executive Members and as stated above, this is unlikely to change considering the scale and type of authority. Each Executive Member is assigned a specific portfolio, the Council currently has ten established portfolios. These are shown in the table below. _table below_ A more detailed list of Executive responsibilities can be found at Appendix 4 to the submission. The portfolios were established prior to the approval of the Corporate Plan, which overlap the Council's six priorities, listed below. Portfolios intentionally do not align directly to services to ensure that the authority focuses on delivering integrated services, prevents silo-working, and deals with the opportunities and challenges of local government re-organisation. _table below_

Name of Councillor	Portfolio Area
Cllr Jason Smithers	Leader of the Council
Cllr Helen Howell	Deputy Leader - Sport, Leisure, Culture & Tourism
Cllr David Brackenbury	Growth & Regeneration
Cllr Lloyd Bunday	Finance and Transformation
Cllr Scott Edwards	Children, Families, Education & Skills
Cllr Helen Harrison	Adults, Health & Wellbeing
Cllr David Howes	Rural Communities & Localism
Cllr Graham Lawman	Highways, Travel & Assets
Cllr Andy Mercer	Housing and Community
Cllr Harriet Pentland	Climate & Green Environment

Corporate Plan Priorities	Services Covered *(some cross-over)*
Active, fulfilled lives	• Adult Social Care • Public Health • Housing and Communities (including libraries and leisure services) • Levelling-up targets

		Better, brighter futures	• Children's Services • The Children's Trust • Public Health • Training and further education provision
		Safe and thriving places	• Growth and Regeneration • Highways and Waste • Assets and the Environment • Regulatory Services
		Green, sustainable environment	• Assets and the Environment • Growth and Regeneration • Highways and Waste • Regulatory Services
		Connected communities	• Communications and Engagement • Customer Services • Democratic and Legal Services
		Modern, public services	• All Council services • Financial Services • Customer Services • Democratic and Legal Services • Policy and Performance Service

The Leader has appointed non-Executive Members as Assistant Executive Members. Due to the size of the portfolios, it is likely that they will continue to be appointed to in the longer term. Assistant Executive Members will advise and assist Executive Members in the discharge of their duties within their portfolio(s). They do not have decision making powers but are expected to attend Executive meetings.

Portfolio holders' responsibilities necessitate attendance at a much greater number of committee meetings within the Council and associated organisations (i.e. SEMLEP, LGA, Highways etc). The role of Executive Member also necessitates undertaking work in partnership with other local authorities and external organisations.

- *What will the role of a portfolio holder be?*

Portfolio holders (as Executive members) have individual and collective responsibility to deliver integrated services and deal with the opportunities and challenges of local

government re-organisation. They are responsible for providing strategic direction to the Corporate Leadership Team and individual directors, who in turn are responsible for delivering operationally.

Key duties of portfolio holders include
- reviewing council policies and leading on them where taken to the Executive and/or Council for approval;
- consulting and communicating with members of all-party groups, council officers and key partners to make sure decisions are well formed and that council policies are widely understood and positively promoted;
- acting as spokesperson within and outside the council for matters within the portfolio;
- having responsibility for liaison with Chief Officers and other senior officers responsible for the services within the portfolio;
- answer and account to the council, the community, and the press for matters within the portfolio;
- responding within agreed timescales to the recommendations of relevant scrutiny committees and panels
- seeking to involve and consult non-Executive members in the area of work for which they have responsibility, particularly through chairing of, and attendance at, monthly meetings of Executive Advisory Panels;
- representing the council and the political administration in the community and elsewhere as required by the Leader.

- *Will this be a full-time position?*

Executive members have to attend a significant amount of both informal and formal meetings, liaise with fellow councillors and officers and provide strategic direction to senior officers. Given the level of responsibility, it is expected that the role of Executive Member is a full-time one. This is backed up by the councillor survey which revealed on average, Executive members spend 76 hours per month working on their portfolios (in addition to their other duties as a councillor).

Executive members chair Executive Advisory Panels which are held monthly. These are an integral part of the Council's governance arrangements.

More information on executive arrangements can be found within the Council's Constitution. [5]

[5] North Northamptonshire Council Constitution

| | | Due to the requirements of Executive Members, it has already been necessary for the Leader to appoint three Assistant Executive Members in order to help manage their workloads. Assistant Executive Members are precluded from sitting on scrutiny and regulatory committees and so also impacts on the workload of remaining councillors.

Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?

Portfolio Holders do not have delegated authority to make decisions within their portfolios unless specifically authorised by the Executive. It is likely as the Council stabilises and executive arrangements bed in that an Executive Scheme of Delegation will be implemented which will increase workload and accountability of the Executive Members. At the current time, whilst they are not exercising authority regularly, they are involved in high level decision making and are consulted as appropriate. Authority is not delegated to officers for Key Decisions and therefore they must be made by the Leader or the Executive unless urgency provisions are utilised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader. |
|---|---|---|
| **Delegated Responsibilities** | *Key lines of explanation* | ➢ *What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?* |
| | Analysis | Within the Constitution, a scheme of delegation records the delegations to officers from both the Executive and full Council, intended to provide a streamlined, clear and simple decision-making process. It is designed to empower staff to carry out their functions and deliver the Council's services within the Budget and Policy Framework set by the Council, and subject to the guidelines set by the Council, the Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team.

The scheme of delegation excludes key decisions of the Executive, which must be taken at member level, where a decision is likely to: -
• result in the incurring of expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant (above £500,000); or
• be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.

The Executive has delegated the following functions to Joint Committees exercised alongside that of West Northamptonshire Council: -
• Shared Services – overseeing the management of services yet to be disaggregated from the former County Council, following local reorganisation in April 2021;
• Children's Trust - exercising functions on behalf of both Councils insofar as they relate to the joint ownership of, |

and commissioning of services from, the jointly owned local authority company 'The Northamptonshire Children's Trust'.

Full Council has delegated the following functions to committees, which in turn may delegate some of its decision making to Subcommittees: -

- Licensing and appeals;
    - The Committee has two subcommittees which consider licensing appeals and taxi-licensing.

- Audit and Governance;

- Democracy and Standards;
    - The Committee has the following Subcommittees and Working Groups: -
        - Constitutional Working Group;
        - Standards Assessment Panel;
        - Standards Hearing Panels;
        - Boundary Changes Committee

- Strategic Planning;

- Local area planning (x4 committees)

- Employment
    - *Two subcommittees have met to date, in order to interview and consider chief officer appointments.*

There are also additional joint committees, including the Pension Board and its subcommittees, and the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

The Council also appoints members to the Corporate Parenting Board and Safeguarding Board, chaired jointly by the portfolio holders for children services at North and West Northamptonshire Councils.

➢ *How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?*

All 78 councillors participate in major decisions relating to the budget and policy framework at full meetings of Council. 10 councillors form the Executive and 60 of the remaining 68 councillors are also decision makers as part of the wider formal decision-making processes through the regulatory and joint/partnership committees of the Council.

Of the 60 councillors involved in non-executive decision making, as part of the Council's hybrid governance arrangement, 34 councillors are also members of cross-

Topic	
	party advisory panels which recommend items to the Executive and promote a more open and inclusive form of policy formulation and decision making.

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	➢ *How will decision makers be held to account?* The principal means of accountability within the authority is delivered through the Council's scrutiny process. The Council has Scrutiny Committees which support the council. Scrutiny's role is to hold Council to account and provide reviews into Council functions where appropriate. The Committees are essential to good governance and making sure there is challenge to decision making where appropriate. Scrutiny has a duty to scrutinise other organisations, particularly Health Bodies, however, whilst in the Scrutiny work programme, to date there has been no capacity to fulfil this. ➢ *How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?* Since May 2021 (shortly after the Council was created) two Scrutiny Committees have operated. The Council has adopted an approach to scrutiny that will deliver the most impact. The overarching Scrutiny Commission (with input from Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee) agrees an annual workplan which is informed by matters of concern raised by the public/ members/ stakeholders, the Corporate Plan, the strategic risk register, performance data, the Forward Plan and published decisions. It is able to establish task and finish groups completing work on the agreed workplan, that includes for instance, Assets, Levelling Up and Outside Bodies. This means that not only will the Commission take on its own substantive work, it will provide co-ordination of a number of task and finish groups for matters that have been identified as important within the organisation. The Council believes that this will allow scrutiny to have real impact on the organisation and its external scrutiny responsibilities under the Police and Justice Act 2006 and National Health Service Act 2006. The Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee is a standing Committee which focuses primarily on the budget, as well as

reviewing and scrutinising regular monitoring reports on the revenue budget, the capital programme and the housing revenue account. Task and Finish Groups are established to scrutinise draft budget proposals and for the 2022/23 budget there have been eight meetings of the Groups. The Committee receives feedback and formulates proposals which are presented to the Executive for consideration before they submit their budget to full Council for approval in February. Executive members have been in attendance for their relevant portfolios.

The terms of reference for both Committees are attached to the Submission, as Appendix 5.

Both Committees are able to call in those decisions that have been included on the Executive Forward Plan in relation to their respective terms of reference. However, the inclusion of Executive Advisory Panels, which provide important overview work for policy and development and important decisions, have likely reduced the number of call-ins as a result of cross-party consideration of Executive reports in advance of them being decided upon. To date, the Council has not received a call in of any of its decisions, but it is still early in the life of the Council and the Council is fully supportive of call-in as a process. The Council considers call-in to be a key tool of scrutiny and welcomes the principles behind it and the ability for the Executive to re-consider policy as may be required. This is reflected in the low number of councillors required to instigate call-in as a request shall only be considered to be valid if it is signed by at least 8 members of the Council (10% of the total number of members). Of the 8 members signing, none can be members of the Executive.

Whilst data could be provided about call ins at the predecessor authorities, three of the five councils operated a committee system where call in was not available and neither of the other two remaining councils had similar hybrid governance arrangements.

Whilst providing the opportunity for elected Members to hold the Executive to account it also provides a forum for residents to seek answers to questions from Executive Members and in some cases external organisations, and to challenge proposals. Public participation is now being added to all committees.

The Executive Advisory Panels provide a cross party approach to policy formulation pre-decision, which in other authorities that undertake the more traditional executive system is usually undertaken within the scrutiny environment. They are held monthly.

➢ *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?*

If an item is added to the workplan then a Task and Finish Group is created to scrutinise and provide in depth review. This allows

		scrutiny to have real impact on the organisation, react quickly and fulfil its statutory functions in relation to crime and disorder, health and education in a way that multiple Committees would not. In 2021/22, there have been three Task and Finish Groups established to complete matters which are key priorities for the Council. These are an additional time commitment for members and dependent on the review, members may be required to not only attend meetings but attend sites, interview the public/organisations and collect data. One off items are also included on the workplan as necessary and recurring items, such as performance, are considered to ensure that there is adequate scrutiny of the organisation. ➢ *How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?* Each scrutiny committee has 13 member places. There are currently 13 members of the Scrutiny Commission (with six reserve members) and 13 members of Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee (with seven reserve members). All reserves members are expected to undertake the same training as full scrutiny members, and to keep abreast of scrutiny activity throughout the year. ➢ *Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.* For the moment the amount of scrutiny committees is the correct number for the authority, noting its hybrid governance arrangements, although this may need to increase in the future. It should be noted that the expectation is that much of scrutiny's activity is undertaken through the work of smaller numbers of councillors via scrutiny reviews. ➢ *Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.* Each Committee has 13 members. This is a consistent number throughout the Constitution and was agreed following benchmarking with other authorities.
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?
Planning	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?*
	Analysis	From 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022, 133 planning applications have been considered by members. From the period of 1 April to the 31 December 2021, 1,705 applications have been considered under delegated powers. Our Planning Policy was recently changed by the Democracy & Standards Committee to ensure a

smoother and consistent approach throughout our planning process.

Although the dates sourced are slightly different, this gives an approximate total of 7.24% of applications determined by members.

➢ *Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?*

Comparative data is not readily available from the predecessor councils for this purpose, noting the differences in delegation arrangements following local government reorganisation, however changes to the approach adopted by North Northamptonshire Council are not currently expected.

It is worth noting however that (in government figures released in December 2021) in England the total number of district level planning applications has risen year on year by 19% (after a large dip in 2020 following the start of the pandemic and a subsequent recovery in early 2021). It is not known how quickly this is likely to return to historical averages, but at present puts a pressure on the local authority planning system. [6]

➢ *Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?*

The Council has a Strategic Planning Committee, comprising 13 councillors, which relates to town and country planning and development management in respect of applications for large scale major development, including residential developments over 250 dwellings, non-residential of 10,000m2 or more, all minerals and waste developments, energy production of 10MW or more, significant highway infrastructure implications, and cross boundary applications (relating to area committee boundaries).

The Council believes in considering less strategic planning applications, as close to residents as possible. It has four Area Planning Committees, comprising 9 councillors whose wards are situated within the defined local government boundaries of the predecessor Borough and District Councils.

The number of councillors is felt should be increased to 13 to use more local knowledge, unfortunately due to the restrictions of 78 councillors, this is currently not possible. Non planning councillors are also involved in ward related planning matters and need to keep up to date with applications and the relevant planning laws. They also attend planning meetings to speak about planning applications.

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[6] Planning applications in England: July to September 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The purpose of the Area Committees is to consider area-based planning matters not otherwise reserved for consideration by the Strategic Planning Committee or else dealt with by planning officers under delegated powers.

➢ *Will executive members serve on the planning committees?*

No, executive members do not serve on the planning committees of the Council due to the workloads they undertake and also not wishing to influence members undertaking regulatory decision making.

➢ *What will be the time commitment to the planning committee be for members?*

On average, the time commitment spent at each planning committee meeting (excluding travel time) is as follows: -

Committee	Average length of agenda setting meetings	Average length of each meeting	Total number of meetings as of 15 February 2022.
Strategic Planning	1 hour	1 hour, 12 mins	5
Area – Corby	1 hour	1 hour, 15 mins	5
Area - Kettering	1 hour	1 hour, 7 mins	7
Area – Thrapston	1 hour	2 hours, 20 mins	7
Area - Wellingborough	1 hour	1 hour, 18 mins	7

Chairs and Vice Chairs of Planning Committees will also spend additional time in preparing for agenda setting meetings, briefings and liaising with Democratic Services on matters such as public speaking on applications.

All planning committee members (including substitutes) are required to undertake six hours of training (1 day) prior to participating on the committee, with annual refresher training also required. Substitutes are also expected to keep abreast of planning matters at their designated committees through the year. All members on average will also spend up to half a day's preparation time on average to read the papers in advance of the meeting

Following approval by Council of a site visit protocol for Planning Committees in December 2021, it is expected that additional time will also be required of members to undertake site visits in advance of committee meetings, on an ad-hoc basis. Each member of a Planning Committee is also required to spend a significant amount

		of time reading through papers to enable them to exercise their quasi-judicial responsibilities effectively.
Licensing	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?*
		The Council has a Licensing and Appeals Committee dealing with functions relating to licensing registration, enforcement and duties and powers contained within relevant Licensing Act 2003, functions under the Gambling Act 2005, responsibilities under the Criminal Justice and Police Act and the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 and other relevant legislation.
		Over the first nine months that the Council has been in existence, the Committee, comprising 13 councillors has met once, with the majority of its business undertaken through 11 ad-hoc licensing sub-committees and taxi licencing panels; equating to average of 15 such meetings per annum.
		All licensing committee members and substitutes are required to undertake six hours of training (1 day) prior to participating on the committee, with annual refresher training also required. Substitutes are also expected to keep abreast of licensing matters through the year.
		➢ *And what will be the time commitment for members?*
	Analysis	Each sub-committee/panel consists of three members, with up to half a day's preparation time to read the papers in advance of the meeting and two hours required on average to conduct the panel's work (excluding travel time).
		➢ *Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?*
		Licensing panels are held on an ad hoc basis, as and when required, with any trained licensing committee member able to participate in an individual panel.
		➢ *Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?*
		To date, the majority of licensing sub-committees and taxi licensing panels have been served by a core membership of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing and Appeals Committee, together with a third ad-hoc committee member. Other members are being encouraged to participate in future meetings, to widen the experience and pool of available members.
Other Regulatory Bodies	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What will they be, and how many members will they require?*
		The Council has three additional regulatory bodies, as follows; -
	Analysis	i) Democracy and Standards Committee;

The Committee comprises of 13 members (which only recently has increased from an original number of 7, due to its large amount of casework).

Much of the work of the committee is in making necessary recommendations in relation to decision making governance, elections, Community Governance and Boundary Reviews on behalf of the Council. The Standards responsibilities of the Committee are to oversee and develop the Council's Code of Conduct and the overall standards of conduct for Council Members, co-opted Members, and Parish and Town Councillors of North Northamptonshire.

The committees and working groups require up to half a day's preparation time to read the papers in advance of the meeting and two hours required on average to conduct the individual working group's work (excluding travel time) A very high level of familiarisation work is required on the Constitution. All members are required to undertake training on standards matters, to deal with standards cases. A standards case may take extensive time with the assessment and decision processes.

Very detailed and time-consuming work is required for the Boundary Changes Working Group and has already required extensive preparation and many meetings within and off committee environment.

The Committee has established a standing Constitution Working Group, comprising six members of the Committee on a cross party basis. The Working Group meets monthly and reviews the operation of the governance of the Council, making regular recommendations for changes to improve the operation of the Constitution, as is to be expected from a living document at an early stage of the Council. Such recommendations are considered by the Committee and in turn, full Council. The Monitoring Officer is able to make changes to the Constitution utilising their delegated powers, where such changes are minor and/or consequential (for example, as a result in the change of legislation).

ii) Audit and Governance Committee;

The purpose of the Committee, comprising 10 members and 3 external independent persons, is to act as an advisory committee to the Council and the Executive on audit and governance issues. The functions that are discharged by the Committee are not Executive functions and cannot be discharged by the Executive. Responsibilities include the audit functions, the regulatory framework, accounts, and risk management of the Council,

The Committee meets bi-monthly, six times per annum, on average for two hours (excluding travel time) at each meeting.

iii) Employment Committee

The purpose of the Committee, in general, is to deal with employment matters relating to specified senior officers. It also determines pay awards on locally agreed Pay Conditions and approves significant staffing and organisational reviews.

The Employment Committee is able to appoint Sub Committees and in its first year of operation has appointed two such Committees, delegating to them the power to make senior officer appointments.

➢ *Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.*

The number and breadth of regulatory member bodies that the Council has is considered the correct number required in order to support delivery of the Council's strategic vision. In this, managerial and operational decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, which is usually the closest point of contact to the resident. Officers are empowered through the Officer Scheme of Delegation to carry out regulatory functions and deliver the Council's services within the Budget and Policy Framework set by the Council, and subject to the guidelines set by the Council, the Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team. Decisions taken by Officers carry the same weight as any decision taken by the decision-making body.

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	Members are appointed by North Northamptonshire Council to serve on a range of Outside Bodies. An "Outside Body" covers organisations such as national and regional Key Strategic Bodies, Trusts, Voluntary Bodies, Charities, Community Associations, and Companies. Service on Outside Bodies is an established part of a Councillor's role and a Member appointed to an external body will be able to use their knowledge and skills both as a Council Member, and as a representative of their communities, to assist the organisation to which they are appointed, as well as the Council which they represent.

A Panel, established by the Scrutiny Commission, drew up a list of notified Outside Bodies for the Council in its first year. Due to the size and scale of the Authority, and member commitments, it has |

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been necessary to be as strategic as possible on deciding which Outside Bodies to appoint to, with there currently being 63 such Outside Bodies. The list will be reviewed on an annual basis as to whether the appointment is a statutory requirement, is consistent with the Council's strategic objectives and/or adds value to the Council's activities.

A copy of the full list of Outside Bodies appointed to by the Council is at Appendix 3 to the Submission.

➢ *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?*

The Leader and three other members of the Executive are members of the Local Government Association, and the Leader is also a member of East Midlands Councils.

The leader appoints to 37 strategic bodies that require at least 42 appointments in total, many of which are taken up by portfolio holders, with a further 10 significant partnership register bodies that require appointment to as well.

In terms of community outside bodies, the Council appoints to 14 such bodies (one member for each). In surveying across all members, the average time spent on outside bodies per month is 11 hours, however when focussing specifically on portfolio holders the average rises to approximately 20 hours.

➢ *What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?*

As well as participating in the activities of the Council, members also have a vital responsibility at the centre of community life, including working with a variety of local organisations such as health services, schools, police, local businesses, town and parish councils, and voluntary organisations. Members are expected to develop a shared understanding of local issues and ensure that communities make the most of all the opportunities available to them.
In addition to Outside Bodies, on average, councillors spend seven hours per month preparing for/attending community boards and their working groups.

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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?*
		Councillors take their representational role with electors extremely seriously, engaging with their constituents in a number of ways to participate in the work of the Council, for example: -
		i) Bringing the views of their communities into the council's decision-making process;
		ii) Effectively representing the interests of their ward and of individual constituents;
		iii) Dealing with individual casework and acting as an advocate for constituents in resolving their particular concerns or grievances;
		iv) Responding to constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and impartially;
		v) Promoting and bringing to the attention of constituents ways of participating in decision making, such as through formal consultation, presenting petitions, asking questions at meetings, and applying for grants through individual ward councillors' Member Empowerment Funds.
	Analysis	It should also be noted that a number of councillors have very rural wards and have to travel large distances, not just to carry out council meetings, but to attend parish meetings and deal with constituent enquiries that require face to face liaison.
		➢ *Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?*
		The Council does not have area committees, other than those for local planning decisions. However, a Member Empowerment Fund is being established which will provide each of the 78 ward councillors a fund of circa £2000 per annum from 2022/23 onwards to support local projects.
		➢ *How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?*
		Based on a recent survey responded to by half of the current North Northamptonshire Councillors, the average time spent on casework is 15 hours per week, the vast majority of which are via email and telephone. To a lesser extent, councillors also receive and respond to letters, hold surgeries, visit schools and other community groups, conduct walk-abouts and meet in person –

Casework		however direct interactions have necessarily been curtailed during and arising from the pandemic.
		Increasingly, councillors are utilising social media channels, such as Facebook and twitter as alternative and new methods of communication with, and to gain the views of, their constituents.
		The average number of constituent contacts is 13 per week, per councillor.
		➢ *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?*
		Councillors receive a copy of the electoral register and a monthly list of electoral roll changes and so are able to monitor changes to their electorate over time and help them engage in canvassing. Councillors also address schools, minority groups and other representative bodies to encourage electoral participation and visiting officers will engage on the doorstep in the months outside of the annual canvass to maintain the accuracy of the electoral register and provide the opportunity for constituents to engage in the electoral process.
		➢ *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?*
		Councillors are involved at all levels of the community, this can involve representing their constituents at commemorative events and services, local markets, community fetes, welcoming and encouraging new and existing business owners to understand and apply for grants, supporting local residents to increase the wellbeing of the local area, such as addressing crime, flood risk, health messaging etc.
		➢ *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?*
		The Council does not currently have an area governance structure and there are no plans to put one in place at the current time.
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?*
	Analysis	Based on the same councillor survey described above, councillors spend an average of 15 hours per week dealing with

constituents' casework, representing/supporting the community and/or attending Town/Parish Council meetings.

> *What support do members receive?*

Councillors undertake their own casework, but are encouraged to contact Democratic Services staff, who can direct them to the appropriate support that may be needed, should officer engagement be necessary. Councillors are also provided with the contact details of the relevant senior managers in each service area should they need to access them.

> *How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?*

On the basis that more and more interactions between councillors, constituents and officers are online, all councillors are offered either a laptop or iPad (including peripherals such as a mouse, keyboard, headsets, protective covers and laptop bags) to undertake their constituency work, almost all of whom have taken up this offer, and interact with their electorate. Councillors are expected to pay for broadband/telephone use from their basic allowance.

Councillors are provided training and access on their laptop/iPad to be able to use modern communication methods such as MS Teams and Zoom, which they can use to access their electorate remotely, they can also make use of outlook to assist them with diary management, email management and their workload generally.

As a result of the covid pandemic, online interactions, emails, social media interactions with constituents has increased significantly and this is expected to be the case in the long term. In the modern media landscape, the expectation of constituents is that councillors will respond immediately, putting further pressure on work-life balance.

> *In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?*

The Council promotes in the first instance for service users to contact the Council directly with any suggestions, queries, concerns, complaints via its website, utilising an increasing number of accessible online forms to initiate interaction across its service areas. Recognising that a number of users do not (or are unable to) use online technology, constituents are also able to telephone the council, Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm, as well as an emergency out of hours service. They are also very welcome to access the Council's services in person at any of the council's access points, including the main council offices in its

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largest towns of Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Thrapston and customer service centres in Rushden and Oundle.

The Council offers a direct compliments, comments and complaints service for constituents to use, either through general complaints, or specifically in relation to one of its 16 service areas. Where a complaint arises a senior member of staff will provide a written response within 20 days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, a review of that complaint will take place by an independent senior manager. If the complainant is still dissatisfied, then they have the right to ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to investigate the matter.

Where a councillor is approached by a constituent they are encouraged to direct them to the council's primary communication channels, however it is recognised there are times when matters need to be directly escalated by councillors and they can do this either by contacting named senior managers within each of the service areas, or by emailing a dedicated enquiries email address set up for members.

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Other Issues

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

The Council is perhaps unique in being extremely rural with a number of market sized towns, but no single large urban conurbation as its centre. Travel from east to west boundaries is approximately 27 miles and 45 mins, and north to south 37 miles and 50 minutes.

On that basis, there are four main offices within the council area which require a great deal of travel depending on meeting locations, be they strategic or local, which also includes a number of meetings in Northampton which is out of area but the location for a number of shared services and Children's Trust, Pension and Police, Fire and Crime meetings. This all adds to the large workload already experienced by councillors in North Northamptonshire and their ability to maintain their work/life balance. It should be noted that travel time is excluded from the figures provided above arising from the recent councillor survey undertaken, in February 2022 (attached as Appendix 6).

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.

Introduction/Background

The Democracy & Standards Committee was asked to form a cross party working group with a membership as follows: Conservative (3), Labour (1) and Green Alliance (1), being the major groups on North Northamptonshire Council and to prepare a response to the Boundary Commission of the view of this council on its size.

We took into consideration the cross-party views, the data available from ONS and also our own councillor survey, to assess the average workload of a councillor and made an effort to ensure that, in future, North Northamptonshire Council will be able to draw on younger councillors and make membership available to all as well as manageable by all.

There are obvious areas, such as remuneration that, in our joint view, must be similar to other employment Councillors may hold. If the workload is too high, it could preclude or limit employment, care giving/receiving and other interests and factors. It would be a too prescriptive council if we had not considered the existing workload of councillors and officers.

CURRENT NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS 78 (AVERAGE HOURS PER WEEK EQUALS ~ 42)	
NEW COMMITTEE REQUIREMENTS	**QTY OF CLLRS**
GREENWAY BOARD	6
ASSETS	5
STRATEGIC GRANTS	6
SMALL GRANTS	6
FUTURE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT MEMBERS (POSSIBLE ESTIMATE 5 TOTAL)	2
NEW MEMBERS TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE NEW COMMITTEES AND SUBSTITUTES	4
SUB-TOTAL	**29**
ADDITIONAL COUNCILLORS REQUIRED (from above new committees estimated mix of current and new councillors) – additional numbers of councillors are needed now already – so we could not support to disregard the population growth. Complete of 29 councillors as per the column QTY uses 19 existing councillors and asking for 10 additional ones	10
IMMEDIATE NEED **TO INCREASE COUNCILLORS TO 88 BASED ON INCREASE IN COMMITTEES ETC**	88
BASED ON AN EVIDENCED 13% INCREASE IN POPULATION – USING SUPPLIED ESTIMATES FROM ONS DATA – RESULTS IN A REQUIREMENT FOR THE FORTHCOMING 10 YEARS	99

Working Group Proposal for the Boundary Commission:

North Northamptonshire Council to petition the Boundary Commission to agree to an increase to 99 councillors, i.e., 21 additional councillors to account and distribute the current and additional workload for the next 10 years and allow new committees to be set up and accommodate the evidenced 13% increase in population = 99 councillors for the next 10 years.

Implications if we keep current number at 78 councillors

- Councillors are already working approximately 42 hours per week on council related business. This is more than the average working week and the executive portfolio holders work approximately in excess of 50 hours per week, that contravenes the Working Time Directive.

- Councillors who have other paid employment are struggling to fit the council work around their job and to attend many daytime meetings.

- The role of a Councillor is continuously expanding, i.e., additional committees are being set up for Strategic Grants, Small Grants, Greenway Board, Strategic Partnership Board etc. and there is already a struggle to find members who have the time to go onto existing, let alone new, committees or become substitutes.

- It is the expectation that there is the requirement to create new committees in the not-too-distant future, i.e., there is a potential need to strengthen with a further Scrutiny Committee to investigate other services, i.e., possibly Children's Services, Health Services, Educational Needs etc. West Northamptonshire Council for instance investigates via an additional Scrutiny Committee. We strongly recommend we do the same.

- We need additional EAPs and may also require 2 additional Assistant Executive Members in the future. There is too much constraint already and it will be very difficult to carry out our statutory functions, if the councillor numbers stay the same.

- North Northamptonshire is a fast-growing area. The population is expected to rise by a minimum of 13% over the next few years. People are coming to our area and commute to either London and Birmingham and that is having an impact on increase in population too. We currently have 3,344 electors per councillor. With an anticipated 13% growth figure this will lead to 3,778 per councillor.

- The current population per councillor is 4,492. With 13% growth it is estimated to be 5,076 per councillor.

- The area's population is also ageing and that will create additional demands on the workload for councillors involved in adult services, public health etc. It is only going to get more pronounced over the next 10 years.

- The growth will lead to the need for increased planning applications, more quarries for the minerals, additional schools, further Supported Living, Health Services and Residential Care Homes for the ageing population. There will be increased demands for additional roads and by-passes, replacement and new leisure facilities and more flood prevention measures. Businesses will be settling in the attractive North Northamptonshire area and will put increasing demands on our transport system.

- All of this will have the involvement of Councillors and creates further workload, especially on ward matters and in the planning of these services

The outcome for a reduction in councillor numbers below 78

- A poorer service for the residents

- Councillors who are already stretched will not be able to cope with the extra workload and are at risk of suffering from stress-related illnesses.

- It will be a fulltime job for every councillor and could require councillors to give up any other employment.

- Although it is not within our remit as per the introduction, our comment is that the remuneration of councillors would have to rise to 'compensate' for the fact that councillors could not hold down additional employment. Quality candidates would not put themselves forward for election; only those who could afford to stand. We could see only wealthy or retired candidates putting themselves forward for election – thus eroding democracy and proper representation

- Councillors are supposed to represent and be embedded in their community.
  With reduced numbers of councillors we will end up with a cadre of professional Councillors, who will drift away from the communities that they are supposed to represent.

- It will discourage young people from standing for the council as they will have to give up aspirations of other careers.

The case for increasing the councillor number as per the calculations

- Councillors will have a more manageable workload. Using the Councillor Survey, it was assessed that Councillors worked at an average 42 hours a week on councillor business, in comparison to say to a full-time employee working an average 37 hours per week.

- The extra councillor numbers will help to 'spread this load', particularly when the population increases over the next 10 years and hopefully those in employment will still be attracted to becoming councillors. Councillors will be able to fit council meetings around their other commitments and create a better work/life balance.

- The extra committees we are currently setting up will be able to be accommodated. We will not be constrained by the number of councillors available to sit on committees. as we are at present.

- We will be able to scrutinise other areas better, such as Children's Services, Health and the Police. We can make provision for the potential return of the Children's Trust in-house.

- We will be able to add additional Executive Advisory Panels to improve decision making.

- We will be able to appoint a possible 2 further Assistant Executive Members in the future, to take some of the workload off the Executive, who are currently working at an average 50 hours per week, which contravenes the Working Time Directive.

- We will be able to appoint substitutes as per our constitution (currently we have a lot of vacancies).

- It will be possible for people from a variety of backgrounds and ages to become councillors.

- A more evenly shared councillor workload will lead to a broader, more representative set of councillors. That in turn will mean better decision making.

- We will be able, as a Council, to cope better with additional demands arising from population growth, such as increase in planning applications for schools, homes, factories/businesses, quarries etc. resulting in a better service for the Public.

- We would like to refer to the highly respected Lichfields report, which analysed the New Standard Method for projected housing growth in December 2020. This was subsequent to the Government's reversal of their August 2020 proposal for 300,000 extra houses a year in the UK (3,009 a year in North Northants). Lichfield's estimate is 1,837 new houses a year under the new Standard Method for North Northamptonshire, instead of the 1,750 proposed in the Core Spatial Strategy.

    - https://lichfields.uk/grow-renew-protect-planning-for-the-future/how-many-homes-the-new-standard-method/#method