

Council Size Submission

Southampton City Council

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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 by the whole Council. The matter has been discussed and considered in detail by a cross political party task and finish group over the summer months and subject to a full report to Council in September 2021

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

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

Southampton City Council was last subject to an electoral review approximately 20 years ago. It is a periodic review and Southampton meets the Commission's intervention criteria for electoral inequality with 3 of 16 (18.5%) wards having a variance outside 10%. One ward (Bargate) has a variance outside 30%. The largest variances are Bargate ward (32%) and Swaythling ward (-15%).

The Context for your proposal

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

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

Like most upper tier authorities, the most significant change Southampton has embraced was as a result of the Local Government Act 2000 when we moved to a Leader and Cabinet model. Since this time, the council has finessed its governance arrangements and streamlined; bringing the former Audit and Governance Committees into one Governance Committee, which also encompasses employment matters. This has improved efficiency and reduced the amount of time members are spending attending committees.

In addition, we have worked closely with our health partners to create a Joint Commissioning Board which is focused around delivery of integrated health and wellbeing commissioning and meeting our aim of transforming the delivery of care in Southampton, so that it is better integrated, delivered as locally as possible, person-centred and with an emphasis on prevention and intervening early to prevent escalation. This board has been in place since 2017 and in light of the abolition of the Southampton CCG in the last year, and a new county-wide CCG replacing it, we are currently undertaking a fundamental review of the JCB and associated governance arrangements and related, complimentary, and integrated health functions. We will ensure robust and revised governance are in place (and in shadow form if needs be), and in place for full decision making by April 2022.

We work closely with other Hampshire authorities to ensure holistic arrangements are in place for spatial planning, regional and sub regional transport requirements etc. Primarily this is through delegated joint committee arrangements such as Partnership for South Hampshire, Solent Transport, Transport for the South East etc.

We have actively sought combined authority status with other south coast authorities but to date this has not come to fruition. It is likely that these conversations will recommence not least on the back of the newly acquired Freeport status and recently announced opportunities by the Prime Minister.

The transfer of public health functions to the Council has worked well and aided the integrated working between the health and local authority sector. This has, of course, been evidenced over the last 18 months during the Covid 19 epidemic and enabled fleet footed, evidence-based decisions to be made during a constantly changing environment.

The council last took part in an LGA peer review in July 2013, which did not result in any recommendations relating to our governance arrangements or committee structure.

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:

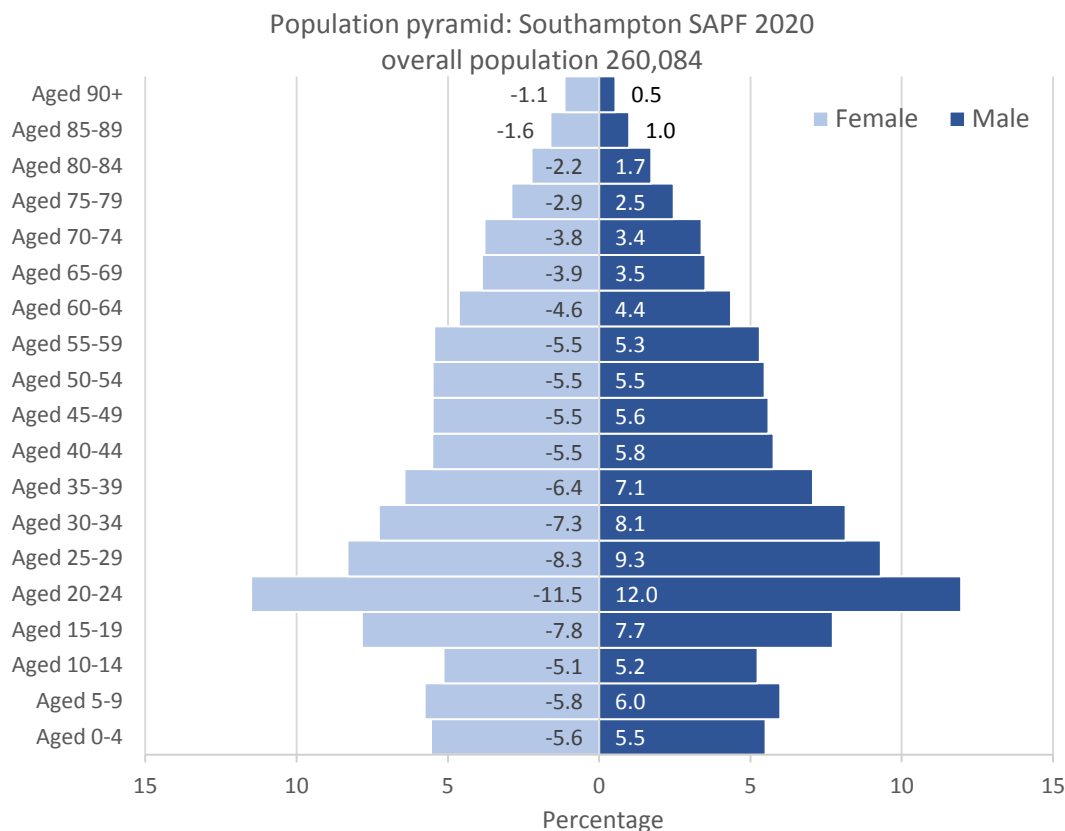
- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- 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?

Southampton is an urban environment with a significant number of green spaces and the River Itchen dividing the city in half. It covers 49.8km². The council maintains over 416 miles of highways and 53 parks and over 147 other green spaces and 75 eco areas “managed for wildlife” which cover over 95 hectares. The council have recorded 55,000 council owned trees (estimated 267,000 within total urban forest) and 290 hectares of woodland. The council has 3 Green Flag awards for St. James Park, Riverside Park and the 5 Central Parks (as a collective award)

There are 109,210 properties in Southampton of which 51% owner occupied, 25% private rented and 24% social rented (2011 Census). Southampton City Council manages 15,691 council houses. Between May 2020 and April 2021 there have been 987 planning applications. The average house price in Southampton, in April 2021 is £217,646.

According to the Hampshire County Council Small Area Population Forecasts Southampton's population is 260,084. (source SAPF 2020-based)



Source: Hampshire County Council: Small Area Population Forecasts (SAPF) 2020-base

Southampton's over 65 population is forecast to increase by 15.7% (5,729 people) between 2020 and 2027. The overall population is due to increase by 6.1% (15,940 people) from 260,084, in 2020, to 276,024 in 2027.

In May 2021 in Southampton there were 29,816 (16.7% of the working ages population) people claiming Universal Credit, the impact of COVID-19 is reflected in these numbers. In January 2020 there was only 15,604 people claiming Universal Credit this was 8.8% of the working age population.

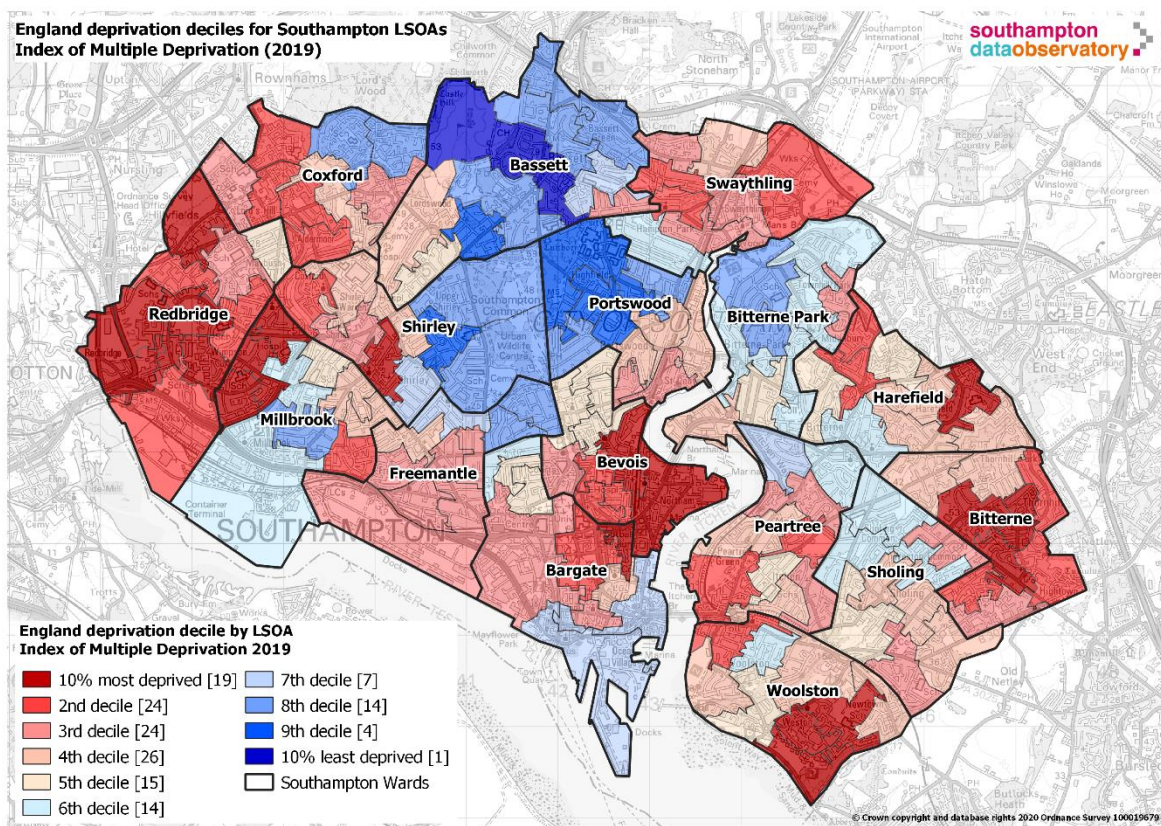
When looking at the Claimant Count (job seekers allowance claimants and those individuals claiming Universal Credit who are actively seeking work) in May 2021 there are 11,275 (6.3%) people claiming compared 3.0% in January 2020. Some of this increase is probably related to COVID-19 and job furlong and people being made redundant.

Southampton has about 3,500 supported housing properties which have pull cords available and runs a 60+ support service has provided Housing Related Support to over 474 clients during 2020/21. There are also 1,362 monthly support plans were delivered by Housing Support Workers supporting older vulnerable residents and 389 Extra Care properties in the city.

One of the challenges that has affected the whole country as well as Southampton has been the COVID-19 pandemic. In Southampton we have had 15,708 cases since 30th January 2020. And unfortunately, 389 deaths. As Southampton comes out of the pandemic

into the endemic COVID-19 world we have the challenge of working together to improve the situation in Southampton.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019) illustrates how Southampton continues to be a relatively deprived city. Based on average deprivation rank of its neighbourhoods (LSOAs), Southampton is now ranked 55th (where 1 is the most deprived) out of 317 local authorities; more deprived than the comparator cities of Bristol (82nd), Leeds (92nd) and Sheffield (93rd). Southampton has 19 Lower Super Output Areas within the 10% most deprived in England and one in the 10% least deprived.



Overall, there has been very little change in relative deprivation levels in Southampton compared to other local authorities in England since the last IMD in 2015, with Southampton remaining a relatively deprived city. Some of the main findings from the IMD (2019) are outlined below:

- Of the 317 Local Authorities in England, Southampton is ranked 55th (previously 54th) most deprived based on average rank of LSOAs and 61st (previously 67th) most deprived based on average score of LSOAs
- The fact that Southampton appears to be more deprived based on the average rank measure (55th nationally and 2nd amongst comparators), illustrates how Southampton is more uniformly deprived rather than being highly polarised (i.e. extremes of deprivation)
- Southampton has 19 LSOAs within the 10% most deprived in England (same as in 2015) and one LSOA in the 10% least deprived in England (previously zero in 2015)

- Around 12% of Southampton’s population live in neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived nationally; this rises to 18% for the under 18 population, suggesting deprivation disproportionately impacts upon young people in the city
- Over 45% of Southampton’s population live in neighbourhoods within the 30% most deprived nationally (around 117,000 people)
- At neighbourhood level, approximately half of the LSOAs in Southampton have become more deprived (77/148; 52%) since 2015, whilst half have become less deprived
- The five most deprived neighbourhoods in Southampton are in Bargate (Golden Grove), Weston (International Way), Weston (Kingsclere Avenue), Thornhill (Lydgate Road) and Millbrook (Lockerley Crescent)
- Southampton is ranked 3rd worst in the country for crime deprivation and is in the worst 20% of local authorities for 5 other deprivation domains

Nearly 7,000 children under 5 use our city’s children’s centres (over 14,000 visits per year) and we look after approximately 490 children who are in our care.

Southampton has approximately 40,000 students living in the city and attending the higher education facilities. The University of Southampton is ranked 15th and Solent University is ranked 120th in the 2021 league tables.

There are 8,310 businesses in Southampton, looking at the wider Travel to Work Area Southampton is ranked 3rd for good growth and recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

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	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <p>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Southampton City Council Southampton has 48 elected members (over 16 wards) elected in thirds and operates a Leader and Cabinet structure. Following local elections in May 2021 the political make-up of the council is 25 Conservative and 23 Labour.</p> <p>Leader and Cabinet model</p> <p>The council has operated a Leader and Cabinet model since 2002. There are a few discrete delegations where cabinet members can make decisions individually for their portfolio areas primarily in Education and Health and Adult Social Care, although the majority of decisions are made by the whole cabinet at monthly cabinet meetings and decisions must be in accordance with the budget and plans within the Policy Framework (see Appendix 3) all of which have been agreed by Council. This makes for clear, transparent, decision-making and strong accountability. Further information on the functions and the role of cabinet are outlined in the council's Constitution.</p> <p>The Leader's role is to provide clear political leadership for the city and the council and is elected at the AGM following elections in May. The Leader is responsible for appointing a cabinet (executive) of no fewer than three and no more than ten councillors (including themselves) and determining a scheme of delegation for executive functions. The Leader chooses their cabinet and collectively cabinet set clear and realistic direction (reflected in the council's Corporate Plan and financial strategy), as well as</p>

defining corporate priorities and ensuring they are reflected in the budget and other planning and decision-making processes. The council also has an extensive scheme of delegations to officers as set out in the Constitution which is regularly reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Before the Leader and Cabinet model, the council operated a committee structure, which was found to be cumbersome with double referrals and multiple debates often occurring. A change in governance structure and implementation of a directly-elected Mayor was previously considered by the council some years ago as part of a combined authority submission to central government, but it is not considered that a move to this alternative governance structure will add any further value or democratic accountability at this time. To that end the council can see no merit in changing this currently and does not intend to move away from the tried and trusted Leader and Cabinet model. It is noted that devolution is back on the Government's agenda and the Council's new Administration is currently reviewing its position.

Full Council

Full Council is held every other month and is attended by all 48 members and chaired by the Mayor of Southampton.

Since the pandemic Full Council (and most other decision-making meetings) are live streamed to ensure easy accessibility, openness, and transparency. Extraordinary Council meetings are held, as required, to consider any urgent business and the council's AGM is held after the election every May when the Leader and cabinet members are elected, along with representatives of outside bodies. The purpose of Full Council is to set the budget and council tax and it makes important decisions that affect the whole council, as well as agreeing the Policy Framework including important plans (such as the Local Transport Plan and Community Care Plan). Members of the public can attend and are actively encouraged to submit questions or deputations. The agenda also includes tabled questions from elected members to be asked and this opportunity is ordinarily well used with circa 100 questions each year. All are published, as are the answers that are given. An overview of Full Council's purpose can be found here in our [Constitution](#).

		<p>Committee structure The council operates several other committees (predominantly statutory) ranging from centralised planning and licensing committees to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and our Governance Committee. There is a slim committee structure in place, with all committees busy and fully utilised. A full overview of our committee structure is available in Appendix 4.</p> <p>Strategic and operational policy Policy formulation is an integral part of the Terms of Reference for the Overview and Scrutiny function (as outlined here in the Constitution). Major policies are also considered by Full Council whereby all 48 members may contribute.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Portfolios There are currently nine cabinet members with each cabinet lead having responsibility for an individual portfolio. The composition has fluctuated over the years depending on the Leader’s preference and corporate priorities. For example, in 2018 the then Leader added a discrete “Green City” portfolio to concentrate on the Council’s Green City and environmental agenda including the Clean Air strategy. Southampton’s current cabinet portfolios are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader • Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Growth • Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Assets • Cabinet Member for Environment • Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Heritage • Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care • Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care • Cabinet Member for Education • Cabinet Member for Customer Service and Transformation <p>More information on our cabinet portfolios can be found here. Except for the Leader, no cabinet positions are full time. Save for some adult social care and education matters, no individual decision making is delegated to cabinet members and all cabinet member decisions are made at monthly cabinet meetings. More</p>

		<p>information on cabinet responsibilities is outlined in Appendix 5.</p> <p>Cabinet members play an active role in attending Full Council, giving updates to questions in relation to their portfolios raised by fellow councillors or members of the public. They are required to attend the council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and give updates on the status and performance of their portfolios. They can also be scrutinised on decisions made by the Executive through the 'call in' process.</p> <p>Cabinet meetings occur monthly and are open to members of the public and live streamed, which ensures public accountability. Cabinet members also attend monthly (internal) cabinet member briefings. These are not formal decision-making bodies, but informal meetings designed to discuss, in confidence, any emerging issues, policies, strategies, major and sensitive political issues. Shadow cabinet member briefings also take place regularly but are less formal.</p> <p>The Council has, in its view, a fit for purpose decision making and scrutiny structure which it regularly reviews and refines. LGA Peer Reviews in 2013 and 2017 have not commented adversely on the structures in place. The call on members time to attend meetings is, in the round, manageable. Other calls on members time as presented later in this submission are greater drivers.</p> <p>More information on cabinet member commitments and time spent attending meetings and briefings can be found in Appendix 6.</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Southampton has a comprehensive scheme of delegation which is reviewed by the Monitoring Officer annually (and in year as needs be) and considered at the AGM. The Financial Procedure Rules (FPRs) and key decision thresholds dictate what cannot be decided by officers and form part of our Constitution. The FPRS were substantially rewritten this year, streamlined and adopted by Council at the AGM. All</p>

		<p>officer decisions must of course be within policy and budget.</p> <p>Full Council takes all decisions on the policy framework, budget etc.</p>
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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	<p>The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	<p>Scrutiny is widely acknowledged as being the ‘cornerstone’ of transparent decision-making at Southampton. Scrutiny has a specific statutory basis under Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000, which introduced executive arrangements for local authorities. The council operates an Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) supported by two sub committees, The Health Overview Scrutiny Panel and the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel. The council also holds an annual scrutiny enquiry. The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel is legally a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, with responsibility for undertaking scrutiny inquiries in accordance with a programme developed by OSMC.</p>

The current core scrutiny arrangements have been in place since the Leader and Cabinet model was adopted in 2002 and ordinarily works very effectively. They have been finessed over the years to allow for the health overview function and other legislative changes.

Overview and Scrutiny Management

The Overview and Scrutiny function is a key component of the Council's democratic system. One of its principal roles is to hold the Executive to account by;

- Questioning and evaluating Executive actions, both before and after decisions are taken
- Monitoring the performance and financial management of the council
- Developing and reviewing policies, including the Policy Framework and budget strategy
- Making reports and recommendations on any aspect of council business (ie non-executive functions) and other matters that affect the city and its residents.

Overview and Scrutiny is a key mechanism for enabling councillors to represent their constituents' views to the executive to inform policy development. Southampton's overview and scrutiny bodies review local authority policies and matters of local concern/interest and make recommendations to the executive and Full Council. In addition, through the "call-in" procedure, scrutiny members can require the executive to publicly defend and, if necessary, reconsider important decisions.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) is set out in paragraph 8 of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee Handbook ([See Appendix 7](#)) and is responsible for:

- Setting the overall Scrutiny agenda
- Setting and monitoring standards for Scrutiny
- Establishing Scrutiny Panels
- Preparing a Scrutiny Inquiry Programme
- Scrutiny of all corporate and resource management issues
- The exercise of all decisions called in
- Scrutiny of the Forward Plan
- Monitoring performance and budgets
- Considering, at least once a year, actions undertaken by the responsible authorities on the Safe City Partnership
- Responding to the Councillor Call for Action with the exception of health matters where the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel will respond
- Engaging with the Leader of the Council and appropriate members of Southampton Connect in State of the City debates.

	<p>The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for undertaking the statutory scrutiny of health across Southampton. The Children and Families Scrutiny Panel is responsible for undertaking the scrutiny of services for children and families across Southampton.</p> <p>To ensure an effective scrutiny process, the Chair is held by the opposition (by convention) and membership is weighted in favour of the opposition. In addition, the council has external co-opted members on some Scrutiny Panels (Health and Wellbeing and Children and Learning). This demonstrates the council’s commitment to openness, transparency and true scrutiny. This approach has been in place since 2002 and is supported by all political parties and allows for a wide range of opinions to be heard (including a clear and strong emphasis on public engagement).</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meets monthly and membership of the panel is currently nine members (five Labour and four Conservative). Committee and panel chairs ensure that items of business are prioritised on the agenda, and that the meeting is conducted in a brisk and business-like manner, without compromising the ability to review agenda items. It should be noted that, by convention, the opposition has more seats on the committee and has the Chair. This aids true scrutiny. Meetings ordinarily do not exceed two hours but in recent times have become slightly longer given the nature of the business on the agenda and required political scrutiny. Cabinet members are not permitted to be members of Overview and Scrutiny, or its sub-committees.</p> <p>Task and Finish Groups</p> <p>Task and Finish groups are established on a ‘needs’ basis and participation is good. The council’s annual scrutiny enquiry always attracts keen member interest and a willingness to participate. The most recent enquiry being ‘Carer Friendly Southampton.’</p>
<p>Statutory Function</p>	<p>This includes planning, licensing 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?</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Southampton operates a centralised Planning and Rights of Way Committee and a separate Licensing Committee (with discrete ad-hoc sub committees and panels to deal with revocation, review of licences etc).</p> <p>Several years ago, an area-based approach was piloted; planning decisions were determined at either east or west planning committee with members on opposite sides of the city making decisions on planning applications. However, the authority moved to a single, centralised, planning committee several years ago after concluding that east and west arrangements were no longer necessary, or working in a timely way, due to statutory determination periods. They did not appear to add to the quality of decision making or add any local community knowledge or advantage.</p> <p>There is an extensive scheme of delegation for both statutory functions which works well and this is reviewed at least annually. Major and contentious planning applications or issues are placed before members. The trigger for contentious applications is either five+ public representations against the recommendation of the planning officer, or three if the application is a departure from the Local Plan, (all must be from the same ward) or a 'call in' from one of the ward councillors.</p> <p>Approximately 2.5% of all planning applications are determined by the Council's Planning and Rights of Way Committee. There has been no substantial change to this in the last few years and there is no expected change for the future.</p> <p>Considering the urban and tight geographical nature of the city there are no area committees for any function, nor is there seen to be any compelling reason to implement this change. The single council wide Planning and Rights of Way Committee is considered effective and should continue.</p> <p>Executive members by convention do not sit on quasi-judicial committees so as to have "clear water" and transparency regarding policy setting and decision making on discrete matters. Planning Committee members are expected to attend training sessions held after annual council and as required. They are also expected to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [a] have read all planning committee reports [b] attend any relevant pre- committee briefings [c] familiarise themselves with application material (available

		<p>on-line) [d] attend and participate in committee meetings.</p> <p>The Chair will have a pre-meeting briefing and occasional meetings with the Executive Director and Head of Planning.</p>
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The council's Licensing Committee sits to determine and adopt policy. It delegates its other functions to two sub committees, one that deals with the Licensing Act and Gambling Act matters and the other for the remaining licensing functions (predominantly tax licensing).</p> <p>The constitution has an officer scheme of delegation to allow for determinations and sub-committee deal with more contentious determinations.</p> <p>Licensing Committee (2003 and 2005 Acts) must be made up of a minimum of ten members and from this group there are two sub committees to deal with different aspects of licensing. The sub committees normally sit with three members done on a rota basis but ordinarily with the Chair of Licensing Committee for continuity.</p> <p>We would expect to hold two Licensing Committee meetings each year and including reading papers and attending the meeting the average time is likely to be around five hours for each meeting.</p> <p>Licensing (Licensing and Gambling) Sub Committee is scheduled to be held weekly but is often cancelled due to lack of business. We expect approximately 12 to take place in an average year but are already at 16 in 2021. Including reading papers and attending the hearing, member time will be approximately eight hours each hearing.</p> <p>Licensing (General) Sub Committee is held as and when required and we anticipate approximately five each year.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	<p>Governance Committee</p> <p>The council operates a Governance Committee appointed by the Council under the Local Government Act 1972 and Localism Act 2011 to maintain and promote a culture of</p>

openness, accountability and probity in order to ensure the highest standards of conduct of councillors and staff. It meets six times a year and consists of seven members. Certain functions of the committee are delegated to officers.

The remit of Governance Committee includes;

- Leading on the Council's duties under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 to design, implement, monitor, approve and review the standards of ethics and probity of the council, both for councillors and employees. The committee's powers include responding to consultation documents and the promulgation of codes of conduct but the adoption and revisions to the local members code of conduct are reserved to Full Council.
- To lead on all aspects of corporate governance by promoting the values of putting people first, valuing public service and creating a norm of the highest standards of personal conduct.
- To oversee and manage programmes of guidance, advice and training on ethics, standards and probity for councillors and employees and on the Members Code of Conduct.
- To be responsible for the council's register of members' interests and to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services on the operation of the register from time to time.
- To be responsible for written guidance and advice on the operation of the system of declarations of members' interests and to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer on the operation of the system of declarations from time to time.
- To establish, monitor, approve and issue advice and guidance to councillors on a system of dispensations to speak on, or participate in, matters in which they have interests and give dispensation in appropriate cases.
- To exercise the functions of the council in relation to the ethical framework, corporate governance and standards of conduct of joint committees and other bodies.
- To establish a Standards Sub-Committee to investigate and determine appropriate action in respect of alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct.
- To receive regular reports on the performance of the corporate complaints process, Local Government Ombudsman referrals, Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance and to recommend revisions to related policies and procedures as appropriate.

The committee also plays an audit role in providing independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control and reporting environment, including the reliability of the financial reporting process and the annual governance statement.

- To be satisfied and provide assurance that appropriate action is being taken on risk and internal control related issues identified by the internal and external auditors and other review and inspection bodies.
- To receive, and make recommendations on, such reports as are required in relation to all audit matters including the Annual Audit Plan.

The committee has responsibility for oversight of and provision of assurance on the following functions:

- ensuring that council assets are safeguarded
- maintaining proper accounting records
- ensuring the independence, objectivity and effectiveness of internal and external audit
- the arrangements made for cooperation between internal and external audit and other review bodies
- considering the reports of internal and external audit and other review and inspection bodies
- the scope and effectiveness of the internal control systems established by management to identify, assess, manage and monitor financial and nonfinancial risks (including measures to protect against, detect and respond to fraud).

The work of the council's Standards Sub Committee and Appeals Sub Committee has been amalgamated into the Governance Committee in recent years and subsequently the committee also assesses written allegations that a member, or co-opted member (or former member or co-opted member) of the Council has failed, or may have failed, to comply with the Members Code of Conduct in accordance with Chapter 7 Localism Act 2011 and administers sanctions where appropriate. To date they have not needed to hear any referrals from the Monitoring Officer.

Chief Officer Employment Panel

Southampton operates a Chief Officer Employment Panel which meets as required to appoint chief and statutory officers. It has the power to appoint and dismiss on capability grounds as permitted under legislation, the Head of Paid Service, statutory and non-statutory chief officers and deputy chief officers in accordance with the council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

	<p>COEP has delegated the appointment and dismissal of deputy chief officers to the Chief Executive and Executive Directors as appropriate. The Chief Executive, Executive Directors, statutory and chief Officers will continue to be appointed (and where necessary dismissed) by COEP subject to statutory procedures.</p> <p>Whilst named members are appointed to the committee, it is agreed locally that the relevant cabinet member for the service area to which the officer is being appointed, will ordinarily take the place of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer Service and Transformation, if appropriate.</p>
<p>External Partnerships</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Board</p> <p>Our Health and Wellbeing Board exists to advance the health and wellbeing of the residents of our city and encourage health and social care services to work in an integrated and joined-up way. It meets approximately two or three times a year and its membership include five councillors alongside the council’s statutory officers including the Director of Public Health, Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) Director of Children’s Services (DCS) alongside representatives of the CCG. Certain functions under S196 (2) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 may be delegated by the Board to officers.</p> <p>In 2020 the Southampton Outbreak Engagement Board was established to provide strategic oversight of health protection in relation to Covid-19 including prevention, surveillance, planning and response to ensure they meet the needs of the local population.</p> <p>The board supported the delivery of the primary objectives of the government's strategy to control the Covid-19 reproduction number (R), reduce the spread of infection and save lives. In doing so help to return life to as normal as possible, for as many people as possible, in a way that is safe, protects our health and care systems and releases our economy. In 2021, following central government’s release of lockdown measures, the function of this board was amalgamated into the Health and Wellbeing Board to provide a broader overview on the “exit from lockdown” implications and a more integrated approach to health. The composition and make up of the Board is currently under review in order to fully reflect up to date joint working arrangements with health partners.</p> <p>Joint Commissioning Board</p> <p>The Joint Commissioning Board between the City Council and the former Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group has been in operation since July 2017 first as a pilot arrangement before it went “live” in April 2018. The</p>

	<p>arrangement provides for further integration between Health and Social Care in the city to make cooperative decisions on certain agreed functions related to Health and Care. The Terms of Reference for this committee can be found in Appendix 2. However, as previously mentioned, we are currently undertaking a fundamental review of the JCB and associated governance arrangements in light of the abolition of the Southampton CCG and creation of a new county-wide CCG.</p>
<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>As referred to above there are several local joint committees to which members are appointed primarily relating to spatial planning and integrated transport planning issues. They have delegated powers to make binding decisions on behalf of the council.</p> <p>Most recently the council has been appointed as a key authority in the regional Freeport programme announced by the Government. The Leader of the Council is a Director of the Solent Freeport company.</p> <p>A full list of outside bodies is attached (See Appendix 9). Primarily appointed members come from the Administration but, for example, the Partnership for South Hampshire (PUSH) Scrutiny Committee has an opposition member to ensure transparent and proper political scrutiny. This list is reviewed annually in order to reflect alignment with Corporate priorities and the significant call on elected members time.</p>

Community Leadership

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

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council is of the view that community leadership and complexity of casework is the key element that has changed over the last 20 years which drives any change in elected member numbers.</p> <p>In order to assist in the development of a robust council size submission and gain an insight into councillors' community leadership and casework responsibilities, a cross party Electoral Review Task and Finish Group was established with two Labour and two Conservative party representatives in attendance. Three Task and Finish sessions were held throughout July 2021 and a member survey was also issued to all councillors to gain a deeper understanding and was live from 28 June 2021 to 12 July 2021.</p> <p>The survey (see Appendix 10) contained questions about the length of time respondents had been a councillor, if they had been appointed to any external bodies or organisations, and if they hold any other positions. Subsequent questions included the length of time spent on council duties, what aspect of the job takes the most time and what has changed over the past 12 months? There was a total of 32 respondents out of 48 councillors - a response rate of 67%.</p> <p>Key findings revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of respondents have been a councillor for under five years

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost half of respondents do not hold any additional positions • 26 (81%) reported being on a committee, board or panel other than Full Council. • Over half of respondents have been appointed to outside bodies • Most respondents reported regularly using a variety of methods to communicate with residents / businesses / organisations in their ward • Nearly all respondents use face to face or email communication • Nearly all agreed that they are using the right balance of communication methods to engage with people in their wards. According to free text comments, this is often due to a range of communications methods being utilised. <p>Feedback from the Electoral Review Task and Finish Group sessions revealed councillors work on a 'proactive' and 'reactive' basis within their communities depending on the issue and the need. Personal contact is developed 'on the doorstep' or by home visits, with councillors also getting a good feel for issues locally by walking and cycling around their wards, being part of online social/ community forums, as well as 1:1 interaction from residents who are contacting their councillor directly via email, social media, phone etc.</p> <p>Councillors use a range of approaches to engage with their communities. Door knocking, leaflet dropping, home visits, posting information/ updates via social media (e.g. party political Facebook pages or community forums etc). Some wards hold monthly surgeries, but this tends to be in wards with designated and recognisable community spaces such as libraries or community centres etc. Some councillors are holding events in conjunction with the police for example such as community 'street huddles' where residents can come and speak to their councillor/ local police officer at the end of their road etc.</p> <p>Interaction with those residents not on the electoral register and younger people is a challenge and building relationships 'on the doorstep' is felt to be the most effective mechanism councillors use for getting in touch with harder to reach groups across the city.</p> <p>The major reason for people not being on the electoral register is the considerable, transient, student population in the city (40,000+ pre-Covid as a result of Southampton being home to two universities). The survey captured feedback that some councillors do get requests for help from those that may not be on electoral register (particularly</p>
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		<p>around housing issues) and some are concerned that the actual number of residents they represent is far higher than the electorate figure due the amount of individuals who have not registered to vote.</p> <p>During the early days of the pandemic, the role of councillors as community leaders came into sharper focus, with some reporting that their role was to go out into their communities and provide greater levels of help, support and reassurance. Some formed volunteer groups to ensure people were safe and those in need didn't go without essentials such as food or medication.</p> <p>Common views from members are that in recent years some residents mental health have suffered and there is an increase in mental health issues in the background when dealing with housing, anti-social behaviour issues and many other areas for Councillors when trying to represent their constituents. This adds an extra layer of pressure and complexity in trying to resolve issues. A detailed example is as below, and from councillor feedback this is becoming more commonplace and vastly increasing the call on councillors' time:-</p> <p>“One example which illustrates the work and complexity of helping more vulnerable people in the community is as follows.</p> <p>I was called by a volunteer who was helping an older man with his shopping. At first the request for help seemed simple, he wasn't getting shopping done as part of his care package. This was a request I could have easily fielded to officers to see what was happening.</p> <p>However, to get to the bottom of what he needed I had to go out and speak to him as he didn't have email and wasn't able to use the phone. During our conversation I realised that it was a much bigger issue and his care package on the whole didn't suit his needs. This in itself was something that would take much longer to unpick with calls and emails to several officers.</p> <p>It also came to light that there were several issues with his housing that needed to be sorted out. I had to keep all of these separate threads to his case organised whilst working with this man who had learning difficulties and was very vulnerable whilst also liaising with his volunteer who originally called me. This took much more work and a different skillset to just forwarding an email to a council officer.</p>
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		<p>I also had to speak to council officers numerous times as different officers were telling me different things and I ended up having to escalate parts of his case to directors.</p> <p>This is quite typical of casework for more vulnerable people and it is increasing. Some people tend to leave contacting councillors until several issues have built up and are harder to unravel than if they had contacted you with one at a time where they happened.</p> <p>It's never a case of just an email or a phone call as with more complex cases you have to go round and speak to the person and perhaps other people who are working on the persons behalf. “</p> <p>Participation and attendance at community meetings and forums plays a significant part of most ward councillors’ work (84% of respondents answering the survey responded that it featured as a regular method of communicating with the electorate). It should be noted that as a result of Covic-19, a large proportion of active community and residents’ groups have moved ‘online’ and this has changed the way councillors have been engaging with the electorate over the past 16 months. A much higher proportion of interaction has been undertaken via social meeting platforms rather than ‘in person’. Now lockdown restrictions have been released, councillors are starting to see more requests to attend community forums, meetings and events again in person.</p> <p>There is a Youth Parliament set up in the city and plans are proposed to elect a Children’s Mayor to be a discrete voice of the under 11 cohort in the city. Both these functions feed directly into the Chidren’s Service Directorate business planning.</p> <p>Member development and induction</p> <p>To carry out their community leadership roles effectively, the council has put in place an annual development and induction programme for councillors which commences in May after the local elections. <u>See Appendix 11</u>. This development and induction programme is currently under redevelopment and is being strengthened in 2021/22 to include LGA member development support, mentoring and bespoke support for Cabinet Members (not least given the change in administration in May 2021). The current programme consists of 28 hours of councillor training/ briefing and development opportunities (not including bespoke training for scrutiny panel/licensing committee members etc) spread across the year and councillors are encouraged to attend (although a minimum attendance/ training requirement is not in place).</p>
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Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>How councillors manage casework varies and depends on the level of complexity. Councillors can deal with some casework enquiries themselves. For example, signposting a resident directly to the council's website regarding a missed bin. For more complex casework (involving areas such as anti-social behaviour, safeguarding issues, housing, or schools' admissions) then elected members will involve the relevant council department.</p> <p>Southampton is a relatively deprived city and ranks 55th out of 317 most deprived local authorities in England. Around 12% of our population live in neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived nationally, rising to 18% for the under 18 population, suggesting deprivation disproportionately impacts our young people in the city. Southampton is also ranked third worst in the country for crime deprivation. Councillors are reporting that casework is increasing, along with the complexity of casework and that there is a correlation between levels of deprivation and local need and amount of casework received.</p> <p>The councillor survey, which was live from 28 June 2021 to 12 July 2021 revealed the following key findings in relation to quantity and management of casework;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents rated the most time-consuming activity (per month) as dealing with case work, with half reporting that they spend over 16 hours a month on this activity • Respondents spend the least time attending external meetings (a symptom of lockdown restrictions and more external meetings being moved online) • The highest proportion of respondents deal with between 21 and 30 casework enquiries each month (41%) • Half reported that they spend about the amount of time they expected on council business • Over a third reported spending more time than expected on council business and <u>no</u> respondents reported spending less time than expected • Nearly all respondents reported asking specific council officers for support with responding to

		<p>casework. Large proportions also report making use of the SCC website or the council’s PA team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quarter use the customer contact centre, and other sources reported included government websites and other councillors • A large majority of respondents reported that the amount of time they spend on council business has increased • A variety of reasons were discussed, including that as they have become more well known as councillors, their contact with residents has increased • Over three quarters of respondents reported spending more time using email and Microsoft Teams to communicate in the last 12 months • Respondents generally reported spending significantly less time face to face <p>Feedback from the Electoral Review Task and Finish Group provided further insight, with councillors sighting the Covid-19 pandemic leading to some increase in certain types of casework (and increasingly complex casework) including concerns around crime and anti-social behaviour, noise nuisance and safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Technology has had a significant impact on the way councillors interact with their electorate. Survey results showed the electorate are increasingly contacting councillors through digital methods and the way councillors carry out their roles is also heavily influenced by technology (use of MS Teams etc for attending group meetings, meetings with officers, community meetings with residents and before 2021 May elections attending council committee meetings).</p> <p>A sample of free text comments collected from the survey are outlined below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“case work increased - particularly with regards to issues with crime, private sector housing (HMOs), parking, highways and planning applications</i> • <i>“issues regarding housing, education, anti-social behaviour, all these have been on the increase for a number of years.”</i> • <i>Over the past 16 months during the pandemic, the volume of emails both internal to council business and also from constituents and partners has increased a lot, as there are fewer face to face meetings, and fewer informal conversations in the corridor, or at events, or when arriving at/leaving meetings and events.</i>
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- *“There is clearly a large gap between customer facing activities and the needs of residents, which leads to councillors being a part of frontline communication and case management. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however good councillors can and do carry a fair amount of the load at very little expense to the city.”*
- *“We receive fewer letters and much more social media approaches. About half of my casework arrives via Facebook and Nextdoor.”*
- *“Work is increasing because the public expect immediate response, and to be able to use their preferred method of communication. Now so many organisations employ large teams to run social media, many younger residents expect to be able to make their views known on social media.”*
- *“The internet allows angry people to research their issues before writing to their councillors and so a lot more research is needed to respond to many constituents emails or letters.”*

Casework is expected to further increase over the next five years as a result of;

- a. Increased population growth (forecast 176 additional electorate per councillor in 2027)
- b. The overall population is due to increase by 6.1% (15,940 people) from 260,084, in 2020, to 276,024 in 2027
- c. Increased demands placed upon councillors in terms of residents’ expectations. In this digital age and surge in social media means residents are contacting councillors 24/7, via a range of communications platforms, and expecting speedy/ instantaneous responses to their enquiries and concerns
- d. Increasing complexity of casework
- e. Covid -19 pandemic prompting further interaction with councillors and requests for help and support

In order to assist councillors with the management of their casework on a day to day basis, the council has recently implemented a new case management system for this purpose (Caseworker.uk) which is being piloted with some cabinet and backbench members.

		<p>Complaints/dispute resolution</p> <p>The council promotes dispute resolution through its corporate customer compliments and complaints pages on its website. More information can be found here. Information on this page allows residents to direct their concern through the most appropriate and direct route. For reporting concerns or queries in relation to the most common tasks, residents are given the option to be signposted to specific areas of the council’s website in relation to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed bins • Reporting potholes and road problems • Housing repairs • Neighbourhood nuisance • Appealing a parking fine <p>Residents clicking through to one of these areas are then directed to complete an online form.</p> <p>There is also information provided in relation to raising a formal complaint, which is a two-stage process. The council will acknowledge a complaint within three working days and the relevant service manager will then respond to a complaint within 20 working days.</p> <p>If the complaint is complicated, more time may be required to investigate, and the resident is kept informed. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome at stage 1, they also have the option to escalate their complaint to stage 2. A final stage resolution is to take the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</p> <p>Whilst a formal complaints process is operated at Southampton, this does not stop residents approaching their councillor if they have a concern about a council service and councillors themselves are encouraged to signpost residents via the reporting mechanisms if contacted.</p>
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Other Issues

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

As part of the feedback from the councillors’ survey, issued as part of the Electoral Review process, councillors were asked for their feedback on anything else about their experience as a councillor that might be relevant to this submission on council size. Below is a capture of the major themes received. Comments in detail can be found in [Appendix 10](#).

Major themes

- 3 members wards work

- Concerns about reduction of councillors, or needing more councillors to cater for increasing workloads
- Reduction in ward councillors raises concerns around reduction in numbers of people wanting to become councillors
- Councillors having caring responsibilities
- Population of ward / city is increasing, need more resource to cover
- Some residents have not registered, the actual number of residents per ward is much higher
- Concern about coverage at different times of the year due to large student population in the city
- COVID-19 has led to an increased workload
- Social media / the internet has impacted communication and workload

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.

In developing our council size submission, we have considered how the council and city has evolved over the past few years coupled with the changes in population since the last review in 2000 and more importantly, our growing electorate. We have reviewed how the council currently operates in governance terms, reflected on what we have in place and also been cognisant that we frequently review our governance arrangements and implement changes where we believe they are required (both in democratic terms and to be 'business like' in our approach). In summary, we have;

- Analysed and put forward five-year housing development and electorate growth projections – see electorate forecasting methodology (Appendix 1)
- Reviewed our governance arrangements reflecting on our committee structure, number of committees, the number of councillors required to sit on those committees
- Reflected and gained feedback from councillors themselves regarding their role as elected members considering governance arrangements, scrutiny and regulatory functions and councillors' roles in their local communities
- Gained further insight into how the role of elected members may have changed considering aspects such as casework and other commitments

The workload of elected members has been a key feature and consideration, not least because of the emergence of social media and the multitude of platforms that residents of the city and businesses expect to be able to communicate through. This area constantly changes and places additional pressure on elected members. In context, when the last ward boundary etc review was undertaken, mobile phones, laptops etc were in their infancy and social media platforms far less established.

The expectations placed on members to support residents in a timely way has been exacerbated, not only by social media but Covid 19 implications, and whilst we anticipate and trust Covid related matters will dissipate, the way residents communicate is now the norm. This, coupled with the projected population increase in the city over the next five years, has drawn us to the following conclusions:

[The final submission will reflect the resolution by Council as to Option A, B or C]

A reduction in the number of elected members - is not recommended. If this were to be imposed it would place even greater pressure on elected members, with councillors required to attend more council meetings (assuming the number of seats on committees and outside bodies remains similar to now). With the undoubted reduction in level of service provided and expected, this would likely lead to a reduction in members of the public seeking to take up office. Moreover,

- Our councillors report that they are already busy, and that they are getting busier
- Increased levels of projected housing development and growth across the city over the next five years will result in increased population generating additional casework
- Recent feedback suggests three member wards work - they enable councillors to respond to the needs of their residents. It is felt that any reduction in three member wards means councillors will be picking up more casework and less able to respond to the needs of their communities.

Retaining current council size - 48 members and 16 wards of three members in each is an option, however this will not address increasing expectations by the public and demands on members' time not least given the anticipated growth in the electorate over the next five years and beyond. Members have already clearly indicated that the hours they spend on elected member duties has grown exponentially over the years and the status quo would not address this.

Increasing the number of elected members - would have a relatively small overall cost attached. The electorate and overall population of the city will steadily increase over the next five years. The number of present councillors was set in 2000 when the electorate of the city was smaller. In this 20-year period life has changed significantly, along with the expectations of residents and businesses likewise.

Whilst not directly relevant, it is also clear when analysing our CIPFA peer family, that the current number of elected members per head of electorate is amongst the lowest in our CIPFA group. This would be exacerbated further if either the status quo, or a reduction in numbers was imposed. On a purely equitable basis, notwithstanding other compelling factors indicated above, it appears reasonable to increase both the number of elected members by three or six meaning either one or two new wards.

This would mean that each elected member would seek to serve 3,819 residents per ward in the future (taking the figure at the 2027 prediction) as against 3,643 as now. It is appreciated this would require a redrawing of the ward boundaries in the city.

A case for increasing council size can be summarised as a result of;

- Forecast electorate numbers show an increase of 176 extra electorate per councillor by 2027. An increase of 8,469 (4.8%) in our electorate when comparing 2021 against 2027. Of the 8,469 increase in electorate it is forecast that 8,322 of those electors will come from new housing development in the city (4,190 new dwellings).
- Bargate ward already has an electorate variance of 32% from the average electorate for the authority (as of December 2019) – forecasted housing development and electorate data identifies that by 2027 this variance will have further increased
- The complexity of casework is increasing, and councillors report complexity of casework is linked to areas of greater deprivation and need across the city. Deprivation data shows Southampton is a relatively deprived city and ranks 55th out of 317 most deprived local authorities in England. Around 12% of our population live in neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived nationally, rising to 18% for the under 18 population, suggesting deprivation disproportionately impacts our young people in the city. Southampton is also ranked third worst in the country for crime deprivation. If deprivation levels were to worsen, this puts further pressure on councillors and their workloads and ability to represent the needs of their communities
- Councillors report the expectation from members of the public is increasing and residents want speedy, or immediate, responses to their enquiries. They also report a steady surge in social media usage in recent years is resulting in additional casework being generated. The simplicity of sending 'direct messages' or posting on social media sites means councillors are being contacted 24/7 across a wide range of communications and engagement channels. This is only likely to increase and keeping up with this demand will become more difficult.