

COUNCIL

DATE	18 th July 2024
REPORT OF	Rob Walsh, Chief Executive
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Helen Isaacs, Assistant Chief Executive
SUBJECT	North East Lincolnshire Council Ward Boundary Review – Council Size Submission
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Council has two clear strategic priorities – stronger economy and stronger communities. Having clear Ward boundaries enables electors the opportunity to engage in local and national democracy, and provides a sense of belonging within their community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks approval of North East Lincolnshire Council's Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The Council Size Submission is required as part of the Electoral Review process currently being undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That North East Lincolnshire Council's Council Size Submission be approved for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the duty placed on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake electoral reviews of every principal local authority in England from 'time to time'. The last review for North East Lincolnshire Council was undertaken in 2000 and this current review needs to be completed in time for our May 2026 elections.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is carrying out a review of the council's size, wards and boundaries. The review is being conducted in two stages, firstly the number of councillors (council size) and then the warding pattern, including the names of those wards.
- 1.2. At the meeting of Council on 14th December 2023 it was resolved to establish a Ward Boundary Review Working Group to oversee the provision of key information from the Council required as part of the review, including details of current Wards, polling districts and electorate. The Ward Boundary Review

Working Group has considered electoral forecasts, mapping and details of housing development (including future housing developments covering the next five-year period) during its deliberations. The development of the Council Size Submission has also been informed by the outcome of a Member Survey that focused on Members' workloads.

- 1.3. The Council Size Submission is attached at Appendix 1 to this report and has been approved for Council consideration by the Ward Boundary Review Working Group.
- 1.4. Council is reminded that it resolved to retain elections by thirds at its meeting on 25th May 2023, with the presumption of uniform three-member Wards being applied as part of the Electoral Review. This would mean that a decision to retain 42 Members would result in a reduction in the number of wards in North East Lincolnshire to 14. An increase to 45 Members would retain 15 wards but there will be a requirement to review all wards to ensure electoral equality. Therefore, a 'status quo' is not an option.
- 1.5 The Council Size Submission has to be submitted to the LGBCE by 24th July 2024.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 Failure to complete the submissions on time to the LGBCE would result in the Council having no say on the recommendations out forward by the LGBCE.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Do nothing – this would not be recommended as the LGBCE welcomes submissions to help them understand the views of the council and to gain an insight into the local area.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The review requests the local authority consult with a wide range of stakeholders including members, political parties, community groups and local residents on behalf of the LCBCE.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There will be minimal financial costs involved in undertaking the review.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications on children and young people arising from this report.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

- 8.1 The cross party working group reports direct to Council, which will approve the final submissions on behalf of the authority.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As outlined within section 5, there are minimal costs that would result from the consultation process.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The LGBCE is an independent body established by Parliament in April 2010 pursuant to The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The LGBCE has a statutory duty to undertake electoral reviews.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no HR implications directly arising from the report.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The proposals contained within this report will affect all Wards.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 None.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

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ROB WALSH
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

NELC

Council Size Submission: Template

North East Lincolnshire 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 North East Lincolnshire Council and is due to be approved at the meeting of Council to be held on 18th July 2024.](#)

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.*

[Identified for review by the Boundary Commission.](#)

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?

North East Lincolnshire Council is a unitary authority, formed in 1996. The most recent electoral review held by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was concluded in 2001, resulting in the current Council Size of 42 Members representing 15 wards and elections by thirds after 2003. Due to considerable residential growth in some parts of the area, there has been an increasing disparity in the number of electors served by a single councillor across the authority area, resulting in reduced electoral equality. Within the 15 wards there are currently 12 three-member and 3 two-member wards.

The last full governance reorganisation was in response to the Local Government Act 2000. The Cabinet/Scrutiny model of governance replaced the previous committee system and improved the efficiency of decision making by concentrating decisions made within the policy framework into a smaller group of people whilst promoting transparency in decision-making and retaining an effective check and balance on decision-makers.

The political composition of the Council is as follows:

18 Conservative
15 Labour
5 Independents for North East Lincolnshire
3 Liberal Democrat
1 Reform UK

The Leader of the Council is Councillor Philip Jackson (Conservative) who is currently in the second year of his second term of office, having formed a minority administration following the 2024 elections.

The Council has a civic mayor who is selected on an annual basis. The current mayor is Cllr. Steve Beasant and the Deputy Mayor is Cllr. Janet Goodwin.

There are two MPs for the borough. Melanie Onn is the Labour MP for the new Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes constituency and Martin Vickers is the Conservative MP for the new Brigg and Immingham constituency. The latter crosses into the administrative area of North Lincolnshire Council.

The Council has recently concluded a Community Governance Review (CGR) of parish electoral arrangements. This has resulted in changes in two areas:

- At the request of Immingham Town Council there will be a change to its ward boundaries reducing the current three Town Wards to two, a North and South Town Ward split.
- A change to the parish boundary between Barnoldby Le Beck and Waltham Parish Councils, resulting in just five properties changing parish.

These changes will take effect from the electoral registers to be published on 1st December 2026. No new parish councils were proposed for North East Lincolnshire. In total, North East Lincolnshire has 14 town and parish councils.

In 2023, the Council carried out a review of its electoral cycle in advance of this electoral review. Following a public consultation, the Council resolved in September 2023 to retain elections by thirds.

An LGA Corporate Peer Challenge review was undertaken in 2023. The review ([LGA Corporate Peer Challenge: North East Lincolnshire Council | Local Government Association](#)) identified that North East Lincolnshire Council (NEL) and its area has huge assets and opportunities to exploit for the benefits of its residents, communities, businesses and stakeholders. These opportunities include rapidly growing new industries which are at the forefront of net zero, decarbonisation and renewable energy but they need to be utilised urgently. Described as being an “ambitious yet pragmatic” council, partners and staff describe it as feeling quite different from other places they have worked. The council is known for its innovative approach to adults and health care integration and the review team felt that exemplary leadership and partnership working of adults and health through this approach has led to good outcomes for service users at relatively low cost. The review found that the council has a clear focus on regeneration with ambitious plans for Grimsby Town Centre and Cleethorpes. However, the council faces a number of challenges. Capacity was identified as a clear risk to be mitigated and managed. There are many priorities and an enthusiasm for delivery from councillors which stretches that capacity further. The council’s financial position was viewed as vulnerable, its budget is stretched and reducing. The review reported that Councillors need to ensure they understand the budget and the impact of the decisions they make, what needs to be done to ensure financial stability for future years including tough and clear choices and in doing so reduce the risk of financial failure. Subsequent to the review the Council budget position has been stabilised but it continues to operate in a challenging environment. The improvement and transformation journey continues across Children’s Services, as the council seeks to significantly improve the quality of practice across Children’s Services and achieve sustained change for children, young people, and families.

In July 2010, the council entered into a regeneration partnership with Balfour Beatty Workplace Limited (now Equans Services Limited) to deliver a number of key services on its behalf. The expiry of this contract in 2025 has led to a review of this partnership, leading to a decision to adopt a new delivery model based on a hybrid approach involving largely insourced delivery of services as well as some partnership delivery. The current partnership has limited the council’s capacity to make savings. Changes to the leisure landscape and community needs have prompted a review of leisure offer, which are currently externalised. It is felt that there will inevitably be changes to the current arrangements. The council continues to have some benefit from shared arrangements with a neighbouring council. As noted above, integration with health has provided efficiency and outcome benefits for our local community, however some of the systems changes in health have presented challenges more recently.

The Council is the accountable body for the Humber Freeport (constituted in 2023). The Freeport Board is a combination of public and private sector board members, with a private

sector Chair. The four Humber local authorities have collaborated with private sector stakeholders to develop the business case to Government, resulting in the creation of Humber Freeport. Since constitution, the Humber Freeport has attracted inward investment into its tax sites, and along with agreed seed capital from Government, the forecast future business rate retention is positive for the region. As accountable body, the council also has a role in coordinating evaluation of business cases for investment into the Freeport region.

The Humber Leadership Board was established in 2014 as a formally constituted committee of the four 4 Humber authorities. It meets regularly and takes an enhanced role with Government in facilitating business growth and delivering net zero aspirations in the Humber area.

The Council has been successful in securing unprecedented levels of Levelling Up and other Government funding for capital projects in recent years, with investment totalling £270m. These projects, across Grimsby and Cleethorpes include the regeneration of Grimsby's recently acquired shopping centre, reconfiguration of the market and central promenade of the resort and housing regeneration projects. While these are transformational for the borough, effective delivery will require substantially enhanced levels of organisational capacity and political involvement and oversight.

In March 2024, the council agreed to the establishment of a Combined County Authority for Greater Lincolnshire. This is now being progressed with a view to Mayoral elections being held in May 2025. The council will continue to be responsible for delivering valuable local services to its residents, but some powers will be used concurrently by local councils and the proposed Combined Authority. It is anticipated that Transport powers would be brought together with the proposed Combined Authority becoming the Local Transport Authority for Greater Lincolnshire. The devolution proposal for Greater Lincolnshire referred to governance arrangements which would include a Combined Authority that would be able to establish committees to exercise its functions. This could include a Greater Lincolnshire Transport Board, a Greater Lincolnshire Skills and Employment Board and a Greater Lincolnshire Business and Infrastructure Board, each including representation of two councillors from North East Lincolnshire Council. In addition, there will be separate scrutiny and audit committee arrangements, which will also require representation from North East Lincolnshire Council councillors.

The current number of Councillors provides a strong basis for ongoing strategic leadership of addressing the challenges identified above. All Council services have a portfolio holder with overall strategic responsibility for the function, and with adequate Committee and Scrutiny functions to ensure democratic accountability continues across Council services. Taking this into account, any significant increase in Council Size would create some cost and support pressures, while a large reduction in the number of Councillors would increase workloads and limit capacity for strategic oversight at the same time as increased representation and leadership demands in the borough and across wider geographical footprints.

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?

North East Lincolnshire Council is a Unitary Council located on the south bank of the Humber estuary. The Council is a Port Health Authority for Grimsby and Immingham, part of the busiest port complex in the UK. Most of the population live in the towns of Grimsby and Cleethorpes with a smaller number living in the town of Immingham and the surrounding rural villages. Parts of the urban area are ranked as being some of the most deprived areas in the country (see Appendix A for North East Lincolnshire Indices of Deprivation Maps).

North East Lincolnshire is part of the Yorkshire and Humber region for Local Government purposes; part of the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) that covers York, North Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire for health; and in a Humber footprint (with Hull, East Riding and North Lincolnshire) for Police and Fire and Rescue services. Whilst the Council continues to work towards the establishment of a Greater Lincolnshire Combined Mayoral Authority with Lincolnshire County Council and North Lincolnshire Council, it also maintains a focus on strategic developments on the Humber through the Humber Leadership Board (a long-established joint committee of the four Humber unitary authorities which is set to have an enhanced role under the devolution arrangements).

The Council serves a population of 156,907. The working age population (16 to 64) is slightly below national and regional comparators, 61.6% (96,600). An increasing proportion of the population are over 64 - 20.9% (32,800). The percentage of children and young people (0 to 15) is in line with national average at around 17.6% (27,600) of the population. The ethnicity of the population overwhelmingly identifies as white British. There has been a gradual increase in the last 10 years in the proportion of white Europeans.

The population overall has seen a reduction from 159,616 (2011) to 156,907 (2021) and households have remained static 69,907 (2011) to 69,800 (2021). More significantly, the population has seen a reduction in young and working age residents and a significant increase in older residents. However, Experian baseline December 2022 projections predict a population growth of 11,114 for the Borough over the period to 2042 with an associated housing growth of 415 dwellings per annum.

Economically the current unemployment rate stands at 3.7% with a resident-based income of £29,241 in 2022 (ONS 2023). There are high levels of Universal Credit claimants (20,000), a significant number of whom are in work (8,000+). Growth in business formation since 2012 has been considerably lower than across the Yorkshire and Humber Region (ONS 2023 UK Business Counts). There are however, signs and opportunities that point to future economic growth. The Experian Economic Model predicts a net jobs growth of 2,600 for the Borough over the period to 2042, in line with the Experian baseline December 2022 projections. Furthermore, additional growth linked to the Freeport proposals and growth associated with

renewables, hydrogen generation and carbon capture is likely to deliver more, aligned to the formal designation of the Humber Freeport and the delivery of the Council's Investment and Regeneration Programmes.

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	<div> <div>Key lines of explanation</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i> </div> </div>
	<div> <div>Analysis</div> <div> <p>The Council operates a Leader/Cabinet model. Cabinet leads the preparation of the Council's policies and budget and is responsible for taking the key decisions of the council.</p> <p>The Council's constitution provides for the Cabinet to consist of the Leader of the Council together with the Deputy Leader and up to eight other Councillors. At present the Cabinet consists of eight members.</p> <p>In formulating strategic and operational policies, Cabinet will:</p> </div> </div>

		<p>a. consider and manage the exercise of all the functions and powers of the Council which are by law to be the responsibility of the Cabinet;</p> <p>b. consider and make recommendations to the full Council on any matters which it is the responsibility of the full Council to determine (other than on matters which are by law not the responsibility of the Cabinet).</p> <p>c. consider and respond to reports and recommendations from individual Scrutiny Panels or Select Committees.</p> <p>There has been an increased emphasis in recent years on pre-decision scrutiny in particular, allowing non-executive members to be involved in the formulation of policies and improvements to services. Cabinet members also attend relevant scrutiny panels to respond to challenge from scrutiny members on anticipated decisions.</p> <p>This current structure is viewed as both efficient and effective, with opportunities for involvement in decision making by non-Cabinet members, and therefore a model of governance that is expected to continue.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>The Leader has currently appointed an Executive of seven in addition to himself. The Cabinet Members have portfolios as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills (Leader) • Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care (Deputy Leader) • Finance, Resources and Assets. • Children and Education • Environment and Net Zero • Safer and Stronger Communities • Culture, Heritage and Visitor Economy • Housing, Infrastructure and Transport <p>Executive Member responsibilities are set out in Part 2 Decision Making - Section 4 in the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>Decisions will be taken either by all the Cabinet members of the Cabinet as collective majority decisions or by individual portfolio holders at formal scheduled meetings</p>

		<p>to which the press and public can be present.</p> <p>Individual members of the Cabinet may also make decisions within their areas of responsibility (Portfolios). As with Cabinet Decisions there are specific legal requirements that must be observed to ensure that any decisions made are open and transparent. Specific decision making powers have been delegated to individual Cabinet Members.</p> <p>Cabinet Members also join Overview and Scrutiny meetings to give their account of their actions and decisions. They also liaise with partners and represent the Council externally on a number of 'outside body' organisations.</p> <p>Cabinet meets formally at least eleven times a year as well as informally with the council's senior management team on a fortnightly basis to discuss key issues. In addition, they also receive informal briefing meetings with individual senior officers that deal with the services within their dedicated portfolios. These responsibilities are additional to the representative role as a ward councillor, therefore, being a Cabinet Member involves a substantial time commitment.</p> <p>The establishment of the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Mayoral Authority will involve new powers in respect of adult education and skills delegated from central government and the movement of some decisions that currently sit with the Council, e.g. for spatial planning and transport infrastructure. These changes are not expected to materially reduce the budget and statutory service responsibilities of the NELC which will be unchanged as a unitary council.</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>Through full Council meetings, all councillors are involved in approving or adopting the budget and policy framework (key strategies of the Council). Full Council also appoints the Mayor and Deputy Mayor; the Leader of the Council; the Head of Paid Service; committee places and chairs; and representatives to sit on outside body organisations. The Council's Constitution is reviewed on at least an annual basis, and any changes are reported to and agreed by Council. As noted above, Cabinet is responsible for taking key decisions impacting on the day-to-day operational running of the organisation.</p>

		<p>Scheme of delegation to Officers</p> <p>Officers are authorised to take both executive and non-executive decisions under the Council’s Constitution and through decisions by members from time to time in relation to specific matters or projects. As defined in legislation, these decisions are subject to publication requirements.</p> <p>The agreed extensive scheme of delegation to officers can be seen in more detail in Part 2 Decision Making / Article 4 / Section 5.</p> <p>Delegations to Committees</p> <p>Some other functions, of a regulatory nature, cannot be exercised by the Cabinet. These are therefore Council retained functions which have been delegated by full Council to undertake these regulatory functions as follows:</p> <p>Planning Committee</p> <p>This committee consists of eleven members (politically balanced). It meets around 12 times a municipal year. They determine planning applications under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 except applications delegated to the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure.</p> <p>Licensing and Community Protection Committee</p> <p>This committee consists of ten members (politically balanced) and meets around four times a year. All powers conferred on the Licensing Committee under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, subject to the delegation of powers to the Licensing Sub-Committees.</p> <p>Licensing Sub Committee</p> <p>This committee consists of three members, all of which sit on the Licensing and Community Protection Committee. It is organised as and when referrals come in. They have all powers under the Licensing Act 2003 delegated to the Sub-Committees by the full Council on the 16th December 2004 as part of the scheme of delegation.</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Sub Committee</p> <p>This committee consists of five members, all of which sit on the Licensing and Community Protection Committee.</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	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	<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>Decision makers are principally held to account through the overview and scrutiny process. Cabinet Members and senior officers are expected to attend the Overview and Scrutiny meetings on a regular basis. The Council recognises that effective scrutiny arrangements are an essential part of good governance in any local authority, playing a 'critical friend' role in challenging decision-making, reflecting the voice and concerns of local people and communities, and making an impact on service delivery.</p> <p>The council have appointed an Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board (not being a formal committee of the council) and five scrutiny panels as follows to discharge its functions :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children and Lifelong Learning 2. Health and Adult Social Care 3. Communities 4. Economy, Culture and Tourism 5. Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing <p>The titles and terms of reference of these panels were updated at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2024 to ensure best fit with the Council's priorities and achieve a more balanced workload across the panels.</p> <p><u>Scrutiny Panel Functions</u></p> <p>Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board</p> <p>The Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board is responsible for providing the strategic direction and management of the scrutiny function at North East Lincolnshire Council. The membership of the Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board will be the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and Scrutiny Panel Chairs, supported by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer. Opposition Group Leaders are also invited to attend and contribute to these meetings.</p> <p>Scrutiny Panels</p>

	<p>The Scrutiny Panels are responsible for holding the Executive (Cabinet) to account via the process of call-in or pre-decision scrutiny, undertaking policy development work, discharging statutory scrutiny functions as prescribed in legislation and, in particular, with regard to health, crime and disorder and education and undertaking such other activity as may be commissioned either by Cabinet or Council.</p> <p>The membership of the scrutiny panels (except Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel – see below) is eight members per panel, with membership appointed from non-Cabinet members (proportionate to party membership within the council).</p> <p>In respect of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, there are ten members plus the statutory parent governor and diocesan voting representatives co-opted on to this Panel. The panel has also co-opted non-voting trade union and young people co-opted representatives.</p> <p>Each panel meeting typically meets five times a year, but as matter arise more may need to be scheduled in. For example, the Economy Scrutiny Panel met eight times in the 2023/24 Municipal Year as a result of the need to consider key regeneration activities, the Local Plan Review and devolution plans.</p> <p>There has also been a need to establish joint panels to consider matters cutting across the remits of more than one panel. This has allowed challenge on key areas such as the skills agenda and the review of the Equans partnership.</p> <p>Members of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel have joined forces with colleagues in neighbouring local authorities to consider proposals arising from a review of Humber Acute Services.</p> <p>Scrutiny members can also be involved in task and finish work, allowing in depth study of particular areas of council policy or issues of local concern. This gives councillors the opportunity to examine areas in detail and produce detailed and informed recommendations to decision-makers. Such ‘working groups’ have been established to look into depot rationalisation plans and the transition to the new delivery model for services currently being provided by our regeneration partner, Equans.</p> <p>In addition to these task and finish groups, the Council can establish Cabinet Working Parties, again to look at specific matters in more detail. These can comprise of any Member of the Council with each working party including up to 5 councillors (with a maximum of 3 Cabinet members). Cabinet Working Parties report directly and exclusively to the Cabinet and act in an advisory capacity only. There are working parties proposed on</p>
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	<p>the following subjects during the 2024/25 Municipal Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Licensing and Houses of Multiple Occupation • Environmental Street Scene and Enforcement <p>A review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements was undertaken in 2022. This resulted in a number of recommendations, since implemented. These primarily focused on meeting arrangements and improving the ability for members to effectively scrutinise through further training and management of work programmes and agendas.</p> <p>It is felt that the Council's scrutiny arrangements adequately cover local priorities and the number of panels is considered appropriate to ensure effective scrutiny, with each having a wide remit of major importance. A key factor of the Cabinet/Scrutiny model is allowing non-Cabinet councillors the opportunity to remain involved in decision-making and it is important to have a broad range of knowledge and experience brought to the scrutiny role, with no single Member holding too many scrutiny roles. Therefore a reduction in the number of Members would be detrimental to the scrutiny function. As such, it is felt that the current panel membership in terms of numbers continues to be appropriate to the Council's needs.</p>	
Statutory Function	<p>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?</p>	
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Planning Committee is a single council-wide committee. Cabinet Members do not tend to serve on the Committee but due to Members being spread too thin, this has resulted in them serving as a substitute member and occasionally as a full member. Cabinet members also may need to attend committee meetings as a ward councillor to represent residents and communities on applications being considered.</p>

		<p>In the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, the committee dealt with 85 planning applications as opposed to 447 dealt with by officers under delegated powers (15.97% of all applications during this period). This is not out of kilter with previous years and there are no immediate plans to change the scheme of delegation for this committee. During the last Municipal Year the Planning Committee met twelve times, with each meeting lasting approximately two to three hours. In addition to the meeting times, Members may have had to attend site visits before each meeting. Each Member is expected to attend the site visits if it is required for the upcoming meeting. These tend to take place on a weekday a few days before the meeting is scheduled to take place. Agenda papers for these meetings tend to be large, including background papers and representations made, requiring significant time for committee members to read prior to meetings.</p> <p>Only Members who have received appropriate planning training may sit on the committee.</p> <p>Given the time commitment noted above, the Council considers that a committee of 11 members is sufficient to enable effective decision-making.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Currently, there is a Licensing and Community Protection Committee who meets four times in a municipal year for approximately 1-2 hours a time. There is a core of ten members on this committee.</p> <p>It delegates powers to the Licensing Sub-Committee whose hearings are organised as and when needed. The hearings determine</p>

		<p>licensing applications and reviews of premises licenses. Three members of the Licensing and Community Protection Committee are appointed to sit on the subcommittee. These tend to last up to three hours.</p> <p>It also delegates powers to the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee. This meets every four weeks and comprises five members of the Licensing and Community Protection Committee, appointed on an annual basis. The sub committee determines taxi driver licence applications and reviews. These tend to last two to three hours.</p> <p>Members of the Licensing and Community Protection Committee are required to undertake training prior to being able to serve on the committee and its sub-committees.</p> <p>Prior to committee and sub-committee meetings, members will have significant information to read and consider.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>In addition to the above, the Council functions are supported by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards and Adjudication Committee 9 members, meets four times a year. Guides the Council on the promotion of high standards of conduct for Members. Individual complaints that Members may have breached their Code of Conduct are dealt with by sub committees of this committee. Standards Referral Panels determine whether complaints should be investigated or other action taken. Comprises three members of the Standards and Adjudication Committee and meets on an ad-hoc basis as and when complaints are received. It met six times during the 2023/24 Municipal Year. Standards

		<p>Hearing Panels determines any complaints referred for investigation. Comprises five members of the Standards and Adjudication Committee and meets infrequently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointments Committee 7 members, now meets twice a year as a result of changes to the way officer redundancy and early retirement cases are heard. The committee deals primarily with senior officer appointments. • Audit and Governance Committee 9 members, plus an independent Chair. A second independent member is in the process of being appointed. Meets five times a year. The Committee monitors the Council's financial controls and treasury management arrangements, management of risk, the effectiveness of the Council's anti-fraud arrangements and the Council's arrangements for partnership governance. • Health and Wellbeing Board 3 members of Cabinet, meets four times per year. This is a partnership board charged with advancing the health and wellbeing of the people in the area, encouraging persons who arrange for the provision of any health or social care services in the area to work in an integrated manner.
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.	
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i> 	
Analysis	Each municipal year the Council makes appointment to a number of external bodies, commonly referred to as 'outside bodies'. These	

	<p>include national appointments such as the Local Government Association, regional bodies, unincorporated associations, charities and other public authorities. These appointments vary in nature and workload, dependent on the Terms of Reference of the body they are appointed to. Some of the appointments are allocated to Cabinet members based on their portfolio responsibilities, and others are allocated to ward councillors as general appointments.</p> <p>The list of outside bodies and member representation submitted to the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2024 can be found here - Annual Meeting of North East Lincolnshire Council Democracy (nelincs.gov.uk)</p> <p>It is considered that these external appointments are of great importance to the local community and support the way the authority is able to deliver its functions.</p> <p>The Council does not feel that reducing the number of Bodies on which we are represented would be appropriate. We also feel that a significant reduction in the number of Councillors would have a negative impact in the way we can represent the needs of local people on such bodies.</p>
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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	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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</i>

		<p><i>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></p>
	Analysis	<p>Councillors are actively involved within their Wards and play a pro-active part in the communities they represent. The approach taken varies from councillor to councillor, but all are involved in some or all of the following as part of their engagement with constituents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casework/Constituency matters • Town and Parish council meetings • Community/resident meetings <p>The Council does not have any area committees in operation but has a number of active community groups and VCS organisations councillors regularly engage with. Involvement in community/resident meetings is anticipated to be in a representational role, advising on the council's plans and reporting back matters of concern and general queries to the council either directly to officers and/or through the decision-making processes.</p> <p>Members are able to allocate community (ward) funding in support of projects that support community priorities and need.</p> <p>Members use a variety of methods to communicate with constituents, including face-to-face meetings, email and telephone calls. Some hold local surgeries or undertake a ward walk in their community to meet with local people. Some are active on social media to engage with their communities.</p> <p>Due to the differences in roles and working patterns of Councillors it remains difficult to state how much time is required to carry out the role of a Councillor in North East Lincolnshire. It remains a matter kept under review by the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel as part of its role in reviewing members allowances. The National Census of Local Authority Councillors indicated in 2022 that unitary authority members spend, on average, 25.6 hours per week on council business. This includes attendance at council meetings, engaging with constituents and working with community groups. A further 5.3 hours per week was spent on political party/group business. A survey was undertaken to inform this submission (see Appendix B) and indicates that Councillors in North East Lincolnshire consider that, in general, this is a reasonable figure. The increased importance of councillor development is a further consideration with Councillors expected to regularly attend training sessions on a broad range of issues as well as briefings on key areas of council business.</p>

Casework	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Councillors take responsibility for their own casework and manage their workload appropriately. The Ward Boundary Review Working Group wished to emphasise the community cohesion issues within North East Lincolnshire, and the challenges faced in serving well established communities and some of the most deprived areas in the country. There are particular issues associated with housing, crime and anti social behaviour. The Council has provided an online 'customer portal' to allow residents and members to log common calls for service (e.g. fly tipping, pot holes). The council is currently introducing a Members' Portal providing access to the customer portal as well as information on general calls for service within their wards. This will identify common issues within wards and across the Borough to help inform the allocation of council resources.</p> <p>The customer portal provides an audit trail and is aimed at providing a more responsive service with officers having to spend less time on calls from councillors and residents. Through promotion of the portal, it is hoped that service users will engage directly with the services rather than have to rely on councillors to log calls on their behalf.</p> <p>Members receive direct support from the Democratic and Scrutiny Services team (comprising of 8 staff with a FTE of 7.5). The role of the team is to support Members on a daily basis, assisting with the set up of ward surgeries, support with technology, and advice on committee/panel-related matters. The team will also assist with resolution of customer portal disputes.</p> <p>Technology, primarily in the form of laptops, has been incorporated into the councillor role to enable a more responsive and interactive service as well as trying to reduce unnecessary paper consumption. Each member is provided with a council email address. All committee meetings remain face to face (as directed by legislation), however, informal meetings tend to be held on a virtual or hybrid basis to allow Members more flexibility in their attendance and reduce travel time and costs. The Council is about to introduce webcasting of its full Council meetings, with the aim of improving access to</p>

		meetings for the public (and for members should legislation be amended to allow virtual member attendance).
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Other Issues

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

Financial Considerations

The total paid out in Members Allowances for 2023/24 was £552, 526. This amount includes both the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances, as well as travel expenses. It should be noted that member travel claims are restricted to travel outside the Borough on approved council duties (for example to attend outside body meetings).

Local Government Nearest Neighbour Group Comparisons

Key council size data has been compared for statistically similar councils based on the groupings given by CIPFA's Nearest neighbour Model for English authorities.

The table below shows the breakdown at Council level.

Area	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Ratio of Members to Electors
Doncaster	224636	55	4084
Wirral	240107	66	3638
Plymouth	194965	57	3420
Sefton	211916	66	3211
North Lincolnshire	130633	43	3038
Calderdale	150880	51	2958
Torbay	104100	36	2892
St. Helens	138293	48	2881
North East Lincolnshire	116205	42	2767
Sunderland	206916	75	2759
North Tyneside	155347	60	2589
Stockton-on-Tees	143014	56	2554
Hartlepool	70465	36	1957
Halton	94223	54	1745
Redcar and Cleveland	101576	59	1722
Darlington	78427	50	1569
Areas mean	147606	53	2736

Source: ONS December 2022

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 preparing this submission, a Ward Boundary Review Working Group has met and considered the options for the future size of the Council. The following council size options were considered:

Retain the current number of 42

In 2024 the North East Lincolnshire ratio of electors to each councillor is 2776, a slight increase from the 2022 ONS data shown above. However, based on the Council's population forecasts for 2030, the ratio of number of electors to each councillor would be 2901, an increase of 125 electors per councillor on current numbers. This would result in an overall increase in the electorate of 4.5%. This appears to be in line with other authorities that have undergone recent reviews.

In terms of workloads for members, the current model of governance, with 42 members, has been well established for a number of years and proven to work well. The scale of the challenges and opportunities currently faced by the Council is, however, new and is in the context of a council that has just moved to "no overall control" which places additional capacity pressures on Councillors and Officers to maintain effective decision making and progress. The change in electors in 2030 alone would not be deemed a significant increase and would not make North East Lincolnshire significantly different to any of the comparator areas included in this submission. Our context is, however, materially different. Retaining 42 members would mean members would continue to serve on the same number of committees that they currently do. Members would be able to continue to serve their residents effectively as they have since the last electoral review of North East Lincolnshire Council.

Reduction in numbers

Consideration was given to reducing the number of Councillors and although it could result in a modest financial saving for the authority, it was felt that this could not be justified given forecast population growth and the increasing complexity of issues experienced by some of our residents in respect of deprivation, long term economic inactivity and health and care needs which are likely to increase the casework of the Councillors. As noted earlier, the proposed Mayoral Combined Authority will create new meetings, with associated travel and preparation time, which Councillors from the North East Lincolnshire Council will be expected to accommodate. Reducing the number of Councillors whilst increasing the number of meetings they need to attend would not be practical and may adversely impact on decision making in the area. Reducing the number of Councillors could potentially mean that the governance and committee structures would need to be reviewed and amended and the Council does not see any justification for that. Reducing numbers could also have an impact on the diversity of councillors and their ability to be representative of their communities, particularly within deprived areas. There are number of Councillors in full time employment which further constrains capacity. Given the Council's decision to continue to elect by thirds and the requirement for three member wards, reducing numbers would mean a decrease of at least 3 councillors. This would increase the number of electors per Councillor to 3125 moving

it towards the top end of other comparator areas included in this submission. The results of the Councillor Survey undertaken to inform this submission show no support for a reduction in the number of councillors.

Increase in numbers

Consideration was given to increasing the size of the Council. There was some support within the Ward Boundary Review Working Group for this option given the forecast growth in the population and therefore the electorate.

An increase to 45 would give a ratio of 2708 electors to each councillor in 2030; in line with the average for our comparator group of Councils. An increase in numbers would see a small additional budget pressures to fund an increase in allowances and additional support. It was also felt that the scale of investment within the borough combined with additional roles created by the Mayoral Combined Authority would add to existing demands on Councillors. The challenge of serving communities with significant deprivation issues cannot be underestimated and the councillors' roles increasingly focus on partnership working in seeking to resolve matters outside the sole remit of North East Lincolnshire Council, for example, health and crime issues. If number are increased, they could be accommodated with, if needed, changes to the existing governance and Committee Structures.

Recommendation:

Having considered all relevant data and analysis, North East Lincolnshire Council proposes that its number of councillors remains at 42, which currently allows it sufficient capacity to effectively operate its governance and decision-making arrangements and represent the electorate in a fair, equitable and efficient way.