

West Lancashire Borough Council

Council Size Submission

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How to Make a Submission

1. It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal.
2. The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses are should unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

About You

3. The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, or an individual.
 - 3.1 This submission sets out West Lancashire Borough Council's response to the LGBCE's invitation to put forward a case for Council Size.
 - 3.2 At the meeting of Full Council on 22 July 2020 it was resolved that the Council would maintain elections by Thirds.
 - 3.3 The Council's submission has been developed by the Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG) which includes members from all political groups on the Council and a range of officers. The ERWG considered the council size submission over a series of meetings between May 2020 and January 2021 before recommending it to full Council who agreed the submission at their meeting held on 24 February 2021.
 - 3.4 West Lancashire Borough Council has carried out an assessment of the work of the Council, and the roles and responsibilities of its elected members.
 - 3.5 West Lancashire Borough Council considers that a council size of 45 Councillors, elected by thirds, will be able to secure effective local government and maintain strong community identities and interests in the Borough going forward.
 - 3.6 Maintaining elections by thirds will mean significant change from the current electoral geography of the Borough – a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 member wards – but it will bring in more uniform representation with electorally balanced wards across the Borough.
 - 3.7 This decision to maintain elections by thirds was not unanimous, although the decision does respect the full council motion on 17 October 2018 which only resolved to review the Council's size, number of councillors and ward boundaries and not the electoral cycle.

- 3.8 With a Council Size of 45 this could consist of a mix of 13 three member wards and 3 two member wards for a total of 16 wards. Other examples could be 11 three member wards and 6 two member wards for a total of 17 wards, or 9 three member wards and 9 two member wards for a total of 18 wards.
- 3.9 The request for some two member wards is to allow for more concise representation of the Borough's rural communities that would otherwise be subsumed into overly large three member wards which may cross several parish and town boundaries, therefore not reflecting community identity.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

4. Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*
- 4.1 West Lancashire Borough Council (the Council) last underwent a boundary review in 1999/2000 as part of the Local Government Commission for England's programme of Periodic Electoral Reviews (PERs). The Local Government Commission for England has since been superseded by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
- 4.2 The 1999/2000 review resulted in a reduction in Wards and Councillors from 26 to 25 and 55 to 54 respectively.
- 4.3 At the meeting of full Council on 17 October 2018 the following was resolved;
- A. That this council believes:
- 1) That the potential for radical restructuring of Council governance exists within the Sustainable Organisation Review Process, and should therefore be considered at this point in time.
 - 2) That it is appropriate that the role and number of elected members be considered equally alongside those of officers within the review process.
 - 3) That a concomitant review of governance and service delivery will provide the best opportunity for innovative changes across the council and the way in which its services are delivered at a local level.

4) That the new Target Operating Model, to be presented to Council in July 2019, will provide clear guidance as to the potential for revising the political management structure.

B. That this Council resolves:

1) To commence an electoral review process, to review the Council's size, numbers of councillors and ward boundaries, following consideration of the SORP review and the agreement of the new Target Operating Model in July 2019.

2) To authorise officers to make initial contact with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to establish timescales and likely issues arising from an electoral review and assess the resource provision required.

4.4 Separately, on 14 June 2019 the Commission wrote to WLBC advising that a review of West Lancashire would be undertaken as part of their new programme of periodic reviews of authorities who have not been reviewed for 12 or more years.

4.5 On 25 June and 22 July 2019, the Chief Executive and Borough Solicitor respectively, wrote to the Commission confirming the Council's wish to be included in the Commission's review programme given its coincidence with the Council's motion of October 2018.

Local Authority Profile

5. Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description may cover all, or some of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraint 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 transitional populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

5.1 West Lancashire is predominantly a rural borough which lies at the heart of the North West of England, located within easy reach of Manchester and Liverpool, and easily accessed by the M6 and the M58. One of 12 districts in Lancashire, the area stretches from the outskirts of Liverpool, Knowsley, and St Helens in the south to the River Ribble in the north, with Southport and Sefton to the west and Wigan, South Ribble and Chorley to the east.

5.2 In 2012 the Borough population was around 111,000 residents. The Borough is home to over 4,000 businesses and supports around 45,000 jobs.

- 5.3 The Borough is a mixture of small picturesque villages together with the larger market town of Ormskirk, and the town of Skelmersdale, combining business districts, central and local shopping centres, with green space, woodlands and the greatest amount of Green Belt designated land in England.
- 5.4 Outside of the urban centres of Ormskirk and Skelmersdale all parts of the Borough are represented by Parish/Town Councils or a Parish Meeting.
- 5.5 West Lancashire has a diverse population in terms of age with some communities having a markedly older population (Aughton, Parbold/Newburgh and Tarleton) with others being the home to households with younger children (Skelmersdale). The borough is also home to Edge Hill University which has more than 22,000 students, most of whom live in the area – the population of Ormskirk has a high level of 18-24 year olds because of this. The 2011 census has shown that West Lancashire has a generally ageing population – a 23% rise in those over 65 in a ten year period.
- 5.6 The ethnicity of residents is almost entirely White British – around 5% of the population in Skelmersdale declared themselves to be White Other which could reflect the Eastern European community living and working in the area. There are very small numbers of residents who have other ethnicities (less than one half of one percent) and these live across the borough. Less than 1% of residents have a mixed ethnicity. In the most recent census, 76% of residents declared themselves to be Christian with 17% stating that they do not follow a religion. The remaining 7% of the population have beliefs that include Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism.
- 5.7 The gender of the borough is relatively balanced overall with 52% of the population identifying as female.
- 5.8 More than 20% of the population of West Lancashire consider that their day-to-day activities are limited by health which is significantly higher than the national average. Almost 12,000 residents have a hearing impairment and just short of 2,000 adults have a visual impairment. More than 2,000 resident adults have a learning disability. 12% of the population are found to have a common mental health disorder including depression and anxiety.
- 5.9 The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 shows that in West Lancashire 19.2% of the Borough, predominantly in Skelmersdale and north east Ormskirk, is within the 20th percentile of most deprived areas in England. 30.1% of the Borough, predominantly in suburban areas and villages outside of Ormskirk and Skelmersdale, is within the 20th percentile of least deprived areas. Overall, in the period between 2015 and 2019, deprivation in West Lancashire has declined by 5.8% according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation average rank measure.

Council Size

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

Strategic Leadership

7. Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified.

Topic		
Governance Model	Key lines of explanation	<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 have represents is most appropriate for the authority.</i>
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has been operating executive arrangements under the Local Government Act 2000 since May 2002. The Council's Constitution was first adopted at that time and continues to be updated to take account of changes since then. On 15 December 2010 the Council resolved to change its executive arrangements from May 2011, as required by the Local Government Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and adopt the 'new style' Leader and Cabinet Executive (England) model. • There are currently 54 Councillors and the Council would like to reduce this number by 9 to 45 from 2023. This reduction would bring West Lancashire in line with the average number of Councillors for district authorities within Lancashire and also the average of our CIPFA Nearest Neighbours. A reduction to 45 Councillors would mean an Electors per Councillor Ratio of approximately 2002, just slightly below the average of our CIPFA Nearest Neighbour authorities. • There are currently no plans to change to a different governance model at this time, however should West Lancashire decide to change to a Committee structure, the Council is confident that this could be accommodated within the proposed reduced number of Councillors as some of our CIPFA Nearest Neighbour authorities, such as Newark & Sherwood (39 Members), operate under different governance structures with the same or fewer members.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current Cabinet consists of 9 Councillors and whilst this figure has fluctuated over time it is felt that even with the reduction in the total number of members proposed that this would not have a significant impact on capacity based on current workloads. However, a greater reduction in Councillor numbers would make maintaining a Cabinet of this size more challenging as there would be a smaller pool of members from the leading group to choose. This could potentially result in the Leader choosing to have fewer portfolio holders, increasing the workload for those members and reducing the flexibility the Leader has in this regard. A further reduction in council size, beyond the proposed decrease to 45, could mean that the entire leading group are required to be members of the executive or chairs/vice chairs of committees, greatly increasing the workload of each member. Currently the remaining forty five members are appointed to the Council's two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Member Development Commission, the Regulatory Committees for Planning, Licensing, Audit & Governance, Standards Committee and various Working Groups. A reduction in council size may see membership of committees reduced but it is not felt that the proposed reduction would have a significant impact on the work of these committees or the workload of the members, whereas a further reduction would necessitate smaller committees and potentially members serving on more committees than they do now, increasing their workload.
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are currently 9 Portfolio Holders as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader & Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Human Resources Health and Wellbeing Housing and Landlord Services Street Scene Resources and Transformation Planning Emergency Planning, Preparation and Implementation (until 2021) Communities and Community Safety

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full details of each portfolio can be found in the Constitution via the following link: https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=305&info=1&MD=Constitution Sections 4.1B: Cabinet Members - "Portfolio Details" and 4.3 "Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders" • The positions of Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, although not deemed to be considered as full time positions, do require a substantial commitment given the level of responsibility and significant additional time that needs to be spent to undertake those roles effectively. A reduction to a number lower than the 45 proposed would likely adversely impact the workload of these members. • There are 5 scheduled formal meetings of Cabinet each year, 5 scheduled informal meetings and 5 Cabinet Briefing Meetings. Additional meetings are also held when required. • All of the Council's functions are exercised by the Executive arm of the Council unless the law makes specific provision to the contrary. Where the law provides the Council with a choice, the council's constitution determines whether a function may be exercised by the Cabinet. Executive decisions are mainly taken by the Cabinet as a whole or by Officer Delegation given by the Leader, usually in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder. There are no anticipated changes to the current arrangements and the proposed reduction to 45 Councillors in would not adversely affect how this process works, whilst also maintaining a manageable workload for members of the executive. Decisions taken directly by the Portfolio Holders e.g. determining Community Chest Grants, are set out in Constitution 4.3 as detailed above.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scheme of delegation to Executive Members and Officers can be found in Constitution 4.2 via https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=305&info=1&MD=Constitution • Current Member workloads are not distributed evenly across all Members. For example, members in leading positions (e.g. Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Committee Chairmen etc.) have a significantly higher involvement in meetings than those members who are not in positions of responsibility. In

		<p>addition, members of the Planning Committee have a greater workload because of the number of meetings, length of meetings and associated site visits, and members of scrutiny committees, particularly Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee, keep an active overview on the work of Cabinet. Whilst workloads would likely increase with a reduction in members it is felt that this would be manageable without adversely impacting the workload of executive members.</p>
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Accountability

8. Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role.

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is currently undertaking a separate review of its Overview and Scrutiny functions but current arrangements are based on two Committees and a Member Development Commission. <p>Executive overview and scrutiny committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls in Cabinet decisions Examines Cabinet decisions which have not been called in, after they have been made, and comments to the Cabinet or council (post hoc scrutiny) Considers matters referred by the Cabinet or council Makes proposals to the Cabinet of its own volition Acts as Co-ordinating Committee for Overview and Scrutiny

Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- The Committee conducts in depth reviews/policy development as set out in its work programme.
- The Committee considers, as part of its routine work:
 - Items referred from "Members Update" at the request of a Member
 - Members items/Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)
 - Performance Management, including the Annual Reports from West Lancs Community Leisure/Serco and BT Lancashire Services Limited.
 - Acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee
 - Monitors recommendations from previously conducted reviews

Member Development Commission

- This Commission considers issues around the training of members as well as their wider strategic role in Council business. The commission is also currently reviewing the Council's Overview & Scrutiny function.
- This scrutiny structure may change given the internal review of scrutiny that is currently taking place, but any reduction in members will be factored into this review and be managed accordingly with new structures going forward reflecting the number of Councillors the Council will have in the future.

Task and Finish Groups

- Task and finish groups, locally referred to as Working Groups are created ad-hoc to undertake reviews on particular matters. The membership of each task and finish group will likely include a mix of Councillors, including (but not limited to) members of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- Recommendations from task and finish groups are either carried out by officers under existing delegation arrangements or referred to Cabinet and Council as appropriate for approval.

- There are currently 9 task and finish groups. There is no set number for their membership, although they tend to range between 5 and 9 councillors.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committees report periodically and annually to full Council on the workings of currently formed task and finish groups, their future and ongoing work programmes, and working methods.
- The time commitment will vary depending on the members' role in the committee and any membership of working groups that they hold. All members however commit time to reading and understanding committee papers, with those members involved in the Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee devoting more time to in-depth reviews of set topics.
- There are currently 5 meetings of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee each year, 4 meetings of the Corporate & Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee and at least 2 meetings of the Member Development Commission (although additional meetings of the Commission have been held to undertake the Overview & Scrutiny Function review).
- Meetings of Working Groups vary between 1 annual meeting to monthly meetings as required during the year.
- A full list of meeting dates and times can be found via the following link: <https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>
- The Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate & Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee both have 11 members each currently. The Member Development Committee currently has 6 members.
- The 9 task and finish groups tend to range between 5 and 9 councillors and a reduction in council size to 45 as proposed would not adversely affect this.
- The scrutiny arrangements of the Council have been in place since 2002 and are currently undergoing review by the Member Development Commission.
- In 2004, a number of Select Committees were removed and 2 Scrutiny Committees were established.

		<p>Further refinements to Overview and Scrutiny were made in 2006/7 when 3 Committees were established with the titles Executive, External and Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The number of Committees was then reduced down to 2 in 2012.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of these committees has changed over the years, more recently there has been a change from 16 members down to 11. This has not seen a noticeable impact on the work of the committees or the workload of its constituent members. • The number of members in committees is deemed appropriate to allow each member to have a significant and worthwhile contribution. Given the reduction in the number of Committees and their constituent membership over the last several years, the proposed reduction in Council size to 45 members reflects this whilst also ensuring that the Council will have a sufficient number of members going forward to accommodate revised scrutiny arrangements, whatever they may be.
Statutory Function		This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?
Planning	<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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019/20 94.4% of applications were determined by officers under delegated powers. It is envisioned that this figure will increase or remain the same in coming years, pending the progress of the Planning for the Future White Paper. • In the four years between 2016/17 and 2019/20 the percentage of applications determined by officers under delegated powers grew by 1.5%. Over the same period the number of planning applications being determined overall, by both officers and planning committee has declined by 9.2%. Under the current planning regime it is likely that this trend will continue before levelling off.

Period	Total Number of Planning Applications Determined	Number of Planning Applications Determined by Planning Committee	% of Planning Applications Determined by Planning Committee	Number of Planning Applications Determined under Delegated Powers	% of Planning Applications Determined under Delegated Powers
1 Apr 2019 – 31 Mar 20	790	44	5.6%	746	94.4%
1 Apr 2018 – 31 Mar 19	816	56	6.9%	760	93.1%
1 Apr 2017 – 31 Mar 18	845	67	7.9%	778	92.1%
1 Apr 2016 – 31 Mar 17	860	61	7.1%	799	92.9%

- The Planning for the Future white paper has signalled major changes to the planning system and this could fundamentally change the role and function of the Council's Planning Committee. A reduction in the overall number of Councillors to 45 as proposed would not be adversely impacted by these proposals.
- There is a single Council-wide Planning Committee with 11 Members.
- Executive members are not prohibited from being a member (the Portfolio Holder for Planning has previously been a member), although they cannot be Chairman. A reduction greater than to 45 as proposed may necessitate that more executive members are permanent members of the Planning Committee which would increase their workloads.
- The vast majority of planning applications are determined by officers to ensure that the Council meets the required performance standards.
- There are 10 meetings of Planning Committee per year along with associated site visits and preparatory work. The time commitment is dependent on the complexity of applications and the site visits required.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would change should the Planning for the Future White Paper be brought into law and the reduction in Councillor numbers to 45 as proposed would not adversely affect this.
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year? ➤ And what will be the time commitment for members? ➤ Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc? ➤ Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are on average 15 licensing panels held each year split across a Licencing & Gambling Committee (15 Members) and also a Licencing & Appeals Committee (11 Members). This includes both the main Committee hearings and also meetings of sub-committees and appeals. A number of Premises Licence applications have also been dealt with under the non-hearing procedure. The time commitment of members will vary based on the nature of the application, as well as the requirement for any site visits. Meetings of ad-hoc panels take place during the year when there is an objection or appeal. There is a core group of members assigned to the main Committees with members of the sub-committees being drawn from this group.
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require? ➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council also maintains an Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee. Audit & Governance currently contains 11 members and meets 4 times a year. Standards Committee contains 6 members and meets 2 times a year. A reduction in overall council size would not adversely affect the work of these committees. <p>Standards Committee – Arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of the implementation of duties under the Localism Act 2011, from the 1 July 2012 the Council

set out its arrangements for dealing with complaints of misconduct and the actions which may be taken against a member who is found to have failed to comply with the relevant Code of Conduct. Also, the Council delegated appropriate powers to the Standards Committee and to the Monitoring Officer. The functions of the Standards Committee are set out in Article 9 of the Council's Constitution.

- <https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=305&info=1&MD=Constitution>
- The Legal and Democratic Services Manager is the Monitoring Officer (MO) and duly appointed as the Proper Officer to receive complaints of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. The MO provides regular updates to the Standards Committee in respect of the number and nature of complaints received.

Membership

- Six members are appointed to the Committee. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are appointed at Council and, respectively, are the Leader of the Council and Leader of the main Opposition Group. Substitute members may be nominated in exceptional circumstances and if the nominated substitute has been appropriately trained.
- At annual Council on 15 May 2019 it was resolved to appoint 2 Parish Council
- Representatives to serve on the Standards Committee. Parish/Town Councils submitted nominations and subsequently voted on the nominees.

Independent Persons

- The Localism Act 2011 introduced a requirement to appoint an 'Independent Person' (IP). Following a recruitment process during May/June 2012 an IP and a 'Reserve Independent Person' (RIP) were appointed effective from 1 July 2012.
- Following the resignation of the Independent Person, the Council changed its arrangements to provide for the appointment of two IP's. A recruitment process was undertaken and these appointments were considered and approved at Council on 16 December 2020.
- The IP's are not members of the Standards Committee but are invited to its meetings and they regularly

		<p>attend.</p> <p>Audit & Governance Committee – Arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council delegated appropriate powers to the Audit & Governance Committee and to the Section 151 Officer (The Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services). The functions of the Audit & Governance Committee are set out in Section 4.1 of the Council’s Constitution. https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=305&info=1&MD=Constitution <p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee is politically balanced with 11 Members and a reduction in overall council size to 45 members would not adversely affect the work of this committee.
External Partnerships	<p>Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.</p>	
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies?</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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of councillors are appointed as the Council’s representatives on a range of different local, regional and national external organisations. The list of such bodies can be found at the following link; https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/mgListOutsideBodies.aspx?bcr=1 There are currently 24 members, mostly from the leading group, that are appointed to outside bodies. The workload will vary depending on the outside body appointed to and the nature of work that they undertake. Currently all members of the executive have appointments to outside bodies, varying between 1 	

appointment and 6 appointments. Overall 56% of appointments are currently undertaken by portfolio holders.

- A reduction to 45 members as proposed would allow for this current system of appointments to remain as it is. A reduction greater than that proposed to a number below 45 would likely increase the number appointments the remaining members undertake given that there would be a smaller pool of members to appoint from, therefore increasing their workload.

Community Involvement

9. The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties?

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many cases Councillors are community leaders and will frequently take an active involvement in local community groups and parish councils, be that as actual members of the groups/parish councils or as active contributors. This is in addition to their role in undertaking casework and more general engagement with their constituents. • The Council does not currently have area Committees. • It is down to the individual member as to how they engage their constituents. Many members may hold surgeries, attend public meetings, visit constituents and engage in traditional door to door canvassing. Increasingly though contact is made virtually through the use of social media and other digital channels. • Councillors are members of various external bodies that allow for this engagement to take place. • Several Councillors are involved each year in events that take place with local schools during Local Democracy Week and throughout the year.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are not expected to attend or be members of such groups and their meetings, but they are encouraged to do so as part of their representative role. Councillors with specific responsibilities may be asked, or attend of their own accord, meetings of various local or regional organisations and community groups. • Councillors who represent Wards with Parish Councils may also sit as members of those Parish Councils or provide updates to them on their work. We currently have 13 Councillors who are also Parish Councillors. • The Council does not currently operate an area governance structure. • A reduction to 45 members serving a minimum of 15 Wards (down from the current 25) would mean members representing more residents within larger wards than they presently are. Within the geography of West Lancashire, whilst this would increase the size of wards, particularly in the rural areas of the Borough, the proposed reduction to 45 would be manageable coupled with the Council's request to retain some 2 member wards. A greater reduction would translate to overly large wards covering several distinct communities which would dilute their democratic representation and make the community leadership role of members more difficult.
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>
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is often a difference of approach depending the experience and other considerations of the individual member. Whilst not in every case, more experienced members or those with specific responsibilities will often take a more direct role in dealing with casework themselves. There remains a significant amount of casework that is passed to officers to action but this is generally an appropriate response to the variety of issues raised. • The Council has established a 'Patch Problem' protocol which provides Members with a tracking and monitoring facility when reporting issues in their individual Wards. • Members receive support in a variety of ways, both internal and external to the Council. Internally this will include officer support and an extensive member training programme. Externally members may receive

		<p>support from their ward colleagues, party colleagues and the local/regional party office should one exist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the last review of the Council 20 years ago technological advancement has had a significant impact on the way members work and interact with their electorate. • As part of the Council's digital strategy and the introduction of paperless meetings, all members have a laptop or iPad to enable them to access their papers digitally, along with receiving and sending out emails and telephone calls. Meetings are also currently held virtually and broadcast to the public via the internet when appropriate. • A reduction to 45 members as proposed would be reflective of these technological advances and the ability of members to communicate with their constituents in a wide variety of ways, whilst acknowledging the role officers play in assisting members with their casework.
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Other Issues

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

Financial Issues

- 10.1 At Extraordinary Cabinet and Council meetings on Wednesday 28 February 2018, Councillors agreed to undertake a review of the Council's operating model, (across the GRA and HRA funds) with the aim of ensuring that the Council can deliver its key priorities, and maintain service provision and financial sustainability beyond 2020/21.
- 10.2 The Council has agreed savings and additional income which will total £1.2m by 2020/21 and it is anticipated that the remaining budget gap to 2020/21 will be between £1.5-£2.0m.
- 10.3 Over the last 8 years the Council has made savings and generated income totalling more than £10m. This position has been assisted by large scale income/efficiency opportunities and management/staff restructuring since February 2016. Savings have also been delivered in the HRA to address budget pressures and the business plan going forward.
- 10.4 This has been achieved with a limited impact on services and staff. Initiatives, including looking to operate more commercially, and seeking further efficiencies will help generate further income/savings, however it is not anticipated that this will be sufficient to meet the remaining gap in the timescale required.

- 10.5 As it has become increasingly difficult to find policy options for balancing the budget that Members would wish to take, Cabinet/Council agreed to undertake the sustainable organisation review project.
- 10.6 The objective of the SORP is to be able to deliver the Council's vision (being ambitious for the economy, environment and health and wellbeing) and its priorities, whilst also being sustainable from 2020/21, when it is anticipated the Council will have to be locally financed.
- 10.7 Whilst reviewing the Council's operating model, Full Council also resolved to request a review of the political structure.
- 10.8 The new Council Vision & Plan 2020/21 – 2022/23, was approved by Council on 14 October 2020 following an extensive consultation exercise with the Council's vision being "West Lancashire together; the place of choice to live, work, visit and invest" and it's priorities being to:
- Create empowered, engaged and inclusive communities
 - Support businesses to adapt and prosper
 - Become a Greener West Lancashire
 - Be a financially sustainable Council by 2023
 - A clean, safe environment with affordable homes to buy or rent for everyone in West Lancashire
 - Everyone to be healthy, happy, safe and resilient
 - Everyone to be proud of their Council
- 10.9 Whilst this review is not being undertaken with financial savings at the forefront of considerations, a reduction to 45 members as proposed would represent a potential saving of £43,500 each year from the year after the implementation of the outcome of the review, based on current Members Basic Allowance (£4842.00 per Member).

Outsourcing

- 10.10 The Council currently outsources a number of services to third party providers, including; ICT, Revenues and Benefits, payroll and the running of leisure centres.
- 10.11 Members retain oversight of these services through appointments to outside bodies as detailed above. Reports and updates to members are also provided to the scrutiny committees, Cabinet and Full Council.
- 10.12 A review of the above contracts is being undertaken and decisions will be made as to whether services are to be brought back in house but it is not felt that a reduction in overall council size to 45 as proposed would negatively impact oversight of these services.

Summary

11. In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate any other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.
- 11.1 West Lancashire Borough Council has carried out an assessment of the work of the Council, and the roles and responsibilities of its elected members.
- 11.2 West Lancashire Borough Council considers that a council size of 45 Councillors, elected by thirds, will be able to secure effective local government and maintain strong community identities and interests in the Borough going forward.
- 11.3 Maintaining elections by thirds will mean significant change from the current electoral geography of the Borough – a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 member wards – but it will bring in more uniform representation with electorally balanced wards across the Borough.
- 11.4 This decision was not unanimous, although the decision does respect the full council motion on 17 October 2018 which only resolved to review the Council's size, number of councillors and ward boundaries and not the electoral cycle.
- 11.5 With a Council Size of 45 this could consist of a mix of 13 three member wards and 3 two member wards for a total of 16 wards. Other examples could be 11 three member wards and 6 two member wards for a total of 17 wards, or 9 three member wards and 9 two member wards for a total of 18 wards.
- 11.6 The request for some two member wards is to allow for more concise representation of the Borough's rural communities that would otherwise be subsumed into overly large three member wards which may cross several parish and town boundaries.

11.7 Full Council at its meeting of 24 February 2021 approved the making of this submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.