

Chesterfield Borough Council

# Council Size Submission

On behalf of Chesterfield Borough Council

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## How to Make a Submission

*It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.*

*The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.*

## About You

*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.*

**Submission from:** Chesterfield Borough Council, following Full Council recommendation

## 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.*

A full review of electoral boundaries for the borough was recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission due to the length of time since the last review (1998) and due to significant variances emerging since the last review in the distribution of electors.

## Local Authority Profile

*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.*

## Chesterfield Borough Overview

Chesterfield Borough is home to 104,837 people (2019 estimate, ONS) with Chesterfield town the second largest settlement in Derbyshire (Derby City is the largest). It is a relatively compact and mainly urban borough. The market town of Chesterfield acts as the sub-regional centre for north eastern Derbyshire and provides a range of retail, commercial, leisure and cultural facilities. The town is well located on the edge of the Peak District National Park and benefits from easy access to the surrounding cities of Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham. In addition to Chesterfield, there are several other key neighbourhood centres; the largest being Staveley and Brimington. Staveley lies on the eastern side of the borough, approximately five miles from Chesterfield town centre – it is linked to the M1 and Chesterfield by the A619.

## Key challenges

The latest indices of multiple deprivation figures, health profile, official labour market statistics (NOMIS) and child poverty statistics indicate that despite extensive investment to grow Chesterfield's economy, our communities are still struggling to access the proceeds of growth due to a variety of factors including poor health, caring responsibilities and poor educational and skills attainment. Improving these outcomes for our communities has been a key driver in developing our Council Plan 2019 - 2023 priorities.

Key statistics include:

- An estimated 5,600 children living in poverty
- 9.8 years difference in life expectancy between the most deprived areas of Chesterfield compared to the least deprived
- Over 1,000 people per annum presenting as homeless
- Chesterfield Borough is ranked as the 86<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority area out of 317 but is ranked at 13 for health, 40 for employment and 64 for income

Our key challenges include:

- Covid-19 response and recovery in particular around economic, community and health and wellbeing
- The town centre faces a number of challenges including: maintaining a viable outdoor market; raising the quality of the retail and leisure offer; the growth of on-line retailing; and strong competition for consumer spend from surrounding centres such as Meadowhall and Sheffield
- The borough has a weaker occupational and skills profile, with fewer knowledge workers and more people with no qualifications than the national average
- A lower level of entrepreneurship, with fewer new start businesses per head of working age population than regional and national averages (7 per head in the borough, 10 per head nationally)
- The local economy has a bias towards lower-value and lower-growth employment sectors, and an under-representation of the fastest growing 'professional and business services' sector, impacting on future employment growth prospects
- The forecast increase in automation and digitalisation impacting on employment across a range of sectors: 20% of jobs could be displaced over the next 20 years, though new job roles will also be created
- A limited supply of employment land available for immediate development and the costs and difficulty of bringing forward brownfield sites for development
- Increasing the rate of housing delivery and evidencing a five year supply of available housing sites
- A legacy of industrial restructuring: a high level of working age benefit claimants (particularly health related) and concentrated deprivation in some local communities

## Council Plan and service provision

Our Council Plan 2019 – 2023 draws upon our extensive 'State of the Borough' evidence base and communications, consultation and engagement activities. We have also utilised horizon scanning tools to take us through to 2023 and beyond. The Plan provides focus, identifies the key commitments which require a collective corporate effort and places increased focus on achieving real outcomes to deliver our vision of 'putting our communities first'. To ensure we stay on track we also develop annual delivery plans which identify the key milestones, inputs, outputs and measures we will need to achieve to stay on track towards our four year commitments. Our priorities are:

- Making Chesterfield a thriving borough
- Improving the quality of life for local people
- Providing value for money services

Alongside the standard district/borough council services we have worked hard to maintain and continue to invest in many key assets and facilities for the benefit of our residents, visitors and businesses. These include:

- Council housing service which provides landlord services to just under 9,000 households in the Borough (over 20% of the borough's housing stock)
- An industrial and commercial property portfolio worth over £130 million
- Innovation centres and incubator offices to support new start-ups with extensive business and innovation support
- Our two sports centre's Queen's Park Sports Centre and the Staveley Healthy Living Centre, alongside other sports pitches/facilities and green gyms
- Our award winning parks and open spaces
- Pomegranate Theatre and The Winding Wheel Theatre
- Chesterfield Museum and the Revolution House Museum
- Tourist Information Centre
- Chesterfield's outdoor markets, Market Hall and Assembly rooms

### **Local Government context**

Chesterfield is a borough council in a two-tier area with seven other district councils and Derbyshire County Council. The Borough has 48 elected councillors (28 Labour, 17 Liberal Democrat and 3 Independent) serving 19 wards. We provide over 50 services to our residents for a Band D Council Tax of £164.89 – the second lowest in Derbyshire. Whilst the majority of our services are provided in-house, we have a range of partnership and outsourced provision, with public/public partnership provision for Building Control, Internal Audit and Procurement and public/private partnership provision for waste and recycling with Veolia and Wards recycling.

Two areas of Chesterfield Borough are parished with Staveley Town Council representing the wider Staveley settlement including Barrow Hill (part of the Barrow Hill and New Whittington ward), Duckmanton, Hollingwood, Inkersall Green, Lowgates, Middlecroft, Poolsbrook and Duckmanton. Brimington Parish Council represents the Brimington North ward and the Brimington part of Brimington South ward. Chesterfield Borough also has nine Derbyshire County Council electoral divisions with nine councillors representing Chesterfield Borough residents at Derbyshire County Council.

### **Parliamentary constituency context**

The Chesterfield Borough Council wards of Barrow Hill and New Whittington and Lowgates and Woodthorpe fall within the parliamentary constituency for North East Derbyshire. The remaining Chesterfield Borough Council wards form the Chesterfield parliamentary constituency. The most recent (abandoned) Parliamentary Boundary Review proposed that the Lowgates and Woodthorpe ward would move into a redrawn Bolsover constituency and Barrow Hill and New Whittington would remain in the North East Derbyshire constituency.

## 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 10 years. The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

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

### Future Electorate Size

Chesterfield Borough has a population of 104,837 (2019), 21% are under 19 and 21% being over 65. Like many areas Chesterfield Borough's population profile is an ageing one with over 65's set to make up 25% of the population by 2030. Chesterfield Borough's population is estimated to grow by 2% between 2019 and 2030 which is considerably slower than nearby local authorities including Bolsover (8%), North East Derbyshire (4%), Amber Valley (7%) and Derbyshire Dales (3%). Source – Derbyshire Observatory.

The voting age population in Chesterfield Borough is set to rise by 2,976 (3.6%) between 2019 and 2030.

The Chesterfield Borough Council Local Plan adopted in July 2020, identified sites for 4,080 homes to be built between 2018 and 2035. The majority of the sites are located within easy walking and cycling reach of existing district and town centres. Some new housing development will be directed to areas suffering from deprivation to aid regeneration of these communities. Some sites will be sensitive urban extensions on greenfield sites.

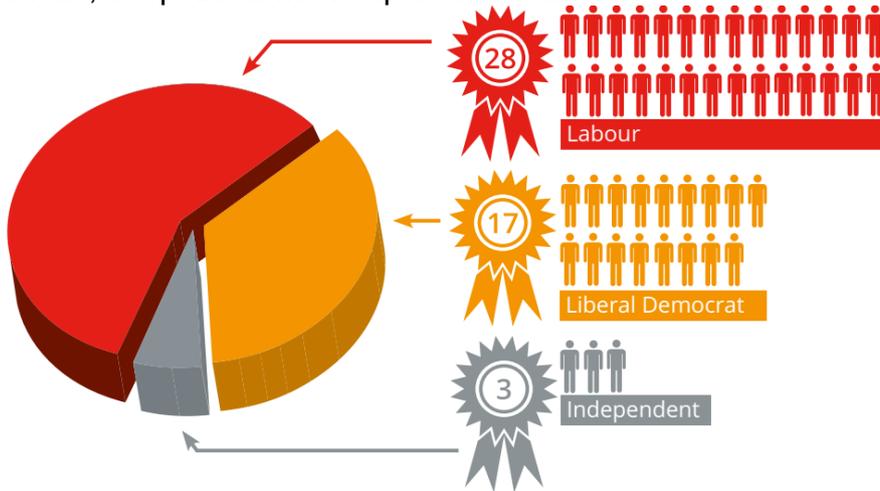
Some of these sites however need considerable investment and remediation and are therefore likely to come forward towards the end of the plan period. The Council is required by the National Planning Policy Framework to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. An assessment has been undertaken of the sites with over 10 dwellings which are likely to come forward within the next 10 years – up to 2030 in order to assist with the forecast of the future electorate of Chesterfield Borough.

There are currently (at December 2020) 2,757 homes planned with either full, partial or outline planning permission for the period 2020/21 – 2030/31. The total housing delivery number during the period however is likely to be around 4,536. With significant numbers in Dunston, Hollingwood and Inkersall, Lowgates and Woodthorpe and St. Helens. A table has been provided to Local Government Boundary Commission with the housing allocations and the current ward int which they fall into.

Between the forecast population increase for people of voting age of 2,976 from 2019 to 2030 and the likely number of additional homes (4,536). The estimated elector number could rise from 79,250 in 2019 to between 82,000 to 88,000.

## Governance overview

Chesterfield Borough Council has agreed a [constitution](#). This sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed. The constitution is reviewed regularly with particular attention to opportunities for portfolio holder and officer delegation. The Council is composed of 48 councillors elected every four years. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them. The council has 19 wards, each with two or three councillors. Following the May 2019 elections, the political make-up of the council is:



Since the last Electoral Review in 1998 Chesterfield Borough Council has undertaken a full review of its leadership model and executive arrangements and in 2011 moved to a “strong Leader and Cabinet” model. The Leader is elected by members of the Council for a four year term, the Leader then appoint Executive Cabinet members. The alternative option of an Elected Mayor and Executive Cabinet has previously been considered. The Council had previously operated under a Leader and Cabinet selected by the Council from 2001 following the replacement of the Committee system.

Overview and Scrutiny is an active and integral part of the council’s governance arrangements. Scrutiny members act as a critical friend to the development and implementation of key council policies and provides robust challenge to the Executive (both Cabinet and senior officers). The emphasis on pre-decision Scrutiny adds value to the Council’s decision making and also enables effective horizon scanning for emerging issues.

Planning committee has overall responsibility for planning decisions, listed building consent and the regulatory planning functions of the council. Licensing matters are considered by licensing committee and appeals and regulatory committee (which also has responsibility for tenant and employment appeals) while the conduct of individual councillors and overview of budget and audit matters is overseen by standards and audit committee. Employment and General committee deals with the council’s functions for appointing staff and determining terms and conditions on which they hold office. It also deals with the Council’s elections and electoral registration functions.

Chesterfield Borough Council has retained the vast majority of services with in-house delivery but is also a key partner in several public/public partnership services including Building Control, Internal Audit and Chesterfield Crematorium. Alongside the standard district/borough council services the Council has worked hard to maintain and continue to invest in many key assets and

facilities for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses. This includes being the largest social landlord in the area with almost 9,000 properties and a large commercial landlord with a property portfolio worth more than £130k.

The spirit of collaboration and partnership working is part of the DNA of Chesterfield Borough Council. There is a genuine commitment across public, private, community and voluntary sectors to work in partnership; focusing on delivering quality outcomes for our communities that no one organisation could achieve on their own. This is evident from the private sector led Destination Chesterfield ([www.chesterfield.co.uk](http://www.chesterfield.co.uk)) and Derbyshire Economic Partnership, through to the Chesterfield Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Chesterfield Community Safety Partnership, and the multiplicity of voluntary sector led arrangements. Close working also exists between all of the Derbyshire district/ borough councils, Derbyshire County Council and Derby City Council through the Derby and Derbyshire Joint Committee on Economic Prosperity. The Joint Committee provides a forum for prioritising economic development opportunities as well as promoting a range of innovative shared services arrangements across the County.

At a Derbyshire level, Chesterfield Borough Council punches above its weight, being a key instigators and lead agency for a number of different agendas, for example developing the Derbyshire Building Control Service, leading with Derbyshire County Council on challenging negotiations with the Home Office regarding strategic migration issues, and being part of the steering group, alongside Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council and two other district/borough councils charged with charting the course for a programme of non-structural public service reform in order to concentrate our resources on issues where together we can make the most difference for our communities – Vision Derbyshire.

With the size and scale of Chesterfield Borough Council's operational services, economic and community ambitions and partnership activity it is recognised that the demands and expectations of councillors are higher than they have ever been. Communities expect the Council to deliver high quality services, to be run and managed well, and to respond quickly and meaningfully to changing demands. This means that councillors have to be effective in their roles – embracing governance, a strong commitment to local representation, possessing a detailed knowledge of relevant law and policy and being knowledgeable about the services the Council provides. To respond to this challenge the active Member Development Group developed a revised Member Development Policy in 2018/19 utilising best practice from East Midlands Councils. The policy sets out a range of learning opportunities:

- Councillor induction programme – this is a comprehensive programme delivered for all new councillors and those returning to office following Borough Council elections; also for individual councillors after by-elections
- Committee membership – members of the Council's regulatory committees receive additional mandatory training to enable them to engage fully and ensure the quality and consistency of decision making is maintained
- Other new mandatory or refresher training – our councillors also receive other mandatory training e.g. data protection, ethical standards, social media and safeguarding etc. to enable them to effectively carry out their roles and duties
- Overview and Scrutiny – the development of the annual scrutiny work programme and associated project groups often highlights the need for further learning and development including briefings on specific topics. Where possible such learning and development opportunities will be made available to all councillors

- Emerging issues identified by either the political or officer leadership – these may lead to mandatory or optional e-learning and/or briefings (these are well attended – our HS2 briefing attracted over 25 councillors)
- Other subjects identified via the political group structures – fed in via their representatives on the Member Development Group
- The facility for individual councillors to access the Council's e-learning platform (aspire learning) and identify core skills courses for completion

## Council Size

*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

*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.*

## Governance Model

Full council is made up of all 48 councillors and is responsible for deciding on the council's overall budget and policy framework and setting the budget each year. Many of the day-to-day decisions are taken by the executive decision making arm of the council known as the cabinet. Cabinet members have specific responsibilities for particular services and take decisions within the budget and policies agreed by the full council. The Council meets six times per annum with the ability to hold extraordinary meetings for urgent issues.

Since the last Electoral Review in 1998 Chesterfield Borough Council has undertaken a full review of its leadership model and executive arrangements and in 2011 moved to "strong Leader and Cabinet" model. This continues to be an effective governance model for the authority and enables effective and efficient decision making and policy development.

The Strong Leader and Executive Cabinet requires 8 to 12 members to work effectively. Linked to portfolio responsibilities the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio holders have many and varied partnership responsibilities for example Joint Economic Growth Committee, HS2 Board, Destination Chesterfield Board, Safer Derbyshire Board etc. The Cabinet meets every three weeks with the ability to call additional special meetings.

In addition to Executive arrangements there are five committees with the number of members varying between committees from 6 to 15. Planning (15), Licensing (14), Appeals and Regulatory (14), Employment and General (6) and Standards and Audit (6). The workload of the committees is extensive due to the size and scale of activity and due to the majority of services remaining in-house. However, there is potentially scope to reduce the size of the larger committees while retaining democratic accountability and effective decision making.

There are 16 councillors on the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum. Each of these councillors are also a member of either the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee or the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. The focus on pre-decision

Scrutiny enables a high degree of member involvement in decision making and scrutiny, the scrutiny project groups in particular adding value. A reduction in scrutiny members could impact scrutiny ability to undertake deeper dives into Council policy and activity via project groups.

Councillors also represent the Council on around 50 outside bodies with the workload varying significantly between these appointments. This is an area scheduled for review within the next 18 months.

## **Portfolios**

There are currently eight Portfolios (structure chart provided)

- Leader
- Deputy Leader
- Cabinet Member – Economic Growth
- Cabinet Member – Town Centres and Visitor economy
- Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing
- Cabinet Member – Housing
- Cabinet Member – Governance
- Cabinet Member – Business Transformation and Customers

There is also provision to add Assistant Cabinet Member roles to support particular projects or programmes. The Leader of the opposition is currently a Cabinet member without portfolio, making an Executive of 10.

Portfolio holder roles are intensive with a broad range of responsibilities and a significant delegated authority for decision making within their portfolio area. This can be viewed within Part 3 of the [constitution](#). The time and responsibility would be the equivalent of a full time role however some do currently combine the role with employment and a range of caring responsibilities.

## **Delegated Responsibilities**

Part 2 of the Council's constitution details the functions carried out by Full Council. This includes a range of functions which by law cannot be delegated by Full Council alongside elements of local choice. All 48 councillors are engaged in decision making at this level.

The functions and decision making powers of Cabinet and five committees are also explained within the constitution. The Cabinet currently includes the Leader, Deputy Leader, six portfolio holders, one assistant portfolio holder and the Leader of the Opposition. Committee size ranges from six to 15. All non-executive councillors are a member of at least one committee.

Alongside the Leader and Executive Cabinet delegated decision powers there is also an extensive scheme for officer delegations which is regularly reviewed. This can be viewed within Part 3 of the [constitution](#).

## **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.*

## **Internal Scrutiny**

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is an active and integral part of the council's governance arrangements. Scrutiny members act as a critical friend to the development and implementation of key council policies and provide robust challenge to the Executive (both Cabinet and senior officers). The emphasis on pre-decision Scrutiny adds value to the Council's decision making and also enables effective horizon scanning for emerging issues. Chesterfield Borough Council currently hold the Vice Chair positions of the East Midlands Scrutiny Forum and are actively engaged in regional and national scrutiny activity.

There are 16 members of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee. Each of these councillors are also a member of either the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee or the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. Each committee meets six times per annum.

The council's overview and scrutiny committees undertake scrutiny work as individual committees and appoint scrutiny project groups that undertake specific task and finish project work for scrutiny committee consideration.

The council's approach is to support and enable pre-decision scrutiny. Pre-decision scrutiny provides an opportunity for scrutiny members to challenge and inform important decisions before they are made. Pre-decision scrutiny requires time and opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to get involved early. With good planning and access to information, Overview and Scrutiny Committees will often appoint project groups to inform policy and service developments at the very early stages of planned work. This can happen a long time before decision items are entered into the council's published Forward Plan of key decisions.

A standing item on each scrutiny committee agenda is the council's Forward Plan. The Forward Plan is a document that contains details of the key, private and where possible, non-key decisions the Cabinet, cabinet members or officers are likely to make over a four month period. This council supports its pre-decision scrutiny policy by going beyond the legal requirements for publishing notice of key decisions by providing the details of decisions up to four months in advance. As well as being an important document for the public, the Forward Plan helps to provide Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the opportunity to monitor the executive decision making programme and undertake pre-decision scrutiny.

Scrutiny law allows for an Overview and Scrutiny to investigate, make reports and recommendations on Cabinet decisions that have been agreed but not yet put into action. Legislation allows for action on these decisions to be suspended pending a scrutiny inquiry. Call ins are rare at Chesterfield Borough Council due in part to the emphasis on pre-decision scrutiny and early engagement in decision making.

The current view is that the pre-decision scrutiny approach should be retained. This requires more members than a more traditional scrutiny approach. However there is potential to review the current Scrutiny structure including the three committee approach. This reduction in committees would definitely be needed if Council size decreases significantly.

### **Statutory Function - Planning**

Chesterfield Borough Council has a single council-wide Planning Committee. The Planning Committee is responsible overall for the granting and refusal of planning applications, Listed Building Consent and the regulatory functions of the Council. Due to the size and scale of development and planning activity within the borough, the Planning Committee represents a big

commitment for the 15 councillors involved – in particular for the Chair and Vice Chair. The Cabinet Portfolio holder for Economic Growth currently also serves on the Planning Committee. Should the overall size of the Council reduce there would be scope to reduce the number of members on the planning committee however this would need to be considered carefully to ensure a quorum as not to hold up time limited planning applications and to ensure a spread of knowledge and engagement across the borough.

The Planning Committee meet frequently – every three weeks, but even so these are lengthy committee meetings which include pre-committee site visits and a large amount of pre-reading.

The Chart below shows the number of decisions made by the Planning Committee itself and the number of delegated officer decisions reported into Planning Committee. This includes planning applications, building control applications, tree preservation orders and conservation issues. The number of applications has varied across the three year sample period but the average is 64 planning applications per year determined by planning committee. The effective use of delegated authority to officers means that an average of 522 items per annum are determined by officers and reported into Planning Committee.



In 2019/20 85% of major planning applications were determined within the 13 week national target. 60% is required to meet the national standard. 79% of other applications were determined within the 13 week national target. 70% is required to meet the national standard. All quality of decision criteria was also met.

### Statutory Function – Licensing

The Licensing Committee is a statutory Committee, having functions given to it directly by the Licensing Act 2003 including premises and alcohol licensing. It also deals with public entertainment licences and betting, gaming and lottery licensing. Meetings are scheduled monthly but can be held as and when required. Due to the size of Chesterfield Borough’s economy as the largest settlement in the administrative county of Derbyshire, the Licensing Committee has a significant workload in comparison to other Derbyshire districts. This is managed via a revolving group system. The Full Licensing Committee meets between two and four times per annum. For the rest of the year the Committee is divided into three groups with four elected members in each plus the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee. The groups are flexible and respond to the demands of the Licensing function – each group generally meets between two and four times per annum as well as attending to two to four full committee meetings. This means the Chair and Vice

Chair will attend up to seventeen committee meetings per annum in a busy year. These cases are often complex and require a significant amount of pre-reading prior to the committee meeting.

## **Other Regulatory Bodies**

### **Appeals and Regulatory Committee**

The Appeals and Regulatory Committee deals with many of the regulatory, licensing and appeal functions of the Council including hackney carriage and private hire licensing, and housing, benefits and local taxation appeals. Meetings of the committee are ad hoc to support the function but need to be organised quickly and can sometimes be frequent – even weekly. There are 14 members on this committee making it a large committee however due to the need to call meetings urgently it is important to have larger numbers to maintain a quorum. Appeals is managed via a similar group system to Licensing Committee.

### **Employment and General Committee**

The Employment and General Committee deals with the council's functions for appointing staff and determining terms and conditions on which they hold office. It also deals with the Council's elections and electoral registration functions. Meetings are scheduled for every six weeks but can be held as and when required. The Committee has six members. Members of this committee also attend Joint Cabinet and Employment and General Committee – usually every six weeks. Although the meetings are not as often some committees – issues are often complex – requiring significant pre-reading and questioning.

### **Standards and Audit Committee**

The Council has a Standards and Audit Committee to oversee standards and audit procedures. If the Council receives complaints that a local district or parish councillor has broken the Code of Conduct, the Monitoring Officer looks at the allegation and decides what action, if any, should be taken including whether or not the complaint should be investigated. Standards and Audit Committee also carries out hearings of complaints that have been investigated. A Council appointed independent person can be called upon to advise at various stages of a Code of Conduct complaints. The Committee also monitors the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment (ranging from standing orders, financial procedures, service plans, etc.) and makes recommendations in respect of corporate governance matters. The Standards and Audit Committee has six CBC councillors, plus a member from Staveley Town Council and Brimington Parish Council. The committee meets six times per annum but can also call additional meetings.

### **External Partnerships**

There is a genuine commitment across public, private, community and voluntary sectors to work in partnership; focusing on delivering quality outcomes for our communities that no one organisation could achieve on their own. Chesterfield Borough Council councillors – particularly Portfolio Holders serve on a range of partnership decision making bodies including D2 Joint Economic Prosperity Committee, Safer Derbyshire, HS2 Board, Staveley Town Deal Board, Destination Chesterfield, Health and Wellbeing Board are examples. This is a growing area with major decision-making partnerships including Vision Derbyshire (an ambitious new model for local government) coming on stream. Partnership activity now accounts for around 50 - 60% of the Leader's time and between 25 – 50% for other executive roles.

Due to size and scale of partnership and community leadership activity the Council appoints councillors to 50 outside bodies. These are varied in their nature ranging from major partnerships to joint service provision and to support local community groups. The appointments are a mix between portfolio holders and other councillors from different parties/ independents. The full list of outside bodies is available [here](#). This is an area scheduled for review within the next 18 months.

### Community Involvement

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?

### Community Leadership

The extent to which elected Councillors interact with their communities is very much up to the individual Councillor. The majority of councillors are extremely active in their local communities handling significant levels of ward case work and supporting/championing local community groups and services. The majority of councillors undertake static and street surgeries in their areas. Political groups also produce newsletters tailored to different areas of the borough. Many councillors are also active on social media.

As described above, many councillors are appointed to outside bodies. These include specific communities of interest for example Armed Forces Champion and Equality and Diversity Forum. This is an area where review is necessary to focus/increase engagement with specific groups and priority activity.

There are a number of 'twin hatters' with councillors representing constituents on Chesterfield Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council or Chesterfield Borough Council and Staveley Town Council/Brimington Parish Council. There are formal liaison meetings with Staveley Town Council and Brimington Parish Council. As well as bespoke partnership arrangements for specific projects for example Staveley Town Deal.

Each year the Council delivers a programme of events designed to engage students from primary, secondary schools, colleges and special schools in local democracy. Activities take place all year round with a key focus on European Local Democracy Week in October when the Council joins with authorities across the UK and Europe to promote active involvement in local democracy. The programme is reviewed at the end of each civic year and a new theme and series of activities are designed which highlight important events or anniversaries taking place. In 2018/19 the topic was exploring the centenary of women gaining the right to vote and in 2019/20 the 60th anniversary of the Council's twinning agreement with Darmstadt. The next topic will be engagement in Climate Change.

Councillors have the opportunity to take part in local democracy activities as well as key civic events such as mayor making. In 2019/20 over 1,600 local children and young people took part in the Council's local democracy and civic programme. Engaging children and young people continues to be a priority for the Council.

### Casework

Many councillors take an in-depth approach to ward casework. There is regular contact between officers and councillors to try to resolve issues. Next year the Council is investing in a casework system which will assist councillors to track casework activity but also provide the council with valuable trend information and enable pro-active customer service and service improvement activity.

### Support for councillors

The active Member Development Group developed a revised Member Development Policy in 2018/19 utilising best practice from East Midlands Councils. The policy enables a range of formal and informal learning and development opportunities which are well supported by councillors. The Council employs 2.6 full time equivalent employees to support member and civic activity – providing a wide variety of support functions. Councillors receive a weekly e-bulletin round up, have full access to the Council’s intranet and e-learning system. They can also access occupational health support including a 24 hour/7 day per week assistance line and access to counselling. Support policies have also been introduced for example a parental leave policy.

### Other considerations

### 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. This information is available via the Local Government Boundary Commission Website.

Local authority	No of Electors	Number of wards	Council Size	Electors per councillor
Bassetlaw District Council	89,941	25	48	1,874
Bolsover District Council	61,394	17	37	1,659
Boston Borough Council	48,756	15	30	1,625
Cannock Chase District Council	74,884	15	41	1,822
Carlisle City Council	83,190	13	39	2,133
Chesterfield Borough Council	79,250	19	48	1,651
Copeland Borough Council	53,675	17	33	1,627
Gloucester City Council	89,469	18	39	2,294
Ipswich City Council	99,751	16	48	2,078
Lincoln City Council	60,383	11	33	1,830
Mansfield District Council	80,863	36	36	2,246
Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council	96,713	21	44	2,198
North East Derbyshire District Council	80,022	24	53	1,510
Redditch Borough Council	62,781	12	29	2,165
Worcester City Council	77,583	15	35	2,217
Wyre Forest District Council	78,273	12	33	2,372

The nearest neighbour group of councils has a mean average elector number per councillor of 1,956. Chesterfield Borough Council in comparison has an elector number of 1,651. Chesterfield has the fourth lowest number of electors per councillor within the nearest neighbour group.

However, the nearest neighbour group includes several authorities which have a significantly higher geographical spread than Chesterfield borough and are more rural/ small settlement based. If the nearest neighbour group is narrowed to show only the compact large town/small city councils which are more similar to Chesterfield Borough then the mean average number of electors per councillor is 2,077 with Chesterfield Borough having a significantly lower elector per councillor number than any of the other authorities.

Local authority	No of Electors	Number of wards	Council Size	Electors per councillor
Carlisle City Council	83,190	13	39	2,133
Chesterfield Borough Council	79,250	19	48	1,651
Gloucester City Council	89,469	18	39	2,294
Ipswich City Council	99,751	16	48	2,078
Lincoln City Council	60,383	11	33	1,830
Mansfield District Council	80,863	36	36	2,246
Redditch Borough Council	62,781	12	29	2,165
Worcester City Council	77,583	15	35	2,217

## Financial implications

The options considered provide savings to the Council's general fund of between £0 for status quo and £111k for a Council size of 37. Savings will be generated by a combination of reductions in basic allowances, executive and committee changes reducing special responsibility allowances, supplies and services and staffing.

The preferred option – a Council size of 40 will save £49k per annum in allowances and potentially a further £26k from special responsibility allowances, supplies and services and staffing changes.

## Organisation structure and workforce

Chesterfield Borough Council employees over 1200 people to provide over 50 different services. Over the last four years the Council has made significant progress on the 'people' agenda supporting employees to manage the demands of delivering services with reducing budgets and changing customer expectations. Our four-year People Plan has been influenced by a broad evidence base e.g. Investor in People assessment, employee survey responses, workforce analytics and external horizon scanning. The evidence has been used to develop the following five key priorities:

- Develop great leaders
- Manage change well
- Develop capacity and skills
- Support employee wellbeing
- Reward and recognition

Chesterfield Borough Council currently holds the Silver Award for Investors in People and have recently been named in the top 100 employers in the UK for apprenticeships.

## **Equality and diversity**

A full equality impact assessment has been undertaken, this will be supplied to the Local Government Boundary Commission as part of the submission. The impact assessment identified a range of barriers which can prevent people with protected characteristics seeking election as a councillor or remaining as a councillor. Subsequently a range of negative impacts from reducing Council size have been identified including:

- A higher electorate to councillor ratio – this is likely to have a negative impact on groups identified as having greater barriers in terms of conflicting commitments
- The bigger the commitment in terms of committee representation time - this will have a negative impact on groups identified as having barriers in terms of conflicting commitments
- Executive member places will need to be reviewed with pressure to reduce the ratio between executive and non-executive members leading to large executive roles and a bigger commitment - this will have a negative impact on groups identified as having barriers in terms of conflicting commitments
- Reducing councillor places available – therefore reducing potential role models
- Fiercer competition for candidate selection potentially closing opportunities for less experienced candidates, those unable to commit to large amounts of campaigning time and non-traditional routes into politics
- Less opportunity for scrutiny both of Council decisions but also for representation and challenge with outside bodies and partnerships potentially reducing the challenge regarding equality and diversity issues and representation and feedback opportunities

Option analysis indicates that the lower the Council size the more pronounced these issues become with greater limits on mitigating factors. The proposal around Council size needs to strike a balance between elector per councillor ratios and reduced ward inequalities with maintaining a Council size that enables sound governance, manageable workloads, maintains councillor support structures

## **Council size options considered and analysis summary**

6 options were considered for future Council size: 48, 45, 42, 40, 38 and 37. Key findings include:

- The average number of electors per councillor remains significantly higher when compared to our comparator authorities for options 48, 45 and 42
- For options 40, 38 and 37 elector number per councillor is more in-line with the comparator group average even when taking into account future potential elector numbers
- Changes would need to be made to committees for options 42, 40, 38 and 37 to maintain a management committee place per non-executive member ratio. For example with the current committee places available and a council size of 37 each non-executive councillor would need to sit on at least 3 major committees if changes are not made
- Currently 21% of councillors hold executive roles – this is in-line with the average across our comparator authorities. An upper limit of 25% is generally considered reasonable to strike a balance between executive functions and challenge through Council and Scrutiny activity. The Council size options for 37 and 38 would increase the percentage above 25% so a review of portfolio roles would be prudent. A loss of executive roles will have a significantly detrimental impact on partnership and place shaping activity
- Our equality analysis shows that a lower Council sizes can have a negative equality and diversity impact with fairly limited scope for mitigation
- The scope for financial savings ranges from £0 to £111k

- Disruption to the Council during what will be a key time for economic and community recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic is a concern

## 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 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.*

Taking into account all the available information and analysis we believe Chesterfield Borough Council requires a minimum Council size of 40 to effectively operate and represent the electorate. This would be a reduction in current numbers by 8. There are several factors influencing this proposal including:

- Mainly in-house service provision including managing just under 9,000 council homes, an industrial and commercial property portfolio of £130 million, innovation centres, sport and leisure facilities, two theatres, two museums, tourist information centre and markets
- Extensive strategic economic, community and operational partnership structures requiring significant councillor engagement
- Chesterfield is the North Eastern Derbyshire sub-regional centre for the night-time economy, shopping and access to key health services. It is also a sub-regional centre for employment, commerce and industry providing over 52,000 people with employment, 21,000 of whom are daily inbound commuters
- These factors increase the workload for the Executive Cabinet and key committees including Planning, Licensing, Appeals and Regulatory and Employment and General when compared to other districts of a similar size
- Chesterfield is a relatively compact urban borough with just two areas being parished
- In comparison our nearest neighbour group authorities, Chesterfield Borough Council has a low number of electors per councillor
- Taking into account the highest estimated future electorate size in 2030 – 88,000, 40 councillors would give an elector per councillor number of 2,200. This remains in line with the majority of our nearest neighbour group (compact large town/small city authorities) in their 2019 counts
- Striking the balance indicated within the equality impact assessment to not significantly further exacerbate barriers to becoming a councillor
- Like many local authorities Chesterfield Borough Council has financial challenges and reducing Councillor numbers would provide a significant saving to the Council's general fund