

ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP
Tuesday 25 January 2022 at 7.30 pm
Zoom - Online

This meeting is a virtual meeting which is being hosted on Zoom. Councillors and registered public participants will be sent access details nearer the date of the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to watch the meeting can do so via a livestream which will appear on the Council's YouTube page

<https://www.youtube.com/user/HarlowCouncil>

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 2 - 3)
4. Matters Arising
5. Size of Harlow Council
 - a) Council Size Submission (Pages 4 - 52)
 - b) Initial Response from LGBCE (Page 53)
6. Matters of Urgent Business

**MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP
HELD ON**

30 November 2021

7.30 - 8.54 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Simon Carter (Chair)
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor James Leppard
Councillor Chris Vince

Officers

Hannah Criddle, Governance Support Officer
Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support
Janet Jackson, Corporate and Governance Support Team Leader

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Councillor Simon Carter be elected as Chair.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

3. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

RESOLVED that the Working Group noted the Terms of Reference.

4. **ELECTORAL REVIEW TIMETABLE**

RESOLVED that the Working Group noted the timetable.

5. **HARLOW COUNCIL ELECTORAL CYCLES**

The Working Group received a report on Harlow Council Electoral Cycles.

The Working Group considered the pros and cons of elections by thirds and all out elections as detailed in the report. The Working Group also considered the costs of elections and the estimated costs of carrying out consultation with the public.

The Working Group noted that consultation with the public on changing to all-out elections could be carried out at any stage in the future.

RESOLVED that the Working Group recommend that the Council does not proceed with public consultation on opting for all out elections at this time for the following reasons:

- a) The time constraints of making a decision following a consultation by the end of March;
- b) The Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing;
- c) Given the results of the survey on turnout in local elections there were concerns that there wouldn't be enough public appetite for a meaningful result;
- d) A consultation would not be appropriate at the current time;
and
- e) There is no current budget for the consultation.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND NEXT STEPS**

The Working Group noted that there would be a further meeting on 16 December 2021 to consider a report on council size. Following the meeting, any proposals on changes to council size would need to be formally agreed by a meeting of the Special Council in February 2022 ready for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) by March 2022.

CHAIR OF THE WORKING GROUP

REPORT TO: ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

DATE: 16 DECEMBER 2021

TITLE: SIZE OF HARLOW COUNCIL AND RESULTS FROM COUNCILLOR SURVEY

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON HILL, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES (01279) 446099

CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: JANET JACKSON, CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER (01279) 446004

ADAM REES, SENIOR GOVERNANCE SUPPORT OFFICER (01279) 446057

RECOMMENDED that the Working Group:

- A** Recommends to Full Council that the Council Size Submission (attached as Appendix A to the report) be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in particular noting the request that the number of Councillors be increased.
- B** Notes the responses to the Councillor Survey (attached as Appendix B to the report).

BACKGROUND

1. The Council currently has 33 Councillors who represent 11 wards. Each ward has three Councillors. Each Councillor is elected for a four year term. The Council has elections by thirds, with one Councillor from each ward being up for election each year. There is one year in four where no district elections are held.
2. As part of the electoral review the Council must develop and submit proposals to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on the size of the council.
3. As set out in the review timetable the Council must submit its proposals on council size to the LGBCE by 18 March 2022. These proposals will then be considered as part of the wider review into ward boundaries.
4. There are a number of factors which will influence the size of the Council and these are detailed later in the report. To help inform this response a Councillor Survey was carried out. The responses to the survey are attached as Appendix B to the report.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

5. The first seven pages of the response to the LGBCE consultation are primarily background based, but attention should be drawn to Impact on the Council's effectiveness. With the current council size, if the majority of the administration is smaller it becomes more challenging to fill places on committees whilst maintaining a reasonable workload. Both the Audit and Standards, and Scrutiny Committee have restrictions on the number of Cabinet members that can be on the committees.
6. From page 8 of the response onwards, the LGBCE present a number of topics with key lines of explanation. The suggested responses are in the analysis section of each of these.

Governance Model

7. There has been no indication from Councillors of a desire to move from the Cabinet system, or to fundamentally overhaul the governance structure within the Cabinet model. Therefore it is not expected that any changes in workload will arise.
8. The Cabinet Policy Development Working Group provides an opportunity for non-Cabinet members to have input into the development of strategic policies, in addition to the other avenues for developing strategic policy.

Portfolios

9. It is noted that being a Portfolio Holder is more onerous, requiring a greater time commitment, than for other Councillors. The size of the Cabinet and delegation of functions to individual Cabinet members is a matter for the Leader to decide, however it is not expected that Cabinet sizes would vary significantly.

Delegated Responsibilities

10. The Leader has the power to delegate any function of the Cabinet to themselves or another member of the Cabinet. Typically Cabinet notes these delegations at the first Cabinet meeting of the municipal year. Decisions taken under delegated powers are subject to the same call-in provisions as decisions taken by the Cabinet as a whole.
11. Few decisions are taken under delegated powers by Portfolio Holders. If delegated powers were increased this would have a limited impact on overall workload.

Internal Scrutiny

12. The Council's overview and scrutiny function was reviewed in 2019/20 to align with Government guidance and improve the Scrutiny Committee's effectiveness. The Committee is functioning effectively and it is not felt there is a need to change the number of Councillors on the Committee.

Planning

13. The Committee deals with a manageable number of applications per year. The Council is also a relatively small authority covering a densely populated area. This means there is no real need to introduce sub-committees or area committees.

Licensing

14. The Council is required to have a Licensing Committee and it must have at least 10, but no more than 15 members. The Council's Licensing Committee has 10 members. These members also sit on the Licensing, and Regulatory Sub Committees. The Sub Committees have panels of three Councillors and these are arranged on a rota so workload is balanced.

Other Regulatory Bodies

15. The Council has relatively extensive delegations to Officers, and so the regulatory committees only consider applications that are more complex or contentious.

External Partnerships

16. Councillors are appointed to outside bodies and these have some impact on the workload of Councillors, particularly those in the Administration who are appointed to the majority of them, and further to Cabinet members.
17. The Council also appoints directors to HTS and its subsidiaries. The HTS directorships create a relatively large workload but these positions are remunerated on a level equal to Portfolio Holders.

Community Leadership

18. The way in which Councillors communicate with the public has changed in the last twenty years, as the way people generally communicate has changed. There will always be a need for face to face contact, but the survey responses have indicated that where Councillors have resumed surgeries they have had low attendance

Casework

19. The survey has indicated a clear shift towards casework coming via email, and this change was accelerated by the pandemic. There was a large increase in case work from the 2020/21 financial year to April 2021-November 2021. It is noted that this increase was most likely due to the reduction in Covid restrictions.
20. There is a large variance in the amount of case work, ranging from 1-5 cases up to 41-45 cases a month. The median is 11-15 cases. Generally Councillors feel they are able to cope, however there are some who occasionally find the

workload difficult. This is in part due to the quantity of workload, and similar points were raised later in the survey.

Potential size of the Council

21. At the previous meeting, the Working Group decided that the Council should not carry out a consultation on changing to all-out elections. The LGBCE is unlikely to approve any number of Councillors which would mean that wards had different numbers of Councillors if that meant some wards had fewer opportunities to vote. For example, where some wards had two members and some three.
22. Most wards have no more than three members. Given the Working Group's desire to not pursue a consultation on all out elections and continue with elections by thirds, the number of Councillors will likely be a multiple of three.
23. The answers to question 16 indicate a variety of views on council size, with some in favour of retaining the current size, and some wishing to see an increase of three to six councillors. No respondents felt the Council should have fewer Councillors.
24. The population of Harlow has increased in the last ten years with a number of large scale developments such as Newhall. Not only have these changes meant that some wards have become relatively large it has meant an increase in caseload as Councillors represent more people.
25. Some Councillors will have experienced disproportionate increases in their workloads. The proportionality of work needs to be addressed through the setting of revised ward boundaries.
26. Instead council size needs to look at overall workload. This means whether the average workload of a councillor allow them to fulfil their roles effectively. This needs to take into account any additional workload which will be caused by further population growth.
27. The only population growth that can be considered at this stage is growth within Harlow's existing boundaries that will be delivered in the next ten years. Therefore growth from the strategic sites outside of Harlow should not be considered.
28. As set out in the response to the LGBCE, a reduction in the number of the Councillors would increase the workload for each Councillor, inhibiting their capacity. With the population of Harlow set to grow the ability to maintain effective arrangements would be further diminished. Councillors would also experience an increase in committee workload.
29. A recommendation of no change to council size presents challenges in that population distribution has changed significantly in Harlow and it is important that new ward boundaries take into account some of the more natural ward boundaries that can be found in Harlow.

30. An small increase in council size would mitigate against the issues mentioned above, and would provide more flexibility in the governance arrangements. It is therefore recommended that the Council proposes to the LGBCE that the Council's membership is increased.

Next Steps

31. The proposals on council size need to be approved by Full Council. This will be done at the meeting on 24 February 2022.
32. The LGBCE will then be required to carry out two consultations. The first on warding patterns from 10 May 2022 until 18 July 2022, and the second on its draft recommendations from 4 October 2022 until 12 December 2022.
33. The LGBCE will meet to agree its final recommendations on 13 February 2023 with the order made in Spring 2023, taking effect from 2024.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Communities and Environment

As contained in the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance and Corporate Services

As contained in the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft response to the LGBCE

Appendix B – Responses to Councillor Survey

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.

Appendix A

Council Size Submission: Harlow

Harlow District Council

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How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

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

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

This is a submission made by Harlow District Council and was approved at a full meeting of the Council on xxxx. The proposal received **unanimous support** from all Councillors present at the meeting.

Following the Council's formal request for the review, the Council established an Electoral Review Working Group in October 2021, chaired by Councillor Simon Carter, with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To oversee and ensure full Member involvement in and support to officers in progressing the review of Council size and the ward boundaries in Harlow by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE);
- (b) To formulate draft recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Commission for consideration by the Council relating to:
 - (i) the total number of Members of the Council

- (ii) the number and boundaries of electoral wards for the purposes of the election of Councillors;
 - (iii) the number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral division;
and
 - (iv) the name of any electoral area.
- (c) To make recommendation to the Council on its future electoral cycle if considered appropriate

The Working Group comprised of five Members and was politically proportionate with representation from both political groups on the Council.

The Context for your proposal

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

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

Last Changes to Internal Governance Arrangements

The last review by the boundary commission was undertaken at a time when the authority was operating a Committee system as a 'fourth choice' authority. At that time, in addition to the full Council, it operated six central committees (Strategic Policy and Equalities, Resources Co-ordination, Housing, Personnel, Audit Quality and Best Value and Commercial Development and Enterprise). In addition there were seven Area Committees whose remit was to debate and examine all issues directly or indirectly affecting the community. The last review reduced the number of members from 42 to 33.

Since that time the Council has changed to a new Cabinet operating model in 2010 and although taking on Licensing functions in the early 2000's, no longer has six programme committees or any Area Committees. The Governance structure is discussed further below in the Strategic Leadership section. Essentially the Council operates a Cabinet of eight (current) members and the

following Committees: Scrutiny Committee, Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee and Audit and Standards Committee.

The Council's Constitution Working Group are currently undertaking a review of its governance arrangements but, having done this in 2010, this review is essentially codifying its rules in light of operational experience rather than a quantum shift to a more onerous form of governance. This review will be completed by March 2022 subject to Council approval. The Cabinet model has operated successfully with some good examples of scrutiny/cabinet working in recent months.

The Council has ambition to significantly regenerate the town and has recently taken steps to increase capacity within its third tier managers to undertake the greater levels of multidisciplinary projects. In turn Cabinet portfolio responsibilities have recently been recast to match the aspirations of the Council's administration.

No governance issues have been raised by recent inspections or similar.

Local and National Policy Trends

The Council has recently worked on a new Corporate Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in December 2021. The aspiration of the Council is that this will enable the setting of a balanced budget again in 22/23 and in future years provide certainty on which the Council can financially plan through its Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The ambitions within the Corporate Strategy are to be achieved through four key strategic themes. These are:

1. Economic Growth;
2. Social Cohesion;
3. Safeguarding the Environment
4. An Efficient Council

Pressure on Local Authorities mean that the Council is always looking for ways of working with greater efficiency and service sharing opportunities.

Work of this nature is brought forward in a collaborative way through the Cabinet and the current administration has appointed 'shadow members' to assist in shaping policy.

Impact on the Council's Effectiveness

Having looked at current arrangements, which remain fit for purpose, and having taking sounding from members both via survey and anecdotally, the Council's governance arrangements are seen as sound and can be supported by the current level of representation. The point has been made by both political parties that when the council is more balanced than currently (ie the number of councillors are closer) filling places on Committees and outside partnerships becomes more difficult particularly for the administration at that time. As shown

below, some areas of the responsibilities (cabinet roles) do lead to a heavy workload and scrutiny has, in the last couple of years, (and particularly during the pandemic) had to make choices on the work it undertakes. A review of scrutiny processes during 2020 has helped to focus cabinet, officer and scrutiny expectations and work closer together.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

Profile

Harlow is located in the west of the County of Essex and is bordered by Epping Forest district to the south, west and east; and East Hertfordshire district (in the County of Hertfordshire) to the north. Harlow is 38km north of London and 50km south of Cambridge. It has good access to the M11 (with a further junction being constructed to the north east), and the West Anglia Mainline railway and Stansted Airport is located 24km to the north-east. Harlow is the smallest local authority area in Essex, with a land area of 30.5sqkm.

The Evolution of Harlow

Between 1946 and 1970, 21 New Towns were designated in the UK under the New Towns Act, primarily to rehouse communities displaced by bomb damage caused during the Second World War. The New Towns were influenced by Garden Cities, formulated by Sir Ebenezer Howard in the late 1800s to deliver settlements which combined the best of town and country and offered alternatives to the polluted, industrial towns of the Industrial Revolution.

In September 1946, the then Minister of Town and Country Planning, Lewis Silkin, invited Frederick Gibberd to work on a plan for a New Town in the Harlow

area. The plan would also contribute to designating the site of the New Town. An inquiry into the designation was held in December 1946 and the Ministry enacted a Designation Order for Harlow New Town on 25 March 1947. The current tight administrative boundary of Harlow, and subsequent small size of the district, is a legacy of this designation. However, Harlow nowadays serves as an important sub-regional centre that meets employment, retailing, social and cultural needs of the surrounding area.

Sir Frederick Gibberd's draft master plan was given ministerial approval in 1949 and the Harlow Development Corporation was established to deliver Harlow New Town. The final version of the master plan was published in 1952.

The master plan was influenced by the area's distinctive landscape and environmental features, such as the River Stort in the north, the valley ridges and wooded areas in the south and other important ecological assets.

Neighbourhood design

The New Town was built around a series of neighbourhoods, dissected by large areas of natural and semi-natural spaces, now known as Green Wedges, which are key physical features of Harlow that have shaped its subsequent growth. Additionally the Town has a number of main artery roads which create the neighbourhood structure. The current ward boundaries, in many places, use these key features to denote democratic demarcation lines. Work in the latter stages of the review needs to take these key features into account.

The neighbourhoods, as set out in the master plan, are focussed around a shopping centre with easy access to social and educational facilities, connected by a series of distributor roads together with a network of cycleways and footpaths. These were separated by a network of landscape wedges, now known as Green Wedges, which were designed to reflect the original landscape setting. These promote a keen sense of local identity.

The Green Wedges continue to provide amenity space for residents, habitats for wildlife, transport corridors, locations for schools and sport and community facilities. Two industrial sites, Templefields and Pinnacles, were located in the north and west of the district, relatively close to the railway line. The Town Park was provided to the north-east of the town centre and was designed around existing landscape features and a hamlet.

Population Profile

Harlow's population is approximately 87,300¹ residents. The district first reached its original target population of around 80,000 people in the mid-1970s, but this was subsequently followed by a period of population decline. In 1995, Harlow's population fell to 73,600 people, which gave rise to a number of social and economic problems.

¹ Nomis, Resident Population 2020

The district's population grew again in the late 1990s and 2000s through planned extensions to Harlow, in particular the Church Langley and Newhall neighbourhoods.

Harlow has a very high population density of 26.8 people per hectare, compared to 4.7 for Essex and 4.1 for England. This high density is compensated by easy access to services and facilities and the network of Green Wedges and open spaces across the district.

The population of Harlow, in comparison to the rest of Essex, is relatively young with 21% of its residents aged between 0-15 years, and the percentage of older persons living in Harlow is lower than Essex and England averages. However this is projected to increase from 13,500 in 2018 to 18,000 by 2033, which is a +33.3% increase.

The district has a higher than average number of lone parent households and higher overcrowding levels compared to the rest of Essex and England. Smoking and obesity levels in Harlow are higher than average, with physical activity rates lower than average.

Deprivation levels in the district are overall lower than the England average but high compared to most parts of Essex. There are some variances between different parts of Harlow, with the east being less deprived than areas to the west and south. Furthermore, the district's health profile is higher than the England averages in some respects, such as smoking rates, alcohol related hospital admissions and obesity. Physical activity is also low and therefore there are overall health and wellbeing issues across the town.

As is reported below, social related issues, particularly during the latter phases of the pandemic have led to increased workload for members, particularly during the last year².

Population Growth

The Council has recently had its Local Plan accepted and adopted. The population of Harlow has increased in the last ten years with a number of large scale developments such as Newhall. Not only have these changes meant that some wards have become relatively large it has meant an increase in caseload as Councillors represent more people.

Some Councillors will have experienced disproportionate increases in their workloads.

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions

² See section on member support

should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

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

Topic	
Governance Model	<p>Key lines of explanation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i>
	<p>Analysis</p> <p>The Council currently has 33 Councillors, elected by thirds. The Council’s political composition in 2021- 22 is: Conservative 21, Labour 12. Prior to May 2021 the Council had a Labour administration (since 2012).</p> <p>The Council operates a Cabinet model with 8 Cabinet members, currently Conservative. The Cabinet meets once every seven weeks.</p> <p>The Cabinet has a Policy Development Working Group which also meets cyclically and is cross party. This group have a forward work plan and a remit to have an early look at developing strategies and policies before they are subject to cabinet decision. This role</p>

		<p>has been looked at recently as part of a review of our scrutiny rules and processes. (found here)</p> <p>The authority operates one development management committee. Meetings of that committee generally have two to five items to consider and meet ten times a year. Significant delegation is in place for officers to deal with applications of a non-contentious nature and this has operated well for a number of years.</p> <p>The Council also operates the following committees: Licensing (five times per year) (and subcommittees dealing with applications and determinations) and a combined Audit and Standards Committee ;</p> <p>Strategic and operational policies are formulated by a number of routes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Via officers taking account of changes to external factors, this characteristically includes appropriate stakeholder consultation or statutory consultations where required, and discussion at the Cabinet Working Group 2. Policy review driven by the new Corporate Strategy (emerging); 3. Items raised as part of the annual scrutiny work plan process. 4. Matters formulated by the Portfolio Holders or Cabinet themselves <p>Scrutiny does have the right to ask decision makers to attend and liaises at the beginning of each municipal year on where they could add value to proposed executive decision making.</p>
<p>Portfolios</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>There are currently eight members of the cabinet. Their role extends to individual</p>

		<p>decision-making within delegations agreed by the cabinet and leader between meetings and those items delegated by the cabinet itself for an individual portfolio holder to decide in consultation with officers. Cabinet meets regularly as a group both formally to decide items within their work plan but also with chief officers to discuss strategic and operational issues.</p> <p>These roles are not full time positions but are more onerous than other councillors due to their service responsibilities.</p> <p>The eight portfolios are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader • Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community and Business Resilience • Environment • Finance • Governance • Housing • Regeneration • Strategic Growth <p>Each has defined areas of responsibility (service related) and oversight of key strategic policies and areas</p> <p>Details of those Current delegation arrangements are set out here</p>
<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Portfolio holders also have delegated authority for individual decision making and may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take urgent decisions that cannot reasonably be deferred until the next meeting of the Cabinet on any matter within the powers delegated to Cabinet and their Portfolio, after written (including e-mail) consultation with the Leader (or Deputy if they are not available). • Take any decision that may be necessary to implement a decision of

		<p>the Cabinet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the grant of licences for the use of land within their Portfolio. • Agree minor or inconsequential amendments to any Policy, Plan or Strategy within their Portfolio <p>Take decisions relating to procurement and contractual matters as set out in the Financial Regulations and Procurement Policy and Standing Orders relating to contracts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, and working with the relevant officers, respond to national consultation specific to their Portfolio. • Allocate specific grants relevant to their Portfolio. <p>Collective decision making will take place at Cabinet (eight members) and in line with most Council's, major decisions would come to council should the constitution require it.</p>
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Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of</i>

	<p><i>members per committee in terms of adding value.</i></p>						
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The council has one scrutiny committee which meets four times a year and has a work plan of their own devising.</p> <p>The scrutiny committee has eight members and is currently chaired by a member of the opposition group.</p> <p>The committee is politically balanced:</p> <div data-bbox="560 757 1126 1518" data-label="Figure"> <p style="text-align: center;">Committee political balance (seats)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Committee political balance (seats)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Party</th> <th>Seats</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>CON</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LAB</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>Scrutiny Committee seeks the view of the cabinet at the beginning of each year on likely topics for their work programme. The scale and number of projects undertaken in the last three years has taken account of members/officers ability to deliver a programme within available resources and prioritises its work plan accordingly. This has meant commissioning external work and help from consultants and the need to prioritise the programme and extend the timetable.</p> <p>In the last year work plan items relating to the council's housing development programme and</p>	Party	Seats	CON	5	LAB	3
Party	Seats						
CON	5						
LAB	3						

		<p>facilities for adults with learning disabilities have been considered by the scrutiny committee. Work plan topics are often dealt with by way of a small working party of scrutiny and backbench members who report back to the main committee once their review is complete.</p> <p>Recommendations on the review are made to cabinet and in the immediate past these have been accepted by the cabinet.</p> <p>In addition to the a scrutiny committee, the authority now operates a Cabinet Policy Working Group, reporting directly to Cabinet on matters of upcoming policy. This is also cross party.</p>					
Statutory Function		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>					
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i> ➤ <i>commitment to the planning committee for members?</i> 					
	Analysis	<p>The Council has a single council-wide committee and has a scheme of delegation for planning functions with one or two applications going to each committee. This Scheme has not changed since 2012 and there is no current demand to review it. There has been no significant change in committee arrangements, and no further change is anticipated. Shown below is a breakdown of the planning applications the authority received in the last three years and the number ultimately determined by Committee.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="539 1854 1289 2063"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>No of Apps Received</th> <th>No of Apps reported to Committee</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>517</td> <td>23 (4.4%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	No of Apps Received	No of Apps reported to Committee	2019	517
Year	No of Apps Received	No of Apps reported to Committee					
2019	517	23 (4.4%)					

		2020	620	38 (6.1%)
		2021 (part year)	647+	35+ (5.4%)
		<p>As can be seen, although the percentage reaching members is fairly static, with the increase in applications over time, the number coming to committee is increasing.</p> <p>The Council is a relatively small authority covering a densely populated area. Given this and the number of applications considered at Councillor level a single committee is the still the most appropriate mechanism.</p> <p>There is no legal restriction on executive members considering planning applications. It is rare that more than one would be on the committee at any one time and time commitments make more being on it unlikely. Should the administration majority decrease there would be greater difficulty in separating the two functions. This is true for other committees, and evidences that a decision to have a smaller Council than currently would lead to problems filling seats on the committee without significantly increasing core member workload.</p> <p>Planning has a considerable time commitment due to the relatively high number of meetings. The following time commitments are estimates and are informed following analysis of Councillor survey returns.</p> <p>Time Commitment: That are an average of 10 meetings per year at 120 minutes each, including training = 1,200 minutes. If we assume that there is a similar time period to read papers = 1,200 minutes.</p> <p>Dealing with correspondence 60 minutes per meeting = 600</p> <p>Total= 3,000 minutes = 50 hours per year</p>		
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> 		

		<p>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>The number of applications the Council received for licences dropped massively during the pandemic. There was little incentive to apply for licences which couldn't be used. Previous year's show a steady stream of committee work. Pre pandemic there were 8 meetings on average a year and are a mixture of meetings. Some meetings are scheduled, but ad-hoc meetings are arranged when needed.</p> <p>8 meetings per year at 90 minutes each = 720 minutes Same time to read papers = 720 minutes Dealing with correspondence 30 minutes per meeting = 240 Total = 1,680 = 28 hours</p> <p>Members are drawn from the Licensing Committee and a rota is set up for scheduled meetings. For ad-hoc meetings availability is determined and members are then allocated to the meeting</p> <p>Members are put on a rota to ensure a fair distribution of meetings per year.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has relatively small committees which spread out workload across all the Council's committees. The regulatory functions only deal with applications that are contentious i.e. where objections have been received.</p> <p>The Licensing Committee has 10 members (the minimum under legislation). The Licensing Sub Committee and Regulatory Sub Committee have the same membership. The Development Management Committee has 8 members</p> <p>The delegations to Officers are already fairly extensive and only a limited number of applications come before members. Greater delegation is unlikely.</p>
External Partnerships		Service delivery has changed for councils over time,

	and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
Analysis	<p>The Council appoints to a number of bodies, some of which make decisions. These will be set out in an agreed scheme of delegation. The Council has its own Local Authority Trading Company (LATC), HTS, which it has a close relationship with. The Council has established a Shareholder Sub Committee to monitor HTS, with certain decisions requiring Cabinet approval. Members of the Council also sit on the Boards of the various HTS Companies.</p> <p>The time commitments are estimates and will be more informed following analysis of Councillor survey returns.</p> <p>Like other councils, the Council appoints to outside bodies. The workload for these will be skewed towards portfolio holders.</p> <p>Where there are bodies that commitments can be made on, it is normally executive members who are appointed to them, although typically final decisions will be made by Cabinet/Full Council.</p> <p>The exception to this is councillors appointed as directors of HTS and its subsidiaries. These cannot be portfolio holders. Some decisions will be made on behalf of the council but these functions are set out in a scheme of delegation</p> <p>Almost all this work would be undertaken by portfolio holders, except for the HTS directorships. The workload is difficult to estimate, but HTS directors are remunerated on a level equal to portfolio holders</p> <p>The Council appoints to a number of outside bodies like other councils. Workload is difficult to calculate but seems not to be a concern to members.</p>

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Community Leadership

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

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	<p>In preparation for this submission, a member survey was undertaken to find out, amongst other matters, the ways in which Councillors interacted with the public. The top ways are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written letters • Email • Social media

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgery's/Face to face • Door to door • Attendance at external meetings as a representative • Engaging with constituents e.g. home visits • Dealing with constituents enquiries / casework <p>Certainly members will have significantly changed the way they interact since the last review more than twenty years ago and the pandemic has also significantly changes interaction methods by necessity.</p> <p>Councillors are provided with Council technology and email addresses within which they are expected to manage their individual contact workloads.</p> <p>Some Councillors have resumed surgeries although the attendance rates are generally quite low. A few Councillors have started using Facebook Live to engage with residents.</p> <p>The Council uses its Youth Council as a means of engaging with younger people, and has an active relationship with Harlow College. These both facilitate interaction with people under voting age. The Council has developed good relationships with a number of local organisations who represent ethnic minorities and Councillors can interact through these groups.</p> <p>The Council sets no requirement to attend committee meetings, although there would be an expectation that Councillors who are appointed to outside bodies attend such meetings. There are no parish councils within Harlow.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>

	Analysis	<p>The Council has a dedicated Councillor enquiry system which enables greater management of casework. This has a timeframe for responses from the Council to the Councillor. Councillor involvement is expected to be through this system in most instances.</p> <p>In the year to 31 March 2021, 557 such enquiries were made by members. During the current municipal year, to November 2021, this had risen quite considerably to 949 (ie 8 months) This is only a subset of interactions members would have experienced.</p> <p>Members are able to access advice and support through the Corporate and Democratic Services within the Governance and Corporate Services Directorate but do not have specific political support arrangements.</p> <p>Councillors are given an induction training programme, along with some ad-hoc training throughout the year. For example, on planning matters. The Council is developing a more comprehensive training programme for Councillors, and an annual survey is also carried out in order to assess Councillors needs.</p> <p>The pandemic has accelerated the switch towards digital communication with residents. Door to door visits have remained popular as they are often part of Councillors party political canvassing work. Most Councillors have indicated that the majority of their casework now comes via email. Social media has clearly had an impact on how Councillors interact with most Councillors having some form of social media presence. This has allowed for more immediate interaction with larger numbers of residents.</p> <p>The Council promotes online methods of engagement including through use of forms on its website, social media and its complaints procedure. Use of digital engagement methods was further promoted after the first lockdown.</p>
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Other Issues

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

Workload of Councillors

As part of the evidence base for this submission all Councillors were asked to complete a survey on their workload caused by their roles as a Councillor. This survey formed part of the work to establish the current needs, challenges and requirements facing elected members. In total 19 Councillors responded to the survey, with a mix of Cabinet and non-Cabinet Councillors responding

Preparing for and attending meetings takes up a significant amount of Councillor time. Attending council meetings ranked sixth in the answers to question 10. The Council has comparatively few formal meetings, but particularly for Cabinet members, there are a large number of other meetings to attend.

There is a large variance in the amount of monthly case work, ranging from 1-5 cases up to 41-45 cases a month. The median is 11-15 cases. Generally Councillors feel they are able to cope, however there are some who occasionally find the workload difficult. This is in part due to the quantity of workload, and similar points were raised later in the survey. There have been, however, significant increases in member reporting this year.

The survey revealed that there is a near even split between those who are spending the amount of time they were expecting to as a Councillor and those that are spending greater time. It is noted that whilst residents will contact Councillors directly, Councillors can generate additional workload through canvassing. The number of Councillor Enquiries rises significantly in the run up to elections.

Summary

Council view on Election by thirds

The Council's established Working Group recommended to the Council in December 2021 that they should continue to elect members by thirds. This resolution was approved. This decision leads to an acknowledgement that three member wards should continue. The report on the matter can be found [here](#).

Options considered

Reduction in members

We have considered whether a smaller Council could provide effective strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership in Harlow but are of the view that any reduction in the number of councillors would mean that current Governance arrangements would be difficult to support and place heavy workloads on councillors inhibiting their capacity. Arrangements for decision

making are finely balanced at the moment and decreasing the number of members against that backdrop would make this harder to sustain effectiveness.

Any reduction in numbers would also result in an increased workload for Councillors across their constituency engagement and casework.

With continued population growth the level of constituency casework is expected to remain the same or increase placing a significantly higher demand on a fewer number of Councillors.

All but two members of the Council have representational roles on main committees, most are also substitutes or reserves on other committees. A reduction in members would mean that members would be required to increase their committee attendances significantly.

It is agreed cross party that a reduction of any number of Councillors is not considered acceptable and would not allow the Council to continue to provide the present level of representation.

No change

We have considered whether the current number of members is appropriate. Clearly, the authority has been able to effectively operate over a period of time with its current number of Councillors and there are now obviously differences in representational ratios which are showing in the differing views expressed in the returns to the member survey.

In terms of neighbourhood identity, the current arrangements have become out of tolerance in a number of areas of the town. We foresee that a redistribution based upon merely re-warding the town has limited flexibility in allowing the unique neighbourhood structures to be taken account of, forcing non-natural boundary solutions being required at the second stage of the process. We would wish that any solution maintained this unique neighbourhood structure as far as could be achieved.

Remaining at 33 Councillors means a likely average increase in time spent by Councillors on case work on top of their other Council duties and outside commitments over the period of reviewed growth and into the longer term given population increases forecast to 2033 by the Local Plan.

Limited Growth

There is general support to the argument that a small increase (say a further ward of three members) would assist in maintaining the current levels of time spent on average by councillors on the whole range of their Council duties.

The projected population growth to 2027 is **XX** and the Local Plan longer term forecast is **YY**.

The case work from an increased electorate and their allocation to committee places would be spread across more councillors, meaning they could provide better community representation and leadership

Analysis of the Councils neighbouring authorities and similar New Towns shows that Harlow already sits above the local representational average:

COUNCIL	POPULATION (Mid 2019)	NO. COUNCILLORS	POP. PER COUNCILLOR
BRAINTREE	151,561	49	3,093
BRENTWOOD	77,021	37	2,082
BROXBOURNE	97,279	30	3,243
EAST HERTS	149,748	50	2,995
EPPING FOREST	131,689	58	2,271
UTTLESFORD	91,284	39	2,341
STEVENAGE	87,754	39	2,250
HARLOW	87,300	33	2,645
AVERAGE (Excl Harlow)	112,334	43.14	2,611

We believe that a small increase in member representation would be prudent. It would also help alleviate the potential for politically foreseen difficulties were the political balance changed, allowing greater flexibility in its governance arrangements.

We are therefore advocating a change from 33 to 36 members and by extension 12 rather the existing 11 wards.

Local Government Boundary Review – Councillor Survey

1. How long have you been a Councillor with Harlow Council?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 to 4 years		52.63%	10
2	5 to 8 years		5.26%	1
3	9 to 12 years		0.00%	0
4	13 to 16 years		5.26%	1
5	Over 16 years		36.84%	7
			answered	19
			skipped	0

2. Which political party do you represent as a Councillor?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Conservative		47.37%	9
2	Labour		47.37%	9
3	Other (please specify):		5.26%	1
			answered	19
			skipped	0
Other (please specify): (1)				
1	Labour and Co-operative			

3. Why did you want to become a Councillor?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	19
1	I was interested in how decision were made that had an impact on my local school		
2	I wished to make a positive contribution to the town where I grew up. I believe it was not being administered as it should be and many areas required improvement.		
3	to do the right thing to use my skill set to help others to hold the council to account		
4	To make our town a great place to live.		
5	To make a positive difference to people's lives and the community I live in		
6	To serve the local community. Many local issues have arisen since and I continue to do extensive case work for local residents.		
7	To help people and give voters a choice		
8	To help my community To give something back		
9	When I retired I had time to think about making a difference to the area I live in so I became a councillor		
10	To help my local community		
11	To make difference to my community		
12	I wanted to make a difference, didn't know we received an allowance		
13	Because I felt I had something to offer and because of a life long interest in politics and the community		
14	To make change and get rid of a failing Council.		
15	To ensure that services provided and decisions made that impact residents of the town, we're made in the best of interest of residents. Ensuring fair access to all		
16	To help others		
17	Wanted to make a contribution to community		
18	I've wanted to be a councillor for some years, however, family and business pressures left me with little time for this until a few years ago. I wanted to become a councillor to try to improve the environment, prosperity and well being of the people of my town. Harlow has given me so much and I felt it was time for me to give something back.		
19	To help residents		
		answered	19
		skipped	0

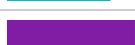
4. Would you recommend becoming a Councillor if you were asked?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	94.74%	18
2	No	5.26%	1
		answered	19
		skipped	0

Comments: (6)

- 1 It's never easy and there is always someone who will verbally attack you
They don't see the person they just see politicians.
They feel it is ok to not be nice .
Others value you but it's always the shouty ones who get heard.
We get a back deal from media,
- 2 Rewarding experience particular as one grows into the role
- 3 You have influence to help people and alter policy. To promote the town and your ward.
- 4 Depends on the person
- 5 Although, I would be honest about the time commitments, which make it difficult for many.
- 6 I love being a councillor and I love having the unique opportunity it gives me to try to make a difference.

5. In addition to your role as a Councillor, what other position do you hold within the Council?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Leader		0.00%	0
2	Deputy Leader		5.26%	1
3	Cabinet Member		31.58%	6
4	Committee Chair		10.53%	2
5	Committee Vice Chair		15.79%	3
6	Member Champion		21.05%	4
7	None		26.32%	5
8	Other (please state role):		42.11%	8
			answered	19
			skipped	0

Other (please state role): (8)

1	None executive of the trading company for the council HTS
2	I am also a Committee Member for Development Management (Planning) and Audit & Standards. I understand I may be appointed to the Working Group for the forthcoming Boundary Review.
3	Leader of Opposition
4	Have been the Leader of the Council and for the last ten years Cabinet member for finance now in opposition
5	Council appointed director of Harlow Trading Services as an Executive Director. Also sit on Development Committee
6	Chair of scrutiny
7	.
8	Chair of council

6. What Committees / Boards / Panels / Working Groups do you belong to?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Council		89.47%	17
2	Audit and Standards		42.11%	8
3	Housing Forums		15.79%	3
4	Cabinet		31.58%	6
5	Cabinet Policy Development Working Group		15.79%	3
6	Call in Sub Committee		10.53%	2
7	Hearing Sub Committee		0.00%	0
8	Licensing Committee		26.32%	5
9	Licensing Sub Committee		26.32%	5
10	Scrutiny Committee		21.05%	4
11	Development Management Committee		26.32%	5
12	Shareholders Sub Committee		15.79%	3
13	Harlow Local Highways Panel		26.32%	5
14	Covid 19 Recovery Working Group		21.05%	4
15	Regulatory Sub Committee		0.00%	0
16	Town Plan Panel		21.05%	4
17	Other (please specify):		10.53%	2
			answered	19
			skipped	0
Other (please specify): (2)				
1	Once again have been a member of a variety of committees and working groups			
2	Reserve for Call In Sub Committee, Hearing Committee and Scrutiny Committee			

7. Have you been appointed by the Council to represent it on any outside bodies?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	47.37%	9
2	No	52.63%	10
		answered	19
		skipped	0

8. Please list the organisations and role, including any appointments to other bodies that are not linked to a council appointment.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	10
1	Harlow college		
2	Chair of the Gibberd Garden Trust Member Civic society Labour Party activist West Essex camera branch		
3	Deputy Cabinet @ Essex County Council Vice President Chartered Institute of Journalism Chair of Members Board Passmores Academy Trustee CIOJ Benevolent Fund		
4	HOSC Aid Stansted Airport Trust Committee		
5	Age Concern board		
6	Razed Roof Committee Great Parndon CA Harlow Occupational Health Trust		
7	Can't remember what they are...		
8	None		
9	Harlow Arts Council		
10	Non-executive Director of HTS		
		answered	10
		skipped	9

9. On average, how many hours per month do you spend on Council (and political) business? This includes online / email

Answer Choices	1 to 5 hours	6 to 10 hours	11 to 15 hours	16 to 20 hours	Over 20 hours	Response Total	
Attendance at Council Committees	36.84% 7	47.37% 9	5.26% 1	5.26% 1	5.26% 1	19	
Attendance at other Council meetings	50.00% 9	27.78% 5	16.67% 3	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	18	
Time spent on party political business	43.75% 7	25.00% 4	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	18.75% 3	16	
Attendance at external meetings as a representative	64.29% 9	35.71% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14	
Ward surgeries	75.00% 9	25.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12	
Engaging with constituents e.g. home visits	42.11% 8	26.32% 5	10.53% 2	10.53% 2	10.53% 2	19	
Dealing with constituents enquiries / casework	26.32% 5	31.58% 6	21.05% 4	10.53% 2	10.53% 2	19	
Preparing for meetings	44.44% 8	22.22% 4	11.11% 2	16.67% 3	5.56% 1	18	
Attending workshops, training, conferences etc.	69.23% 9	23.08% 3	0.00% 0	7.69% 1	0.00% 0	13	
Travel	73.33% 11	26.67% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	15	
Other	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	4	
						answered	19
						skipped	0

10. Please rank the following in order of importance in your role as Councillor. With 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important.

Item	Total Score ¹	Overall Rank
Listen to the views of local people	155	1
Support the local community	148	2
Address issues concerning the whole area	125	3
Represent local residents views to the Council	111	4
Deal with complaints	108	5
Attend council meetings	102	6
Hold surgeries for constituents	92	7
Plan local services	89	8
Keep the public informed about local activities	78	9
Other	37	10
¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	19
	skipped	0
If you selected other please specify (4)		
1	Attention to Council finances and budgetary issues	
2	This is an impossible question and not appropriate to rate one function over another	
3	The above was difficult as you have equal weighting and in part depends on role administrators or opposition.	
4	Consult with the community regarding the council's proposals and feed back responses to the cabinet.	

11. How many cases / issues do you deal with, on average, per month?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 to 5		15.79%	3
2	6 to 10		21.05%	4
3	11 to 15		31.58%	6
4	16 to 20		5.26%	1
5	21 to 25		0.00%	0
6	26 to 30		5.26%	1
7	31 to 35		5.26%	1
8	36 to 40		5.26%	1
9	41 to 45		10.53%	2
10	46 to 50		0.00%	0
			answered	19
			skipped	0

12. Are there instances when the level of your residents' enquiries cannot be coped with? If so, how often does this occur?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	19
1	It how you mange expectations don't over commit,		
2	Not so far.		
3	no		
4	sometimes around election time.		
5	Occasionally		
6	Very occasionally a resident will be an unreasonable in making complaints and allegations but this would be no more than one or two a year.		
7	Occasionally. Enquiries come in all forms, telephone, email, Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and written letter. Replies get delayed about once a month and have to be prioritised over other work or leisure to catch up.		
8	Yes usually planning issues		
9	Never Sometimes I struggle but usually find a way		
10	Rarely		
11	Occasionally Would like more time to follow up on issues		
12	If it involves things that a county councillor deals with. I can normally point people in the right direction. So does not normally occur		
13	No		
14	I am useless at admin, so most days.		
15	No		
16	no		
17	/		
18	* The above figure includes cases dealt with as the result of requests for help from constituents, cases taken up during regular my neighbourhood walk-rounds and cases taken up as the result of regular consultations with the people of my ward. I am also asked to take up cases outside my ward by Robert Halfon, some of these are complex cases that Rob has been unable to resolve. I have averaged my total figures over 5 months as I spent 6 weeks campaigning for the by election and left me little time for anything but keeping my casework ticking over. No, there have never been times when I felt I could not cope. There have, however, been times when coping has been a struggle.		
19	no		
		answered	19

13. Is the time you spend on council business what you expected when you became a councillor?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		52.63% 10
2	No		47.37% 9
		answered	19
		skipped	0

Comments: (6)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | I am spending much more time than I anticipated. |
| 2 | But you grow into the role |
| 3 | There was a change of control in May and there is a lot of new policies and strategies to devise and implement and monitor |
| 4 | Far greater |
| 5 | Far more. Didn't expect things to be in as bad of a state as they are. |
| 6 | I spend more time on council work than I thought I would. |

14. Please indicate the methods of communication you use and give a percentage of time spent on each method.

Item	Average	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Total Responses
Written letters	4.90	0.00	15.00	4.95	10
Email	53.28	7.00	90.00	23.04	18
Surgeries/Face to face	14.75	3.00	50.00	12.57	16
Door to door	20.35	2.00	80.00	20.07	17
Social media	9.69	1.00	30.00	7.81	13
Other (please specify in comments box)	21.00	5.00	44.00	14.34	4
				answered	18
				skipped	1

Comments: (6)

1	For most complaints or enquiries, I make it a point to visit the resident/area concerned.
2	Once again too difficult to quantify
3	Telephone 15%
4	Meetings with groups
5	Phone
6	Text messages Much of my face to face work takes the form of consultations and home visits.

15. To what extent do you think you are effective in your role as a Councillor in this authority?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Extremely effective	0.00%	0
2	Very effective	57.89%	11
3	Somewhat effective	42.11%	8
4	Not so effective	0.00%	0
5	Not at all effective	0.00%	0
		answered	19
		skipped	0

16. Is there anything else about your experience as a Harlow Council Councillor that might be relevant to the Council's submission on Council size?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	8
1	I think that compared to neighbouring towns, Harlow has the smallest number of councillors. With the growth of the district and with HGGT, some new wards will need to be created to eliminate current distortions. This should result in an additional 3 councillors. Furthermore, the HGGT Project will result in the establishment of new districts that will require representation. It is likely that the entire HGGT area will have to be reformed under a single authority rather than under the current three district authorities.		
2	The size of the Council should be increased. Up until 2002 the Council had 42 members. The ruling party only has at most 20 councillors at present and with experience and ability being important to do a job properly this leaves the majority group with a rather small amount of choice for what are very demanding roles, particularly with the Cabinet system. Harlow council in my opinion should have at least 3 to 6 more councillors. With the growth of the town this new size could easily be accommodated in forming one or two more wards with three members each.		
3	Regeneration is major priority for the council which covers many areas including the council's housing stock. There are major schemes underway and others in the process of planning and development of policies requiring consultation. Recovery from Covid is another major issue requiring planning and organisation. The town is growing with major residential developments, a new motorway junction, the arrival of the Health Protection Agency, a new hospital, a new Local Plan, regeneration of the town centre and other retail areas is coming, plus the development of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and its sustainable transport corridor. There are developing Enterprise Zones. The council provides the local leadership for all these activities to ensure they happen, they provide what Harlow needs and to monitor progress. Nearly all of this is additional to what the council has been doing,		
4	Feel that having 3 members for size of ward I represent is important		
5	I think the number of councillors seems to fit		
6	There needs to be more councillors for more areas. The wards should be smaller with 1 member per ward, but more wards created.		
7	Should have more councillors - wards of 1 more / 36		
8	Netteswell has a number of deprived constituents, this and HTS's landscaping and house repairs backlog generates a lot of casework. I don't believe less than three councillors would be sufficient to cope with Netteswell's casework requirements.		
		answered	8
		skipped	11

17. What is your age?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	18 to 24 years		5.26%	1
2	25 to 34 years		0.00%	0
3	35 to 44 years		21.05%	4
4	45 to 54 years		5.26%	1
5	55 to 64 years		10.53%	2
6	65 to 74 years		36.84%	7
7	75 and over		10.53%	2
8	Prefer not to say		10.53%	2
			answered	19
			skipped	0

18. What is your gender?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		84.21%	16
2	Female		10.53%	2
3	Prefer not to say		5.26%	1
4	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0
			answered	19
			skipped	0
Other (please specify): (0)				

19. What is your sexual orientation?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Heterosexual	83.33%	15
2	Homosexual	0.00%	0
3	Bisexual	0.00%	0
4	Prefer not to say	16.67%	3
5	Other (please specify):	0.00%	0
		answered	18
		skipped	1
Other (please specify): (0)			

20. What is your ethnic group?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
White				
1	British		78.95%	15
2	Irish		5.26%	1
3	Other		0.00%	0
Asian or Asian British				
4	Indian		0.00%	0
5	Pakistani		0.00%	0
6	Bangladeshi		0.00%	0
7	Any other Asian background		0.00%	0
Mixed				
8	White and Black Caribbean		0.00%	0
9	White and black African		0.00%	0
10	White and Asian		0.00%	0
11	Any other mixed background		5.26%	1
Black or Black British				
12	Caribbean		0.00%	0
13	African		0.00%	0
14	Any other black background		0.00%	0
Other Ethnic Group				
15	Chinese		0.00%	0
16	Any other Ethnic Group		0.00%	0
17	I do not wish to disclose my ethnic origin		10.53%	2
			answered	19
			skipped	0

21. What is your religion?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Christian 	42.11%	8
2	Muslim	0.00%	0
3	Buddhist	0.00%	0
4	Hindu	0.00%	0
5	Jewish	0.00%	0
6	Sikh	0.00%	0
7	No religion 	42.11%	8
8	Prefer not to say 	15.79%	3
9	Other (please specify):	0.00%	0
		answered	19
		skipped	0
Other (please specify): (0)			

22. Disability is defined as “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. Do you consider yourself disabled?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes 	16.67%	3
2	No 	66.67%	12
3	Prefer not to say 	16.67%	3
		answered	18
		skipped	1

23. Which of the following best describes your current circumstances, excluding your work as a councillor?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Self Employed		10.53%	2
2	Employed full time (30 hrs or more per week)		52.63%	10
3	Employed part time (16 or more hours but less than 30 hours per week)		0.00%	0
4	Employed part time (less than 16 per week)		0.00%	0
5	Unemployed		0.00%	0
6	Unable to work due to illness		5.26%	1
7	Retired		31.58%	6
8	Student		0.00%	0
9	Looking after Home / family		0.00%	0
			answered	19

24. If you are employed please answer the additional questions

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Which sector do you work in?		90.91%	10
1	Health			
2	hospitality			
3	manufacturing			
4	Charity			
5	PR / Public Affairs			
6	Warehousing and logistics			
7	charity			
8	Politics			
9	Private			
10	Recruitment and Transport Logisitics consultancy			

2	How would you describe your main occupation?	100.00%	11
	1 Nurse		
	2 Consultant		
	3 IT Project Manager		
	4 engineer		
	5 Charity worker		
	6 Consultancy		
	7 Supervisory		
	8 charity worker		
	9 Political Advisor		
	10 Supported housing manager		
	11 Managing Director		
3	To what extent does your employer support your work as a councillor?	100.00%	11
	1 Flexible working		
	2 N/A		
	3 time		
	4 no support at all		
	5 A little		
	6 Gives unpaid leave		
	7 In a silent way		
	8 a little		
	9 Little		
	10 None		
	11 Totally		
		answered	11
		skipped	8

25. How safe do you feel in your role as a Councillor and in dealing with the following?

Answer Choices	Extremely confident	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not so confident	Not at all confident	Response Total	
Holding Ward surgeries	12.50% 2	68.75% 11	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	6.25% 1	16	
Engaging with constituents e.g. home visits	22.22% 4	50.00% 9	16.67% 3	11.11% 2	0.00% 0	18	
Personal visits to your home	18.75% 3	31.25% 5	6.25% 1	12.50% 2	31.25% 5	16	
Lone working	22.22% 4	44.44% 8	11.11% 2	16.67% 3	5.56% 1	18	
Attending meetings, workshops, training, conferences etc.	42.11% 8	47.37% 9	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	5.26% 1	19	
Travel	44.44% 8	50.00% 9	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18	
Other (Please specify in the comments box)	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1	
						answered	19
						skipped	0

Initial Response from LGBCE

“The last review – at a time when the Council operated a committee system – reduced the number of councillors from 42 to 33. Since that time, the authority has moved to a Cabinet model and a more limited committee structure focused around scrutiny and statutory/regulatory functions. No governance issues have been raised by any inspections or similar and there is an acceptance that such structures remain fit for purpose. This suggests that the existing number of councillors remains appropriate for the governance of the council, and therefore the argument for an increase is dependent on member workload brought about through an increasing population, particularly as the submission notes that workload relating to outside bodies is reported not to be a concern.

As a consequence of the change in legislation, Harlow’s council size will need to be divisible by three and therefore we do acknowledge that any increase (or decrease) in council size will need to be in multiples of three, rather than one or two. However, at the moment we’d suggest that these workload arguments are not necessarily persuasive to support an increase. We note that casework numbers have increased from 557 total year to 949 in eight months, but at the moment we can’t see the link between this total number and the effect this has on the number of councillors required. Is the support/technology in place insufficient to enable the existing number of members to handle this workload? Is there anything about the complexity of workload that makes (or will make) the existing number of members unsustainable? You also note that ‘Generally councillors feel able to cope’, and so it does seem to be the case at present that the existing number is appropriate. We would need further analysis on the workload arguments in order for our commissioners to be persuaded of the increase.”