Cheshire East Council

Council Size Submission: Template

[Cheshire East Council]

Contents

Cheshire East: Council size submission to LGBCE – DRAFT – Version A15 (19~~14~~/10~~9~~/23)

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

Cheshire East Council notes on the colour coding and abbreviations used in this draft response:

- **Blue font = draft text intended for inclusion in the submission to the Commission.**
- **Yellow shading = brief notes on contributions still awaited, other content still to be confirmed and any important notes regarding redrafting work.**

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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 *(delete from final version)*.

This submission is made on behalf of Cheshire East Council, following its approval by Full Council on 13 December 2023. ==[Wording of previous sentence based on assumption about future decision, so may need amending.]==

Under the Council's Constitution, Full Council is responsible for "approving the Council's response to any issues or proposals in relation to local government boundaries including Electoral Wards, the conduct of elections and community governance functions".

On 11 July 2023, in order to inform the Council decision, the Council's Corporate Policy Committee appointed an Electoral Review Sub-Committee to make recommendations upon all matters relating to the Boundary Commission's ~~r~~Review. These recommendations were considered by the Corporate Policy Committee, prior to the Committee making recommendations to Council. On 30 November 2023, in order to ensure that the Council could comply with the Boundary Commission's deadlines for depositing the final Council -size submission, the Committee delegated authority to the Sub-Committee to finalise the submission, taking into account any comments from the Commission, or any final amendments which the Committee might suggest. ==[Wording of previous sentence based on assumption about future decision, so may need amending.]==

As the Council has a Committee system of decision-making governance, the Sub-Committee and Council committees are required to reflect the Council's overall political proportionalities.

Officers advised the Sub-Committee, Committee and Council throughout the Review process.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Not applicable to Cheshire East 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?~~

Q: When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?

The Council was created on 1 April 2009 following local government reorganisation in Cheshire. ~~From that date, the Council~~ Initially it had a Leader and Cabinet system of decision-making governance.

However, on 19 November 2020, the Council resolved to implement a Committee system model of governance (following consideration of this report: Public Pack)Agenda Document for Council, 19/11/2020 14:00 (cheshireeast.gov.uk). This governance change took effect in May 2021~~.~~. This was a choice made by Council following a change of political control in May 2019 and a subsequent period of 18 months of careful consideration of the proposed change in governance.~~, after the May 2019 local elections.~~ One of the aims behind the change in decision-making arrangements was to ensure political proportionality in the making of decisions which had previously been the responsibility of the majority Council political group.

The Council's political proportionality arrangements must comply with relevant legislation. The Council's "service committees", which decide those matters which were previously the responsibility of the Council's Cabinet, have a membership comprising members of the Council's three main political groups.

~~The proposed change to a Committee system of governance had been very carefully considered by the Council over a period of 18 months prior to the decision of Council to move to the new arrangements.~~ Much work went ~~had gone~~ into the design of the new committee structure and the new committee responsibilities. As set out in the Design Principles which Council adopted:

- The new form of governance (Committee system) will be modern, open, transparent and easy to understand. It will include arrangements that enable people to easily find out about how decisions are made. Committee meetings will be held in public by cross party (politically proportionate) committees.
- The new arrangements are intended to ensure that decisions are made quickly, to meet the needs of the Council and local community.

- The number of committees and meetings will be kept to a minimum, and technology used to provide instant access to information and avoid unnecessary paperwork. ~~Paper copies will be provided upon request by Members.~~
- ~~There will be a process to deal with those rare instances where urgent decisions are needed. This process will be clear and, in most cases, open to the public.~~
- ~~The Committee system of governance has been in operation for approaching three years. Whilst some Members of the Council might prefer a Leader and Cabinet system, no strongly argued substantive views or evidence seems to have been put forward or requested which might question the effectiveness of the current governance arrangements.~~

Council decision-making and business planning arrangements are working effectively and are delivering services in line with the Council's ~~Corporate Plan, and budget~~ policy framework as set out in the Council's Constitution. The key strategic document is the Council's Corporate Plan which covers the period 2021-2025. All Committee decision reports state how the decision supports achievement of the priorities of the Corporate Plan. Resources to support decisions are determined through the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Organisational performance against Corporate Plan priorities is reported to the Corporate Policy Committee on a quarterly basis. Each individual staff member has a personal development review, setting objectives which link into a Service Plan, Directorate Plan and the Corporate Plan. This ensures that everyone can see the "golden thread" of how their work contributes to the overall success of the Council. The Council's Corporate Plan is currently being refreshed and a revised plan is scheduled to be launched by 1 April 2024.

Whilst, following a resolution to do so, the Council could not choose to change its decision-making arrangements for a period of five years, the way in which its Committee system operates could be changed: for example, by making changes to the number of service committees and their functions/ responsibilities, or to the Council's Constitution, so as to improve the Council's Committee system arrangements.

The Council's committee structure has already been reviewed, resulting in the removal of one sub-committee from the structure. A further review of the structure is taking place, taking into account the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Design Principles. Full Council has already considered the Council's planning committee structure and a proposal to reduce the number of planning committees from three to two and a further report will be considered by Council in due course. This demonstrates that the existing arrangements are being assessed against the Design Principles agreed by Council, in order to ensure that they are effective.

It also demonstrates that the Council actively reviews its arrangements in order to ensure that they are generally fit for purpose.

Q: 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?

The management of the Council's involvement in wholly owned companies, which are referred to in the Council's Constitution as 'ASDVs' (Alternative Service Delivery Vehicles), is overseen by the Council's Finance Sub-Committee, the responsibilities of which are set out in paragraph 2.6 of chapter 2, part 4 of the Constitution.

A small number of Cheshire East Council services are shared with Cheshire West and Chester Council, for example ICT and transactional services such as payroll. Cheshire East Council must take decisions by a politically proportionate committee, or by an officer with delegated powers from the Council to do so.

These shared service arrangements are delivered in line with the responsibilities of the Shared Services Joint Committee, whose purpose is "to oversee the management of those services which are provided on a Cheshire wide basis on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council to ensure effective delivery of such services and to provide strategic direction." The Committee is administered on alternate years by each Council. The Design Principles sought to emphasise the need for a new governance model which would reflect modern best practice, maximise the use of information technology, and ensure streamlined, efficient and quick decision-making. They were not intended to replicate every element of a traditional Committee system which used to operate prior to the Local Government Act 2000, but sought to facilitate the provision of a bespoke modern Committee system to meet the contemporary needs of Cheshire East Council and its residents.

Whilst, following a resolution to do so, the Council could not choose to change its decision-making arrangements for a period of five years, the way in which its Committee system operates could be changed. For example, the number of service committees and their functions/responsibilities could be changed. Other changes could be made to the Council's Constitution, in the same way as currently takes place, so as to improve the Council's Committee system arrangements.

Indeed, the Council's committee structure has already been reviewed, resulting in the removal of one sub-committee from the structure. A further review is taking place, which will examine the structure again, taking into account the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Design Principles. At the time of preparation of this submission, Full Council had already considered the Council's planning committee structure and a proposal to reduce the number of planning committees from three to two and a further report will be considered by Council in due course. This demonstrates that the existing arrangements are being assessed against the Design Principles agreed by Council, in order to ensure that they are effective.

It also demonstrates that the Council actively reviews its arrangements in order to ensure that they are generally fit for purpose. One of the considerations relating to the planning committee structure was that there continues to be a member vacancy on one of the committees, which has subsisted since May 2023. This difficulty in filling committee positions provides some evidence of the workload of the Council's members.

A survey of the Council's members has also been undertaken

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Q: Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
The Council received a report following a Joint Targeted Area Inspection in September 2022. Although this did not identify governance or capacity issues for the Council directly, it did find strategic weaknesses in the Local Safeguarding Childrens Partnership, a multi-agency partnership of which the Council is a member. Over the past year the Partnership have been progressing an Improvement Plan to address the challenges identified.

 A Public Interest Report on the impact of the council's culture and governance arrangements during 2014-2018 was published in January 2023. The issues identified during this period led to the Council transitioning its governance arrangements from the Leader and Cabinet system to the current Committee system. The Public Interest Report states that "it is clear that the Council has done a great deal to move on from this period in its relatively short lifetime".

Q: What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
Policy trends, and any necessary changes in strategy, are managed in accordance with the Council's constitution and governance arrangements. Current policy challenges include the impact of the cancellation of the HS2 route from Birmingham to Manchester, the dissolution of Local Enterprise Partnerships, the development of Integrated Health and Social Care systems, and the Levelling up/ devolution agenda. Any influences of these emerging policies are presented through the decision-making processes of the Council.

Discussions around a potential Cheshire devolution agreement are at an early stage, but any clear proposals across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington would be decided through Council.

Q: What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?
It will maintain sufficient provision to ensure ensure that:
- Members and Committees have sufficient time and resources to consult residents and other stakeholders adequately and make informed, evidence-based decisions. The Council's recent survey of Members (summarised later in this submission) shows a large proportion (over a third) of Members currently feel they have insufficient capacity to undertake their duties properly.
- Council services are are scrutinised through the relevant service committee.subjected to thorough scrutiny and shortcomings addressed promptly and effectively.
- The scrutiny committee is limited to examining external partnerships of health, crime and disorder and flooding.Other local services (ones not provided by the Council, such as health, fire and police) are also properly scrutinised.
- Members have sufficient time to engage with residents, businesses, town/ parish councils and external partner organisations, and to tackle casework, rather than having little or no time spare outside of Committee meetings and preparation for those meetings.
- Members have sufficient time to assess and address the needs of the Borough's most vulnerable residents, such as those in deprived areas of Cheshire East and older people/ children.

- Councillor workloads are ~~remain~~ manageable enough to attract a diverse array of people (different age groups, social/ ~~and~~ ethnic groups, household types, occupations, etc), who can offer a broader range of skills/ ~~and~~ experience and ~~who will~~ be more representative of the local community.
- Rural wards cover a manageable area with communities that councillors can reach within a reasonable travel time and adequately serve.
- Rural ward Members representing large numbers of parishes have adequate time to meet and support their parish councils.

~~In reaching its decision about the appropriate council size, the Council has taken a long-term view, based upon what it understands of the likely national and local policy context, over the period of the next 15-20 years.~~

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?

Current population and general overview of the Borough[1]
Cheshire East is the third largest unitary authority (in population terms) in the North West, with a population of 398,800 at the time of the 2021 Census and 400,500[2] as of mid-2021. It covers an area of 1,166 square kilometres.

The whole of Cheshire East is parished. Following the Community Governance Review changes that came into effect in April 2023, there are 12 town councils, 90 parish councils and four parish meetings. A number of parishes group themselves together for administrative purposes. In total, there are ~~124~~ 120 parishes in the Borough.

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[1] Except where specified otherwise, the population data cited in this section are from 2021 Census tables, Office for National Statistics (ONS), NOMIS.
[2] Mid-year population estimates for 2021, ONS, December 2022.

The Borough has very good transport ~~road and rail~~ links: nearly all its towns are close to the M6 or M56 and all but one have a train station. These transport links, along with the Borough's ~~its~~ attractive rural areas and proximity to major cities such as Manchester, contribute to its overall economic strength, with major employers such as Bentley and AstraZeneca located in Cheshire East and many highly-qualified workers choosing to live here. ~~The M6 runs along a north-south path through the centre of the Borough, connecting the area to Staffordshire, Birmingham and the rest of the West Midlands conurbation, Lancashire and Cumbria. The M56 provides access to Greater Manchester, Merseyside and North Wales. Most of Cheshire East's towns are relatively close to one of these motorways and all but one of its towns (Middlewich) have a train station.~~

Cheshire East also contains attractions and institutions that are of national or international importance[3]:

- Tatton Park is one of England's 20 most popular "paid" visitor attractions, with around 700,000 to 800,000 visitors a year. ~~The Borough Council is responsible for the management and financing of the Park and part-funds its operating costs.~~
- The Jodrell Bank Observatory site, which is part of ~~including the Discovery Centre and the world-famous Lovell Radio Telescope, is one of the main sites occupied by~~ the world-renowned Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics. The site ~~Discovery Centre sometimes~~ receives up to 150,000 or more visitors a year.

~~Other historic sites also bring in large numbers of visitors - most notably~~ Lyme Park & Gardens also has large numbers of visitors (over 325,000 ~~visitors~~ in 2022), as do ~~and~~ Quarry Bank Mill & Gardens (nearly 250,000) ~~–~~ and ~~as does~~ the Peak District National Park area of the Borough.

The Borough consists of several towns of varying sizes, along with an extensive rural area covering many villages and smaller settlements. As the 2021 Census results show, Crewe (population 75,700)[4] and the town of Macclesfield (population 53,200) are the largest conurbations. ~~(The "Crewe" population figure quoted here includes the large number of residents living in the parishes of Leighton, Willaston and Wistaston, as well as the area covered by Crewe Town Council.)~~ The other main centres of population are the towns of Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow (each with populations between 12,000 and 30,000) and Bollington and Handforth (with populations of 7,000 to 8,000). (For a map showing the geographical areas these settlement figures relate to, see Appendix 1.[5])

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[3] Visitor number figures taken from the data files (covering 2017-22) released as part of the 2022 Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions, VisitBritain & VisitEngland, July 2023.

[4] This "Crewe" definition covers the whole of Crewe Town Council, but also the whole residential population of the parishes of Rope, Willaston, Wistaston and Woolstanwood, most of the residential population in the parish of Leighton, and parts of the parish of Shavington (the Gresty Brook parish ward and the part of the Chatsworth Park housing estate).

[5] In this submission, the geographical definitions used for each settlement are (except where stated otherwise) those set out in Appendix 6 of the Cheshire East 'LDF Background Report: Determining the Settlement Hierarchy', Cheshire East Council, November 2010. For all towns apart from Crewe, these Settlement Hierarchy definitions correspond very broadly to the areas covered by Cheshire East's town councils.

However, nearly two fifths of the population (38.9%, based on 2021 Census data) live in rural areas[6] and these rural areas include some sparsely populated and in some cases relatively isolated settlements, particularly in the areas to the west of Nantwich and to the east of Macclesfield. (For a map showing how these rural areas are defined, see Appendix 2.)

The Peak District National Park covers an extensive area of Cheshire East, including parts of three Borough wards (Gawsworth, Poynton East and Pott Shrigley, and Sutton). and several parishes. Some of the parishes in the Peak Park area are geographically large and include some very isolated hamlets, often at high elevations. Settlements at high altitudes, along with physical barriers, geographical distance and the level (or lack) of local infrastructure, amenities and service provision mean that some of these rural communities have quite different interests and ties than do other parts of the same Borough ward. (also a feature in some other parts of the Borough) present their own distinct local challenges that add to the demands on local Members, such as keeping roads open and transporting agricultural goods in bad weather. In some cases, factors such as physical barriers, geographical distance, local infrastructure and the level (or lack) of amenities and local service provision mean that some of these rural communities have quite different interests and ties to other parts of the same Borough ward. This range and variation in characteristics and needs, even within the same Borough ward, This can add to the workload faced by Members in this part of the Borough.

Compared to England as a whole, Cheshire East has a relatively old population, with 22.5% of residents aged 65 and above as of mid-2021 (against the England average of 18.5%).[7]

The population is somewhat older still in rural parts of the Borough (where 24.9% are aged 65 and above). This is likely to increase the demands on rural ward Members, given the presence of many elderly residents (whose age and health may restrict their ability to travel) in more remote areas where transport links are limited.

The Census data indicate that the Borough's population is less ethnically diverse than many other local authorities, with oOnly 5.6% of the Borough's population classifying themselves as non-white, compared to an England average of 19.0%. However, the non-white proportion is significantly higher in the towns of Handforth (13.3%), and Wilmslow (11.5%), than elsewhere and also well above the Borough average in Crewe (8.6%) and Alderley Edge (7.8%), reflecting the ethnic diversity of these urban areas of the Borough. ==[Extra wording at end of this paragraph added, to reflect feedback from a Policy Briefing Member about the general ethnic diversity of towns such as Crewe and the fact that their ethnic composition is not limited to a small number of specific communities (such as the East Timorese) that are highlighted later in this section.]==

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[6] The rural-urban classification used here is the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification produced by the Research & Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.
[7] Mid-year population estimates for 2021, ONS, December 2022.

Like many other parts of the UK, Cheshire East saw a significant inflow of migrants from Eastern Europe in the early 2000s. Many are still living in the Borough and are very heavily concentrated in Crewe. ~~As of 2021, the proportion of residents born in one of the 'EU8' or 'EU2' Eastern European countries exceeded 15% in three of the town's six Borough wards (compared to an England average of around 3%).~~

~~Evidence published in 2015 by the University of Oxford's COMPAS migration research centre identifies~~ Crewe is ~~as~~ one of several UK towns where there is a significant East Timorese community.[8] ~~(Many East Timorese have had the right to a Portuguese passport, allowing them to live and work in UK as Portuguese citizens.)~~ Local community leaders estimate that ~~there could be~~ as many as 2,000 East Timorese liv~~e~~ing in Crewe.[9] 2021 Census statistics (using the number of Portuguese passport-holding residents as a proxy~~perhaps an undercount~~) suggest a lower, but still very large number of East Timorese (around 900) living in ~~: they show~~ the town's six wards (and predominantly in Crewe South). ~~include around 900 residents with Portuguese passports.~~

~~There is also a small but significant Gypsy/ Irish Traveller community (345 people as of Census Day 2021), with two thirds of them living either in Crewe or in the towns of Congleton, Sandbach and Middlewich.~~
In some parts of the Borough, particularly areas of deprivation, evidence suggests that electoral registration rates are relatively low and therefore elector numbers significantly understate the volume of work that Members face. An indication of these geographical variations in electoral registration rates can be obtained by calculating, for each Borough ward, the ratio of the electorate to the adult (age 18 and above) resident population. For this purpose, the Borough Council has used 2021 Census population data and the closest matching date for which Electoral Register data were available (December 2020[10]). For the Borough as a whole, this ratio is 0.96, but for five wards, including four of Crewe's six wards (all of which contain neighbourhoods that rank among England's most deprived 20%), it is below 0.90[11] and is only 0.79 in Crewe Central and Crewe South.[12]

Recent and future population growth
Evidence from the 2011 and 2021 Censuses indicates that, between 2011 and 2021, Cheshire East's population increased by 7.7%, which was above the England average (6.6%). Whilst the population rose in the vast majority of the Borough's main 24 settlements (see the map in

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[8] 'Backing themselves: East Timorese labour migrants in Oxford', COMPAS, 14th April 2015: https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2015/backing-themselves-east-timorese-labour-migrants-in-oxford/
[9] Source: Public Health Team, Cheshire East Council, August 2023.
[10] Census Day 2021 was 21st March 2021.
[11] Sources: [1] Electoral Register data, Cheshire East Council. [2] 2021 Census tables, Office for National Statistics (ONS), NOMIS; [3] English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), September 2019.
[12] These ratios should be seen only as indicative of registration rates, given that (a) the population and electoral data relate to dates a few months apart, (b) Census Day 2021 coincided with a COVID-19 lockdown and hence affected some people's Census responses about their place of residence and (c) ONS made minor adjustments to some 2021 Census statistics prior to publication, in order to avoid disclosing personal information about individuals.

Appendix 1 for a list and definition of these settlements), this ~~rate~~ growth rate varied significantly across the Borough, largely reflecting the geographical distribution of new housing developments. Shavington (up 46.5%), Chelford (25.3%), Sandbach (22.0%), Holmes Chapel (19.0%), Alsager (13.7%), Audlem (11.9%) and Disley (11.3%) all saw population increases of more than 10%. In absolute terms, population growth during 2011-21 was greatest in Sandbach (3,900) and Crewe (3,000). (These figures are based on settlement boundary definitions developed by the Borough Council in 2010 – and shown in Appendix 1 – ~~,~~ so some ~~– such as the Sandbach figure –~~ would be much higher still if adjusted to include new housing developments that have expanded the Borough's main urban areas outwards.) ~~These high-growth settlements are generally ones where major housing developments have occurred between 2011 and 2021. Conversely, population levels fell slightly (in each case by less than 200) in Alderley Edge, Haslington and Poynton.~~ ==[Some revisions have been made to this paragraph in order to reflect feedback from a Policy Briefing Member about (a) the significance of recent housing/ population growth in the Crewe area in absolute terms, and (b) the need for clarity over the identities and geographical definitions of other (unnamed) towns and settlements that the commentary refers to.]==

~~As for future population change, the~~ The Office for National Statistics' latest (2018-based) subnational population projections (SNPPs)[13] provide the most recently published official statistics on projected future population numbers at local authority level ~~and may understandably be regarded by some as the most reliable source to refer to~~. However, these projections were released in early 2020 and the 2021 Census evidence now available indicates that the SNPPs have (so far) been significantly underestimating Cheshire East's population growth since 2018.

For Cheshire East, the 2018-based SNPPs projected that the population would increase from 380,800 (2018) to 387,000 by 2021 and would not exceed 400,000 until 2029~~after 2028 (its projection for 2029 is 400,900)~~. However, ONS' population estimate for mid-2021 (published in December 2022 and factoring in the 2021 Census evidence) puts the mid-2021 population at 400,500. In other words, it appears that, even by mid-2021, the 2018-based SNPPs were under-estimating the Borough's population by around 13,500 (about 3.4%).

Furthermore, the 2018-based SNPPs' projected population growth for 2021-29 equates to an annual average growth rate of 0.44%. It is reasonable to question whether the growth rate over this period will turn out to be that low, given that:

(a) Population growth in Cheshire East has historically been somewhat higher, averaging 0.78% a year between 2011 and 2021 and 0.52% a year between 2001 and 2011.[14]

(b) ~~The~~ Cheshire East's high volumes of housing completions, ~~(~~which began in the later 2010s, ~~and will have contributed to the 2011-21 population growth rate)~~ have continued up to 2023 and may persist beyond that. During the 10 years from 2011/12 to 2020/21 inclusive, net completions averaged 1,740 per annum ~~. However, in 2021/22 (a year which mostly falls after the mid-2021 date of ONS' latest mid-year~~

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[13] 'Subnational population projections for England: 2018-based', ONS, March 2020.
[14] ONS mid-year population estimates (December 2022 release).

~~population estimates)~~ and in 2021/22 they reached 2,779.[15] Furthermore, the Borough Council housing database actual housing completions figures and forecasts used for this ~~Electoral~~ Review's electorate forecasting work point to around 2,300 net completions between April 2022 and March 2023, with ~~and~~ 2,700 more forecast for the period April to December 2023 and an average of around 2,100 a year forecast for the calendar years 2024 to 2029. ~~For the six-year period from January 2024 to December 2029, the housing forecasts indicate an average of around 2,100 net completions a year.~~

~~Looking at the evidence available to date, t~~In contrast, the population forecasts produced in 2015 by Opinion Research Services (ORS) for the Local Plan Strategy, which are ~~would appear to provide the most accurate projection or forecast of actual population change up to 2021. The ORS forecast~~ based on the level of housing provision proposed (and later adopted) for the 2010-30 Local Plan Strategy, indicated ~~- was~~ that Cheshire East's population would reach 401,100 by mid-2021 (close to ONS' mid-2021 estimate of 400,500).

Hence the Borough Council believes that ORS' forecasts are currently ~~considered to be~~ the most reliable indicator of likely future population change, up to 2029. With this in mind, it should be noted that the ORS forecasts[16] predict that:
- the Borough's population will reach 404,300 in 2022 and 424,500 by 2029;
- whilst the total population will increase by 5.8% between 2021 and 2029, the number of residents aged 65 and above will grow by 20.5%.

The ORS forecasts for the Local Plan did not produce population forecasts below local authority level. However, the electorate forecasts produced for this ~~Electoral~~ Review are heavily informed by the Borough's forecasts of future housing development, which ~~and these latter forecasts~~ provide a guide as to the scale and geographical distribution of housing and population growth up to 2029. These housing forecasts indicate that the total number of residential properties across the Borough will increase by around 8% between July 2023 and December 2029, but with wide variations ~~. However, the expected housing growth over that period (which is closely correlated with the expected 2023-29 electorate growth) varies widely~~ between Borough wards, ranging from less than 0.5% in some wards to ~~more than 15% in eight wards, with this growth expected to be~~ around 50% in ~~two of those wards (~~Brereton Rural and Leighton~~)~~. ~~Clearly those~~ Members in Borough wards with the highest housing growth rates will face increased workloads, both in the short term (as they are required to deal with issues arising during the construction work on the new housing sites) and in the longer term (because of the larger electorates arising from a much-increased local housing stock).

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[15] The historic housing completions figures quoted here relate to 12-month periods running from April to March.
[16] Population and housing forecasts produced by Opinion Research Services (ORS) for the Cheshire East Housing Development Study 2015, ORS, June 2015.

Deprivation[17]
Despite its economic strengths, Cheshire East ~~Although Cheshire East has relatively fewer pockets of deprivation than many other local authorities, it does~~ contains some of England's most deprived neighbourhoods, most of them in Crewe, but with some in other (mainly urban) parts of the Borough (see the map in Appendix 3~~Map 1~~). Furthermore, some areas of Cheshire East rank among England's worst 1% for specific kinds of deprivation.
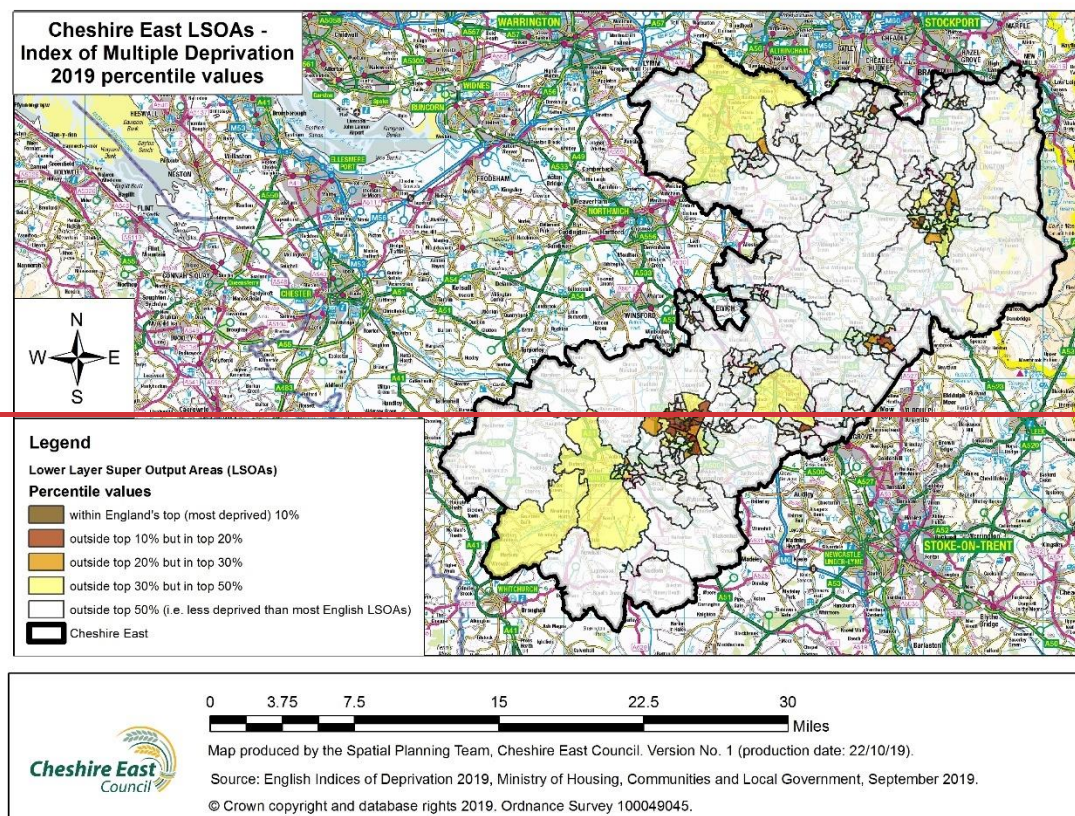
The latest (2019) English Indices of Deprivation shows that, of Cheshire East's 234 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), 18 (7.7%) ranked among the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England for overall deprivation.[18] These included 13 (more than quarter) of the 47 LSOAs in Crewe, as well as two LSOAs in Macclesfield and one each in Alsager, Congleton and Wilmslow. Of the 18 LSOAs that are among England's most deprived 20% for overall deprivation, four (three in Crewe and one in Macclesfield) rank among the worst (most deprived) 10% of LSOAs nationally and one of these (in Crewe) ranks among the worst 5% nationally.

There are five LSOAs in the Borough which are within England's most deprived 1% for one of Indices of Deprivation's sub-domains. Four of these – all in rural areas ~~and outside the Borough's main 24 settlements~~ - are in the worst 1% of the Barriers to Housing & Services domain's 'Geographical Barriers' sub-domain (which measures the proximity of key services, such as a GP surgery and a general store/ supermarket). The other one, ~~which is~~ in Crewe, is in the worst 1% for the Education, Skills & Training Deprivation domain's 'Children and Young People' sub-domain (which measures the educational performance of young people).

~~Map 1: Deprivation in Cheshire East~~

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[17] English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), September 2019. The figures cited here are based on the numbers and boundaries of Cheshire East Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in existence at the time the 2019 Indices were produced, rather than to the revised LSOA boundaries that came into being in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence.
[18] In this context, "overall deprivation" means the English Indices of Deprivation's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Cheshire East LSOAs -
Index of Multiple Deprivation
2019 percentile values

Legend

Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)

Percentile values

- within England's top (most deprived) 10%
- outside top 10% but in top 20%
- outside top 20% but in top 30%
- outside top 30% but in top 50%
- outside top 50% (i.e. less deprived than most English LSOAs)
- Cheshire East

| 0 | 3.75 | 7.5 | 15 | 22.5 | 30 |
Miles

Map produced by the Spatial Planning Team, Cheshire East Council. Version No. 1 (production date: 22/10/19).

Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, September 2019.

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Council Size

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

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

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

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority.

Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

A structure chart of the Council's committees can be seen in Chapter 2, Part 1 of the Constitution.~~-~~ From time to time, the ~~"~~standing committees ~~" (those appointed by Council, not including sub-committees, outside organisations or working groups)~~ appoint sub-committees to undertake specific work. One example of this is the appointment by the Corporate Policy Committee, of the Electoral Review Sub-Committee, which was specifically appointed to make recommendations to the Committee in respect of the Boundary Commission's review of the Council's electoral arrangements.

~~Taking into account only the standing committees, there are 167 committee places to fill, from a total of 82 Cheshire East Councillors; on average, approximately two committee places per Councillor. However, as shown by the table below, 31 Members have fewer than two standing committee places. This is possibly due to Councillor workload, capacity or employment issues.~~

~~Number of Members~~	~~Number of standing committee positions held~~
~~2~~	~~0~~
~~29~~	~~1~~
~~24~~	~~2~~
~~21~~	~~3~~
~~5~~	~~4~~
~~1~~	~~5~~

~~Much work, however, is undertaken by the Council's sub-committees and working groups, as well as outside organisations. As indicated by the data in Table 2 (in the Summary section of this submission), the Borough's Members currently hold an average of 2.6 Committee positions, in addition to attendance at Full Council.~~

~~Whilst it is accepted that the Commission's review relates only to Cheshire East Council's electoral arrangements, it is worthy of note that X Cheshire East Councillors are also members of the Borough's town and parish councils and play an important part in representing Cheshire East Council views in that capacity. The following link provides details of our 82 Councillors: Your Councillors | Cheshire East Council These can be filtered by name, political party, political group or ward.~~

Upon the introduction of the Committee system of governance, the Council retained many of its ~~these~~ standing committees. When the arrangements changed, the Council's Cabinet was replaced by six "service committees" of 13 Members and a Finance Sub-Committee of eight Members.~~seven "service committees" of 13 members each (except for the Finance Sub-Committee which has eight members but is, in theory, a service committee).~~

For the committees which were retained under the new governance arrangements, the approach taken was not simply to replicate the previous structure and membership numbers for convenience. ~~The Council has been in existence since 2009, and therefore has experience of the way in which this number of committees operate and perform, taking into account their memberships.~~

The committee structure and number of committees have been found to be robust and effective (taking into account committee workloads and the need for political balance). ~~the workloads of each committee, as well as the need to ensure that there is an appropriate political balance on each body.~~

~~However,~~ Tthe Council actively pursues change, where this is felt to be needed. ~~At the time of writing this submission, the p~~In particular, as noted earlier, the planning committee structure is currently ~~remains~~ under review, with a proposal to reduce the number of planning committees from three to two.~~. The fact that the review is taking place in itself, demonstrates the willingness and openness of the Council to make changes where these might be beneficial to the Council and its residents.~~

Turning to the six ~~seven~~ service committees and the Finance Sub-Committee, which replaced the Council's Cabinet under its previous governance arrangements, the Council recognises that it must also keep these under review. This was noted in the report to Full Council on 19 November 2020, in relation to the Design Principles (referred to above).

Indeed, the Council has already agreed one change to the original service committee structure and their responsibilities, by removing the Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee, and by empowering the Council's Highways and Transport Committee to take over its functions.

Officers continue to explore whether the number and size of the service committees should change and, in doing so, are guided by the Design Principles referred to. In the light of the Medium- Term Financial

Strategy, agreed by Council in February 2023, officers are exploring whether savings can be made by reducing the number of service and regulatory committees.

In short, the Council is (and can demonstrate that it is) prepared to make changes to the Committee structure and membership numbers of committees, where required to ensure that the Council is effective and efficient in making decisions. ~~Subject to any further changes which may emerge over the coming months, the Council is satisfied with the structure and membership numbers of committees, firmly believing that these are right for the Council now, and into the future, insofar as this can be seen.~~

The member survey evidence possibly suggests a shortage of capacity among Members. It is not clear if this relates to the size and number of Members on each committee or other factors.

- Although there are, on average, approximately two standing committee places per Councillor, 29 Members sit on only one (and two are on none at all).

- As shown in Table 1 below, the number of committee positions (including all types of committees) averages out at 2.6 per Member. However, Members' capacity to undertake committee work depends on their commitments to other meetings and the roles they fill within local partner organisations. As Table 1 also indicates, the number of non-committee positions averages out at around one working group/ board/ panel, one town/ parish councillor position (62 of the Council's 82 Members are town/ parish councillors) and one other outside organisation per Member. Hence there is an overall average (including committee positions) of 5.6 positions per Member, but with some Members holding many more positions than that (one, for example, is appointed to 10 outside organisations).

- As noted later in this submission, there are existing difficulties in filling some committee positions, notably the Licensing Act Sub-Committee.

As these issues appear to stem, at least in part, from a shortage of capacity, not from the model of governance, the Council believes that they are best addressed through ongoing reviews of and adjustments to the committee structure.

Table 1: Summary of Members' internal and external positions

	Number of positions	Number of Members involved	Average number of positions held per Member**	Highest number of positions held by any one Member
Standing committees	167	80	2.0	5
*of which: involved in making 'major' decision-making committees**	*86*	*64*	*1.0*	*4*
Other committees (including sub-committees)	50	38	0.6	2 to 4***
Working groups/ boards/ panels	78	40	1.0	5
Outside organisations (excluding town and parish councils)	98	50	1.2	10
Town and parish councils	70	62	0.9	3

*Figures for 'major' decision-making committees relate to membership of the six service committees and the Finance Sub-Committee (which comprise some but not all of the standing committees). Apart from this, all the categories listed in Table 1 are mutually exclusive.
**The averages shown in the fourth column are averaged across all Members, including those not involved in the specified type of meeting/ organisation: that is, they are calculated by dividing each of the figures in the second column by 82.
***The figure for the highest number of "other" (non-standing) committee positions depends on the allocation of positions on the General Licensing Sub-Committee and Licensing Act Sub-Committee (whose membership is drawn from the 15-Member Licensing Committee), as one Licensing Committee Member also belongs to two of the "other" committees.

It can also be seen from the Council's decision-making structure that the Council has large committee memberships and, therefore, high levels of engagement in the decision-making process by the Council's members. The Council believes that this is a feature of Committee system decision-making, in comparison with lower levels of engagement of "backbench" members in the decision-making processes of Leader and Cabinet forms of governance.

Portfolios	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *How many portfolios will there be?* ➢ *What will the role of a portfolio holder be?* ➢ *Will this be a full-time position?* ➢ *Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?*
	Analysis	Not applicable to the Council in the strict sense of a portfolio holder under a Leader and Cabinet style of decision-making governance. However, the chairs and vice chairs of the Council's service committees, as well as the lead opposition members, have key roles as a consequence of these positions. The chairs of the service committees are all members of the Council's Corporate Policy Committee, which deals with the overarching policy matters, and has power to determine matters which cross over the responsibilities of one or more of the service committees.
Delegated Responsibilities	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?* ➢ *How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?*
	Analysis	Chapter 2, Part 2 of the Council's Constitution sets out the decision-making arrangements of the Council: cheshire-east-council-constitution-chapter-2-july-2023-v2.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk). This Chapter includes the delegations to committees and to officers of the Council and committees' terms of reference.. The information providedAs noted earlier in this submission, illustrates that the Council keeps its decision-=making arrangements under review. Indeed, tThe Corporate Policy Committee appointed a Constitution Working Group (CWG) of Councillors to undertake this role, and it meets regularly throughout the year. to do this. Since the introduction of the Committee system of governance, the CWG Constitution Working Group has received reports on X revisions to the Constitution, outside bodies and the committee structure. Whilst, upon review by the CWGConstitution Working Group, it has been decided that no changes should be made to the Council's decision-making arrangements in certain instances, the following changes have been made: X Agenda for Council on Wednesday, 19th July, 2023, 11.00 am | Cheshire East Council Agenda for Council on Wednesday, 27th April, 2022, 11.00 am | Cheshire East Council Agenda for Corporate Policy Committee on Thursday, 15th June, 2023, 10.30 am | Cheshire East Council The Constitution Working Group The CWG has a worklist of items for consideration in the future, which includes the following X reviewing the committee structure, schemes of delegation, terms of reference of committees and timing of meetings. The Council's Monitoring Officer is the "keeper of the Constitution" and

he considers that the following further areas of work should be brought to the Constitution Working Group for consideration X.

This consistent and ongoing process demonstrates that the Council is constantly examining whether or not its decision-making arrangements, including delegation of powers to committees and officers, are fit for purpose. The recent transfer of the Public Rights of Way Committee's responsibilities to the Highways and Transport Committee, and the ongoing consideration of the planning committee structure, is evidence of this process working effectively.

The recent example of the removal of the Public Rights of Way Committee, and the expansion of the responsibilities of the Highways and Transport Committee, and the ongoing consideration of the planning committee structure, is evidence of the challenge which the Council imposes on its governance arrangements.

The information provided earlier in this submission shows that 80 of the Council's members are members of committees. The Council believes that all decisions of committees could be regarded as "major". However, looking solely at "Major" decisions may be best defined as those undertaken by the Council's service committees, which make those decisions previously made by the Council's Cabinet. As shown in Table 1 above, there are 86 Councillor places on these committees., although some Councillors are members of more than one service committee.

Considering other Committees, However, the Audit and Governance Committee also has great responsibilities in fulfilling its terms of reference, namely: audit, assurance and reporting; review of governance, risk and control arrangements; and promotion of high standards of ethical behaviour. Audit, assurance and reporting
- Review of governance, risk and control arrangements
- Promotion of high standards of ethical behaviour
-

The same is true of the planning committees, which are responsible for determining large scale major development applications, major mineral or waste development applications, applications involving a significant departure from policy, and other matters with strategic or significant policy implications., such as those relating to HS2.

| | | The terms of reference of the above committees can be seen in full here: cheshire-east-council-constitution-chapter-2-july-2023-v2.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

Of course, all 82 Cheshire East Councillors are involved in the most major Council decisions, as part of their role as members of Full Council. Full Council is also involved in deciding decides those matters of key importance: those which are stipulated by legislation or otherwise, such as the Budget and Policy Framework, the appointment of the Head of Paid Service and the other statutory officer appointments, and the Local Plan. So, in this sense, all Councillors make "major" decisions.

Turning to the powers of officers, reference is made earlier in this submission to the relevant delegations. Taking all of the above issues and the Committee system Design Principles into consideration, and in the light of the regular examination of the Council's decision-making arrangements, the Council firmly believes that the responsibilities delegated to committees, and the number of members involved in making major decisions and the powers delegated to officers should not change, except where the continuing process of review of the committee structure and responsibilities determines that this should be the case.

Again, for the same reasons, and unless Council determines that, there should be no change in the powers delegated to officers. |
|---|---|---|

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	➤ *How will decision makers be held to account?* ➤ *How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?* ➤ *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?* ➤ *How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?* ➤ *Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.* ➤ *Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.*
Analysis	As the Council operates a Committee system of governance, the Council's service committees are expected to undertake self-scrutiny through performance monitoring etc. , as was the case prior to the enactment of the Local Government Act 2000. THowever, the Council recognises that the work of its service committees needs to develop, in order fully embrace their internal scrutiny role. Indeed, further training is being planned for the Council's service committee members in this role, which will take place during winter 2023. The Committees are able to establish Task and Finish Groups/ Working Groups as and when required. These can be established for internal scrutiny purposes: for example, to review the effectiveness of policy etc. A maximum of three to four per committee at any one time is recommended. Usually they consist of around three to eight Members. Since the inception of the Council up until the introduction of the Committee system, the Council had three four bespoke scrutiny committees, with a dedicated Scrutiny Team of officers who were specialists in scrutiny work. Due to the change in function of the

	~~Council's remaining Scrutiny Committee, which is now restricted to external health, crime and flooding scrutiny, t~~There is now no longer dedicated officer scrutiny support. The absence of resource for internal scrutiny will place new and challenging demands upon the knowledge, skills and time of service committee Members. The Council now has one externally focussed Scrutiny Committee (13 Members), which is responsible for the Council's statutory scrutiny functions including health, crime and disorder and flooding. In response to the establishment of Integrated Care Systems (ICS), the nine Merseyside and Cheshire local authorities agreed several actions to ensure that joint health scrutiny arrangements in Cheshire and Merseyside are fit to meet the challenge of the new statutory arrangements. A standing joint health scrutiny committee has been established to take on the Authorities' collective statutory responsibility to oversee and scrutinise the operation of the ICS at Cheshire and Merseyside level. The host Authority for this committee is Knowsley BC Browse meetings - Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System Joint Health Scrutiny Committee - Knowsley Council The overarching role of the Joint Committee is to scrutinise the work of the ICS in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities and functions at Cheshire and Merseyside level in order to support their effective exercise and, where appropriate, to make reports or recommendations to the ICS. It also considers any proposals for changes in health services that not only impact all nine local authority areas but are also considered to be a substantial change by each of the nine.

Statutory Function		This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?
Planning	*Key lines of explanation*	➤ *What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?* ➤ *Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?* ➤ *Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?* ➤ *Will executive members serve on the planning committees?* ➤ *What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?*
	Analysis	~~The Council currently has three planning committees.~~ The Strategic Planning Board (SPB), which meets around nine times a year, considers ~~the~~ larger, more strategic planning applications. The other two planning committees are area planning committees – North and South (each holds 10-12 meetings a year) – which consider the remaining applications that are not covered by the scheme of delegation or are 'called in' by a Member for the Committee to determine. There are 12 Members on each of the three ~~C~~committees, although (as noted earlier in this submission) there has been a Member vacancy on one of these (the Southern Planning Committee) since May 2023. As part of the Council's drive to reduce the costs of democracy and develop more efficient decision-making, the Corporate Policy Committee has recently approved a proposal (subject to a final decision by Full Council in December 2023) to reduce the number of planning committees from three to two. Cheshire East is consistently among the top 10 busiest local authorities in England for planning applications (~~it was~~ ranked

seventh 7th for in the period 2020-22) and by far the busiest in the North West region.[19] In terms of applications relative to population, Cheshire East (With 17.8 applications per 1,000 population in 2020-22, Cheshire East) is similar to comparable authorities such as Dorset or, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Buckinghamshire, Shropshire and West Northamptonshire.[20]

The proportion 2% of applications are determined by the committees. as a percentage of overall decision making is XXX%. This proportion has remained fairly consistent over the past four years?. Committee agendas vary in size, but not significantly. On average there are it is usual for between three and sixX and X applications for consideration to be on each area planning committee agenda and two to three X to X on SPB. As the Local Plan has been progressed and larger schemes are being developed out, the number of applications considered by SPB has fallen in recent years.

Average time duration for each of the three committees' meetings is four hours (excluding Members' reading/ preparation time and the occasional site visit). However, meetings can last far longer and this their duration is a particular issue for Cheshire East: for example, during the 12 months to mid July 2023, there were five planning committee meetings in excess of 5five hours, with one SPB meeting lasting 6six hours 40 minutes.

As parts of the Borough fall within the Peak District National Park (see the Local Authority Profile section for further details), Members' workloads are higher because of the need to understand and adhere to two separate planning regimes.

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[19] Planning/ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities data.
[20] Rates based on data from 'Population and household estimates for England and Wales: Census 2021' (the first release of results from the 2021 Census of Population for England and Wales), Office for National Statistics (ONS), 28th June 2022).

Licensing	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year? ➢ And what will be the time commitment for members? ➢ Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc? ➢ Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?
	Analysis	The statutory requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 requires that the Council have a Licensing Committee with 10 to ~~comprised of at least 10 and no more than~~ 15 Members. As required by the Constitution, the Council has a Licensing Committee with ~~comprising~~ 15 Members. ~~The Committee~~ This is scheduled to meet around five times a ~~occasions each~~ year, but in practice tends to meet only twice a year. The majority of business is conducted at the sub-committee level. There are two standing sub-committees: 1. The General Licensing Sub-Committee (GLSC), which has five Members. It is scheduled to meet monthly, but due to a lack of business it has met only once in the last 18 months. 2. The Licensing Act Sub-Committee (LASC), which has three Members. ~~The Sub-Committee~~ It meets on an ad hoc basis and the frequency of meetings varies a lot. During the current year, it has so far met only twice ~~two occasions. In contrast,~~ but sometimes (like last year) there can be 15-20 or more meetings a year.~~last year it met approximately 15 times and has on occasion met over 20 times in a year.~~ Most Licensing Committee meetings last less than an hour. The Sub-Committee meetings tend to last half a day.

		Given the ad hoc nature of LASC meetings and the limited statutory timescale that they can be called within, it can be difficult to populate them with Members. Therefore officers would not advocate reducing the number of Members on the full Committee.
Other Regulatory Bodies	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What will they be, and how many members will they require?* ➢ *Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.*
	Analysis	Not applicable: no other such bodies.
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	➢ *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?* ➢ *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?* ➢ *What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?*
	Analysis	There are at present 54 outside bodies (excluding school governing bodies and local resident associations) which require or expect the Council to appoint representatives. The total number of appointments made to such bodies (excluding school governing bodies) is 98: ~~that is,~~ an average of 1.2 per Member (see Table 1 above). ~~Although the frequency of meetings for each outside body varies greatly, t~~The ~~estimated~~ total number of outside body meetings Members are required to attend per year is around 300~~, adding a considerable number of meetings to the individual Councillor's workload~~: Appointments to Outside Organisations - report v3 final.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk) ➢ Some councillors also are School Governors in their

	Borough wards.
	• ~~62 Councillors are also Town and Parish Councillors~~
	• Members are also appointed to the governing bodies of wholly-owned Council companies, which meet frequently: Report Template v5.1 (cheshireeast.gov.uk)
	• The Police & Crime Panel requires the councillor appointed to attend many meetings and liaise with other public bodies in the local area: report.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)
	• Councillors are also on the Cheshire Fire & Rescue Authority, which meets frequently: report.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)
	• ~~T~~Councillors sit on the Fostering and Adoption Panels, which also meet frequently: Report.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)
	~~The additional time commitment that each of these represents includes not only preparation, research and participation time, but also considerable travel time.~~ Based on the responses to the Members survey undertaken by Cheshire East in September-October 2023 (to inform this Review), it is estimated that, over a typical three-month period, Members spend an average of 2.4 hours/ week on dealing with work for outside bodies that the Council has appointed them to.
	As set out in detail earlier in this submission, Cheshire East also shares some services, such as ICT and payroll, with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

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
	Key lines of explanation	➤ *In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?* ➤ *Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?* ➤ *How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?* ➤ *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?* ➤ *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?* ➤ *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?*
Community Leadership	Analysis	62 Members (76%) are "twin-hatted", being town/ parish councillors as well as Borough councillors. This impacts on the affected Members' workloads and how much capacity they have to support residents.Areas of the Borough are covered by local Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, which are chaired by councillors. A regular "members bulletin" digital newsletter is issued to Members from the communications and media team, to support Members with their community engagement. The Council have a Youth Council, supported by a participation officer, which Members can attend to discuss subjects with children and young people. The participation officer can also enable engagement with cared-for children, local schools and other community groups. 62 Members (76%) are also members of the town and parish councils within Cheshire East. This impacts on the affected Members' workloads and how much capacity they have to support residents. Whilst their membership

		of these bodies is legally separate from their role on and membership of Cheshire East Council, many Members see the role as a dual one: not only to discharge town and parish council business, but also acting as a conduit through which the voice of town and parish councils can be heard, at Borough Council level, and via which important Cheshire East Council issues can be raised in town and parish council meetings. Therefore, town and parish council membership cannot be divorced from the issue of Cheshire East Members' workloads. Town and parish councils are supported by the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (CHALC). CHALC are commissioned by the Council to facilitate engagement through the Council's Communities Team. A Town and Parish Councils Network has been established to support communication and engagement between Cheshire East Council and local councils. Many councillors are involved in local community and voluntary sector organisations. The Leader of the Council chairs the Cheshire East Leaders Board, which is group of Chief Executives from a range of key organisations across Cheshire East including the NHS, Police, Fire, housing providers, colleges and local businesses.
Casework	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *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?* ➢ *What support do members receive?* ➢ *How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?* ➢ *In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?*
	Analysis	Since the inception of the Council, Members have largely taken responsibility for their own casework and for the means by which they deal with it. However, some support is provided to Members in dealing with resident queries: • The Members' Enquiries Service is a service administered by the Council's Democratic Service, which enables Members to raise "ward-based, service-related" enquiries via a central email address. Officers then provide a unique reference number for each enquiry and send them to the relevant Council service for response. Reminders are issued if responses are overdue. This is clearly a key facility for Members in dealing with casework.

		• The Members' Secretary is an officer based in Democratic Services whose work is largely based upon support for Members. This facility is used by Members to deal with a range of queries, including casework which doesn't fall within the scope of the Members' Enquiries Service. • The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, together with the chairs and vice chairs of the service committees also have personal assistant support. But, whilst these Members have access to the Members' Enquiries Service and Members' Secretary, there will undoubtedly be some casework which finds its way to them via their personal assistant. The Council encourages residents to take up queries and complaints with officers, as opposed to directly with Members, when the opportunity presents itself. But residents and Members see their direct relationship, lines of communication and accessibility within the community to be of key importance in the democratic process. Hence it is not anticipated that current patterns of resident/ Member engagement will significantly change. Based on the responses to the Members survey undertaken by Cheshire East in September-October 2023 (to inform this Review), it is estimated that, over a typical three-month period, Members spend an average of 7.3 hours/ week on casework/ ward issues, but nearly half (46%) said they spent an average of more than eight hours a week on this type of work.

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

The Council has no issues to raise here.

Summary
In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.
Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

Table 1 One useful guide to appropriate council size is the average (Borough-wide) electors-per-councillor ratio and how this compares to local authorities that are similar to Cheshire East in terms of population and character, as these are councils that are likely to have a broadly similar workload to Cheshire East. The data table in Appendix 5 shows how Cheshire East's electors-per-councillor ratio (3,800 as of December 2022) compares to those for similar councils (unitary authorities with a substantial rural population and a total population that is between 50% and 150% of Cheshire East's total, or which are identified by CIPFA as 'nearest neighbours' of Cheshire East). These are the authorities which are likely to have a broadly similar workload to Cheshire East. For 10 For eleven of the other 16 of the other 17 authorities in this table, the LGBCE has published Electoral Review final recommendations within the last six years (January 2018 onwards); for three five others, a Review is underway and has already reached a stage where the LGBCE has published its provisional view offered an initial view or draft recommendation on the appropriate council size. In other words, Hence for 14 of these other 16 for 15 of these 17 authorities (all except the East Riding of Yorkshire and North Somerset), the council size and electors-per-councillor ratios take account of recent LGBCE judgements.

As Appendix 5 Table 1 indicates, the Borough's ratio is broadly in line with those for most of these 'similar' authorities and particularly with those seven councils (indicated by the shaded rows in Appendix 5) that have a population within 20% of Cheshire East's., namely Cheshire West and Chester, Dorset, the East Riding of Yorkshire, North Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Shropshire and West Northamptonshire. These seven councils' ratios range from 3,200 to 4,000, or from 3,400 to 4,000 if the LGBCE's proposals from ongoing reviews are taken as the most up-to-date guide to these authorities' appropriate council size. However, it is notable that for the nine authorities (shown in bold in Appendix 5) that are identified by CIPFA as a 'nearest neighbours' of Cheshire East, the ratios cover a much wider range, from 3,200 (Solihull) to 5,000 (Cornwall). Of the 17 authorities listed in Appendix 5, Cornwall is one of two (along with Buckinghamshire) for which the ratio exceeds 4,000.

Table 1: Council sizes and ratios for Cheshire East and similar local authorities
(Shaded rows indicate councils with a population that was within 20% of the Cheshire East as of 2021. Bold font indicates those authorities identified by CIPFA modelling (https://www.cipfa.org/services/cipfastats/nearest-neighbour-model) as most comparable to Cheshire East.)

Name	Population (from 2021 Census)	Local government electors as of Dec 2022	Current number of councillors	Ratio of electors to councillors	New number of councillors proposed or recommended by LGBCE, if applicable (see Note [3] below)	New ratio, if applicable (see Note [3] below)
Buckinghamshire	553,100	412,800	147	2,800	97	4,300
Central Bedfordshire	294,200	219,900	63	3,500	N/A	N/A
Cheshire East	398,800	310,600	82	3,800	N/A	N/A
Cheshire West and Chester	357,200	262,600	70	3,800	N/A	N/A
Cornwall	570,300	431,200	87	5,000	N/A	N/A
Dorset	379,600	297,500	82	3,600	N/A	N/A
Durham	522,100	390,300	126	3,100	98	4,000

~~East Riding of Yorkshire~~	~~342,200~~	~~270,100~~	~~67~~	~~4,000~~	~~N/A~~	~~N/A~~
~~North Northamptonshire~~	~~359,500~~	~~264,500~~	~~78~~	~~3,400~~	~~68~~	~~3,900~~
~~North Somerset~~	~~216,700~~	~~165,500~~	~~50~~	~~3,300~~	~~N/A~~	~~N/A~~
~~Northumberland~~	~~320,600~~	~~251,600~~	~~67~~	~~3,800~~	~~69~~	~~3,600~~
~~Shropshire~~	~~323,600~~	~~250,100~~	~~74~~	~~3,400~~	~~74~~	~~3,400~~
~~Solihull~~	~~216,200~~	~~160,800~~	~~51~~	~~3,200~~	~~51~~	~~3,200~~
~~South Gloucestershire~~	~~290,400~~	~~212,000~~	~~61~~	~~3,500~~	~~N/A~~	~~N/A~~
~~Stockport~~	~~294,800~~	~~222,800~~	~~63~~	~~3,500~~	~~N/A~~	~~N/A~~
~~West Northamptonshire~~	~~425,700~~	~~298,500~~	~~93~~	~~3,200~~	~~76~~	~~3,900~~
~~Wiltshire~~	~~510,400~~	~~382,700~~	~~98~~	~~3,900~~	~~N/A~~	~~N/A~~

~~**Sources:**~~
~~[1] List of comparable local authorities identified by CIPFA, LGBCE email to Cheshire East Council, 21st July 2023.~~
~~[2] 'Population and household estimates for England and Wales: Census 2021' (the first release of results from the 2021 Census of Population for England and Wales), Office for National Statistics (ONS), 28th June 2022.~~
~~[3] December 2022 local government elector data: 'Electoral statistics, UK, December 2022' data file from the Office for National Statistics' 'Electoral statistics for the UK' release, 20th April 2023: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/elections/electoralregistration/datasets/electoralstatisticsforuk~~
~~[4] Councillor numbers: LGBCE electoral data spreadsheet file, downloaded on 14th April 2023 from https://www.lgbce.org.uk/electoral-data~~
~~**Notes:**~~
~~[1] These authorities are ones that were either identified by CIPFA as being comparable to Cheshire East, or which met all the following criteria: English unitary authority; a substantial rural area/ rural population; population (as of 2021) at least half that of Cheshire East, but no more than 50% greater than Cheshire East.~~
~~[2] Ratios based on local government electorate as of December 2022.~~
~~[3] Entries in the final two columns applicable only where a review is currently underway or changes from a concluded review have yet to take effect. These two columns take account of LGBCE review proposals and decisions published up to the end of August 2023.~~

If, as the electorate forecasts for this Review indicate, the Borough's electorate grows to 337,300 by 2029, that would mean a ratio of 4,100 in 2029 if the current number of seats is left unchanged. Hence, if its size remains at 82 seats and allowing for electorate growth in similar authorities up to 2029, Cheshire East's ratio is likely to remain within the range of ratios for those similar authorities, but is likely to err increasingly towards the high end of that range, exceeded perhaps only by two of the other authorities listed in Appendix 5 (Cornwall and Buckinghamshire).~~on the high side.~~

~~Table 2~~ Another indication as to the appropriate council size is data on Members' overall workloads. The bulk of the evidence on this comes from the Council's recent survey of Members, which was undertaken to provide important data that would inform the Council's response to the Electoral Review. This survey was open from 8th September until 4th October 2023 and 57% (47) of Cheshire East's 82 Members responded.

Key survey findings that highlight workload levels are as follows[21]:

- 38% of the respondents (18 out of 47) had been a Member for a year or less, but 36% (17) had served for six years or more.
- The respondents had, on average, 2.7 committee positions (close to the average of 2.6 for all 82 Members). 63% (29 out of 47) had been appointed by the Council to one or more outside bodies.
- It was estimated from the survey responses that, over a typical three-month period, Members spend an average of 26.6 hours a week on council business. (The commentary further below, on the data table in Appendix 6, breaks down the 26.6 hours/ week into its component parts.)
- As an indication of the ranges reported in workload levels (rather than just averages), it is notable that:
    - Some Members (though only a small minority) said it took six to eight hours to travel from home to some of their committees' locations and some (three) reported spending an average of more than eight hours preparing for certain committees' meetings.
    - Nearly half (46%, or 21 respondents out of 46) spent an average of more than eight hours a week dealing with casework/ ward issues.
    - Nearly a quarter (24%, or 11 out of 45) spent an average of more than twenty hours a week dealing with their areas of additional responsibility (such as committee chair/ vice-chair, Group Leader or town/ parish councillor).
- 62% (29 out of 47) were town/ parish councillors, which was lower than the proportion for Cheshire East Members as a whole (76%).
- 64% (30 out of 47) said they spent more time on council business than they had expected when they were first elected.
- 70% of Members (33 out of 47) reported that their workload levels had risen by more than a fifth since they were first elected, of whom ten (21% of all the respondents) reported an increase of more than 60%.
- 33% (15 out of 46) felt "very over occupied".
- 60% (27 out of 45) said workload demands were high at all days and times of the week, rather than being limited to certain parts of the week.
- 70% (32 out of 46) said workload demands had a "significant" or "very significant" impact on their work-life balance and wellbeing.
- 36% (17 out of 47) had insufficient time and capacity to carry out their duties properly.
- In response to an invitation for general comments, a number of respondents expressed a view that Member workloads make it either impossible or very difficult for full-time workers to serve as Members. Some said they could undertake the role only because they were not in a paid job, while some others reported having to switch to part-time employment/ reduced hours and hence reduced pay, to accommodate council business.

These survey results provide compelling evidence both that the Borough Council and its Members are frequently unable to serve and support residents, business and partner organisations effectively, and that workload trends – also bearing in mind the expected growth in housing, population and the number of electors up to 2029 - will exacerbate this situation.

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[21] As indicated by the summary that follows, the sample sizes were below 47 in some cases, due to some questions not being answered by or not being applicable to some Members.

The estimate of average hours worked per week on council business (26.6), which itself excludes some Members' work[22], also demonstrates how a Member's work (allowing for substantial variations from this high average) often equates to a full-time role in itself. This means serving as a Borough ward councillor is not a practical option for many people in full-time paid employment.

The full results from this survey can be found in Appendix 7.

However, in determining the optimal council size, it is important to consider potential alternative sizes and the workload implications these would have. The data table in Appendix 6 therefore presents key measures of Cheshire East councillors' workloads, in terms of Committee work and current and future numbers of electors, for various council sizes (from 77 up to 87 seats). This includes workload statistics derived from the Members survey, as well as others derived from the Council's administrative records.

Table 2: Committee workload per councillor, by council size

Number of councillors	Average number of Committee positions per councillor	Average number of Committee meetings per councillor per year	Average number of hours spent in Committee meetings per councillor per year	Electors per councillor, July 2023	Electors per councillor, December 2029
77	3.8	23.5	68.4	4,087	4,381
78	3.8	23.2	67.5	4,034	4,325
79	3.7	22.9	66.6	3,983	4,270
80	3.7	22.6	65.8	3,934	4,217
81	3.6	22.3	65.0	3,885	4,165
82	3.6	22.0	64.2	3,838	4,114
83	3.5	21.8	63.4	3,791	4,064
84	3.5	21.5	62.7	3,746	4,016
85	3.4	21.3	61.9	3,702	3,969
86	3.4	21.0	61.2	3,659	3,923
87	3.4	20.8	60.5	3,617	3,877

[22] In response to the final question in the survey, which invited general comments, some Members noted that the questionnaire did not ask about time spent in parish council meetings, or in Member training, or on site visits, dealing with emails and phone calls, social media monitoring work (to help keep track of local residents' key issues) or follow-up work. It is clear, therefore, that at least some respondents did not include these activities in the estimates the time they spent on council business (though others may have allowed for these in their responses). This is an indication that the survey statistics may, if anything, understate Members' workload levels.

Sources:
[1] Committee structure and meetings web pages (http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1)
[2] Democratic Services Team, Cheshire East Council, July-August 2023.
[3] Electorate forecasts produced by Cheshire East Council for the current electoral review.
Notes:
[1] Figures based on committee meetings for the 12-month period August 2022 to July 2023. Figures include only those committees that met at least once during that time.
[2] Figures include only the number of Members sitting on a committee at a given time, not the size of the pool (if larger) from which the sitting Members are selected.
[3] Figures include any non-voting committee Members.

As Appendix 6 Table 2 shows:

- The Borough's Members currently hold an average of 2.6 positions, in addition to attending Full Council.3.6 Committee positions, or an average of 2.6 positions (211 positions, spread across 82 Members) if Full Council meetings are excluded. Members hold, on average, a total of 5.6 positions (2.6 on committees and 3 elsewhere) when working groups/ boards/ panels and outside organisations (including town and parish councils) are factored in. They attend an average of 22 Committee meetings a year (including Full Council meetings)It is estimated that, over a typical three-month period, they spend an average of 26.6 hours/ week on council business, of which 3.8 hours are on preparing for, travelling to/ from and attending committee meetings, 7.3 hours on casework/ ward issues, 13.1 on additional responsibilities (including any town/ parish councillor positions) and 2.4 on work for outside bodies that the Council has appointed them to. and the meetings alone involve an average of 64.2 hours (around 9 days' work) per Member. However, i

- in Committee meetings would increase to an average of 68.4 hours a year

- Currently (as of July 2023), the average number of electors per councillor is 3,800 and this is forecast to increase to 4,100 by 2029 as a result of the expected growth in the number of electors.

The evidence from the Council's recent (September 2023) survey of Members indicates that, with the current total of 82 Members, workload levels are XXXX and hence that the effect of:
- a reduction in the number of seats would be XXXX;
- an increase in the number of seats would be XXXX

Taken together, the evidence from Appendices 5 to 7 provides an indication as to what would be an appropriate increase in the number of councillors. Looking at the evidence from Appendix 5:

- The seven authorities that are closest in size to Cheshire East all have electors-per-councillor ratios in the 3,400 to 4,000 range (allowing for the impact of LGBCE proposals from ongoing reviews) and 3,400 to 3,900 if the East Riding of Yorkshire (not reviewed since 2001) is excluded.

- The nine authorities identified by CIPFA as Cheshire East's nearest neighbours have ratios covering a much wider range - 3,200 to 5,000 - though it should be noted that the two with ratios in excess of 4,000 (Cornwall and Buckinghamshire) both have populations substantially (over a third) greater than Cheshire East's. If the Cornwall figure were adopted, the number of Councillors would be reduced significantly.

It is appreciated that these other authorities' populations and electorates will also grow in number over time and that the LGBCE's review decisions allow for some of those authorities' electors-per-councillor ratios increasing, within a few years, beyond the ranges quoted above. Allowing for this growth over the longer term and factoring in the evidence from the Members survey, a ratio of around 4,100 would allow Cheshire East Members to carry out their duties properly whilst preserving their wellbeing and a reasonable work-life balance. It is a suggested a ration as high as 5000:1 would not.

As noted above, the electorate forecasts indicate a ratio of 4,100 by 2029 if the current size (82 Members) is retained. It is considered that this would be sustainable and further reviews and adjustments to the committee structure could enable more efficient decision-making that reduces Members' workloads. However, a reduction from the current council size of 82 is likely to result in unsustainable pressures on Members that structural changes to the Committee system could not resolve.
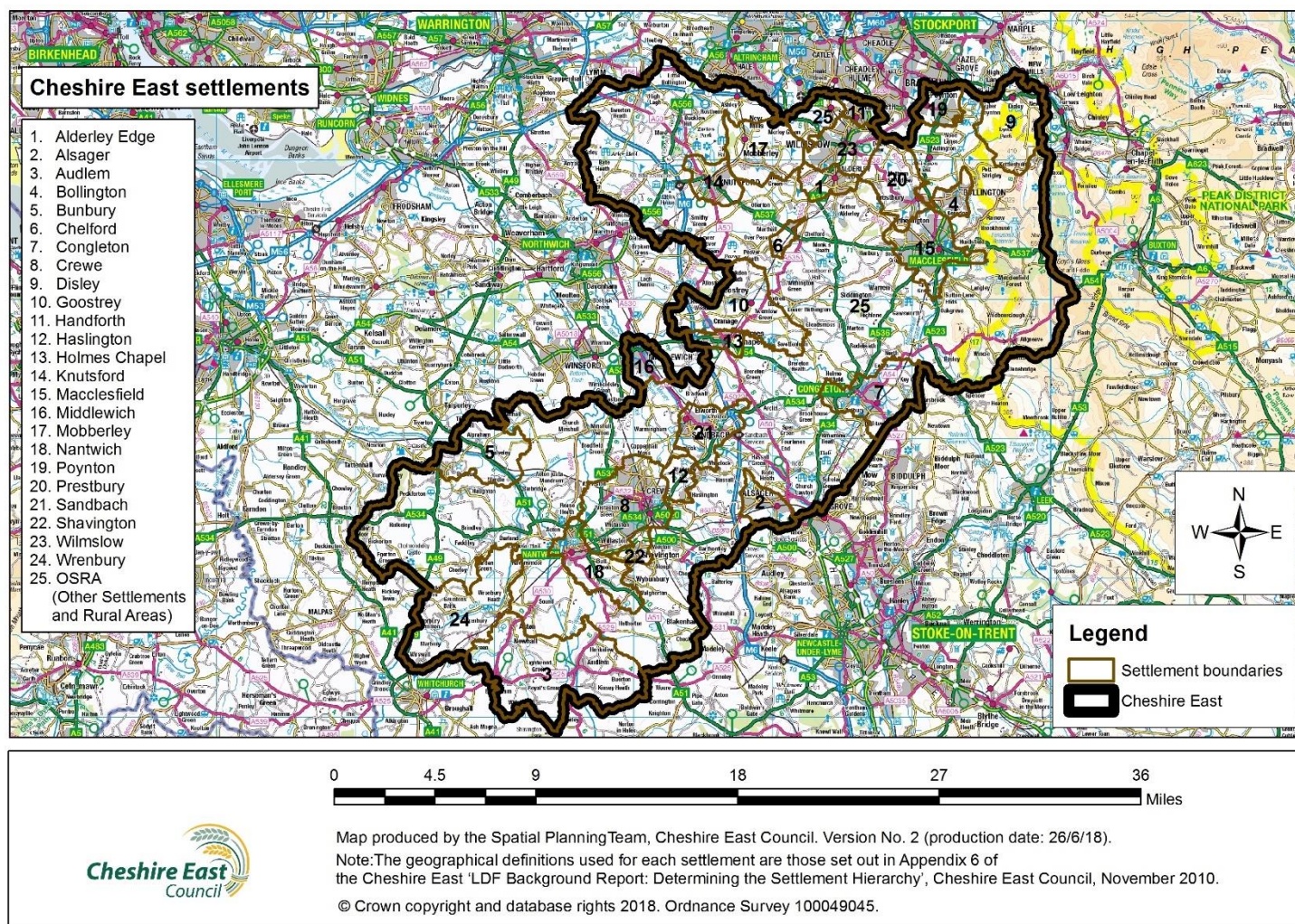
Taken together, the collective evidence in this submission - the Table 1 comparison with similar authorities, the Table 2 data on Committee workloads, the Member survey results and the other evidence presented under earlier sections of this form – therefore suggests that the appropriate council size for Cheshire East would be XX.Therefore the current size of 82 [the **provisionally-proposed** council size figure] continues to reflect sufficient capacity in terms of members to electorate ratio and still provides sufficient room for growth.

In reaching its decision about the appropriate council size, the Council has taken a long-term view, based upon what it understands of the likely national and local policy context, over the period of the next 15-20 years, particularly in the context of an anticipated increased population and also the local impact of any sub regional devolution agreements.

-

In summary, having 82 [the **provisionally-proposed** council size figure]XX councillors would help to avoid the risks set out above and should ensure a diverse range of Members with complementary skills and backgrounds and who have sufficient time and resources to perform all their

duties properly, without neglecting any local communities, vulnerable residents or partnership organisations. It would also help to ensure high quality, accountable service provision and efficient use of the Council's finances.

Appendix 1: Cheshire East main settlements

Cheshire East settlements

1. Alderley Edge
2. Alsager
3. Audlem
4. Bollington
5. Bunbury
6. Chelford
7. Congleton
8. Crewe
9. Disley
10. Goostrey
11. Handforth
12. Haslington
13. Holmes Chapel
14. Knutsford
15. Macclesfield
16. Middlewich
17. Mobberley
18. Nantwich
19. Poynton
20. Prestbury
21. Sandbach
22. Shavington
23. Wilmslow
24. Wrenbury
25. OSRA
    (Other Settlements
    and Rural Areas)

Legend

Settlement boundaries

Cheshire East

Map produced by the Spatial Planning Team, Cheshire East Council. Version No. 2 (production date: 26/6/18).

Note: The geographical definitions used for each settlement are those set out in Appendix 6 of
the Cheshire East 'LDF Background Report: Determining the Settlement Hierarchy', Cheshire East Council, November 2010.

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Appendix 2: Rural and urban areas of Cheshire East

Rural and Urban Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Cheshire East

Map produced by the Strategic Planning Team, Cheshire East Council, 19/9/23. Map version No. 1. (c) Crown copyright and database rights 2023. Ordnance Survey 100049045.

Source: 2015 Rural-Urban Classification (LSOA-based), Cheshire East Council.

Note: Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are small geographical areas created by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for statistical purposes. They are intended to be of similar size to each other in terms of population; ONS reviews LSOAs in the wake of each new Census and makes changes (such as mergers or division of LSOAs) where necessary, to ensure they continue to have similar-sized populations. These changes have resulted in a small net increase in the number of LSOAs in Cheshire East over time. The 2015 Rural-Urban Classification shown here is based on the boundaries of the '2011' LSOAs that were created in the wake of the 2011 Census evidence (though the 2021 Census results have led to a further revision of LSOA boundaries since then).
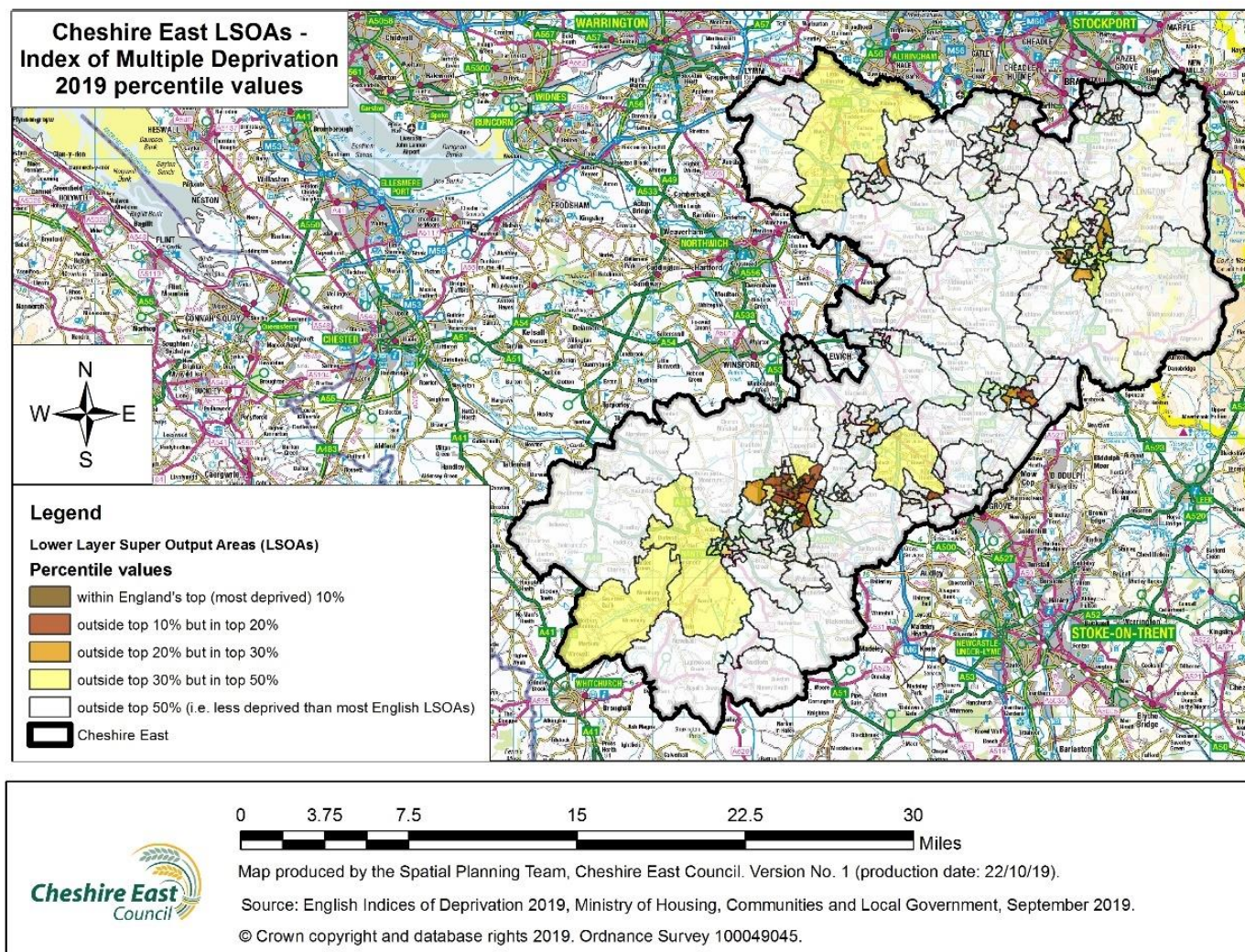
Legend
Rural
Urban
Cheshire East
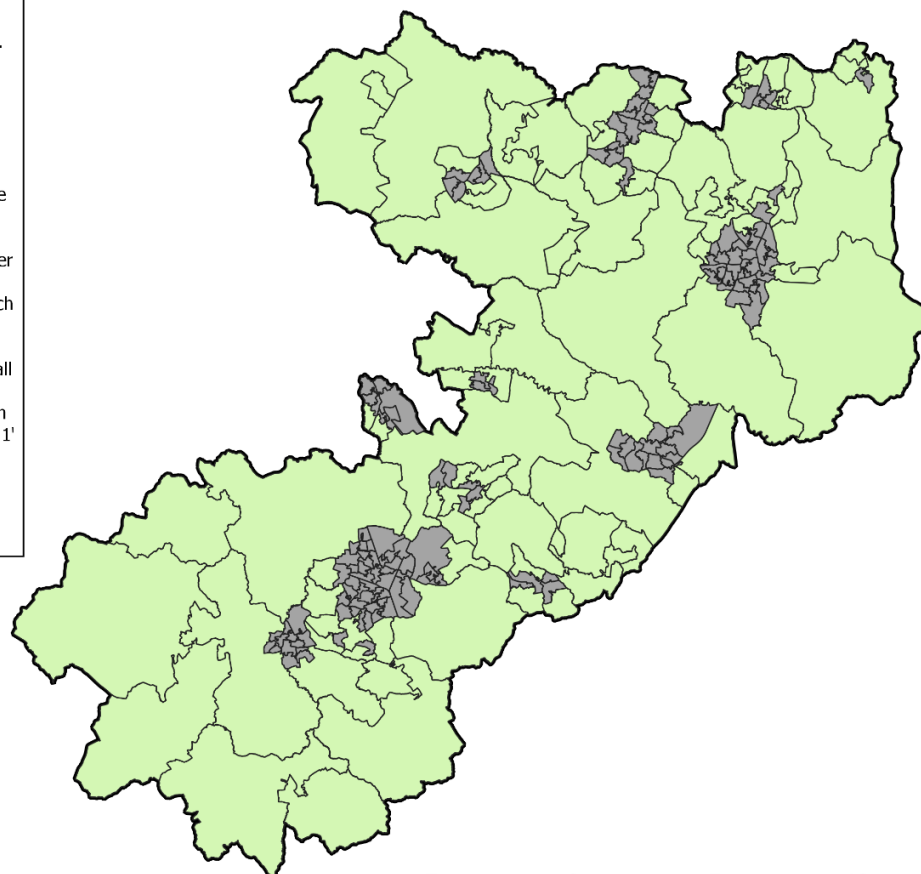
5   0   5   10   15 Miles

Appendix 3: Deprivation in Cheshire East

Appendix 4: Committee names, types, sizes and frequency of meetings

	Committee name	Standing committee	Committee/ meeting category	Number of Members	Number of meetings held in last year
1	Adults and Health Committee	Yes	Service Committees	13	6
2	Children and Families Committee	Yes	Service Committees	13	8
3	Corporate Policy Committee	Yes	Service Committees	13	7
4	Economy and Growth Committee	Yes	Service Committees	13	6
5	Environment and Communities Committee	Yes	Service Committees	13	8
6	Finance Sub-Committee	Yes	Service Committees	8	6
7	Highways and Transport Committee	Yes	Service Committees	13	6
8	Licensing Committee	Yes	Regulatory (Licensing)	15	3
9	Northern Planning Committee	Yes	Regulatory (Planning)	12	12
10	Southern Planning Committee	Yes	Regulatory (Planning)	12	10
11	Strategic Planning Board	Yes	Regulatory (Planning)	12	9
12	Scrutiny Committee	Yes	Scrutiny Committees	13	4
13	Appointments Committee	Yes	Other Committees	8	0
14	Audit and Governance Committee	Yes	Other Committees	9	6
15	Cared For Children and Care Leaver Sub-Committee	No	Other Committees	12	5
16	Health and Wellbeing Board	No	Other Committees	4	5
17	General Appeals Sub-Committee	No	Other Committees	5*	7
18	Electoral Review Sub-Committee	No	Other Committees	10	N/A
19	Shared Services Joint Committee	No	Other Committees	3	4
20	Staffing Appeals Sub-Committee	No	Other Committees	3*	4
21	General Licensing Sub-Committee	No	Regulatory (Licensing)	5**	0
22	Licensing Act Sub-Committee	No	Regulatory (Licensing)	3**	10
23	Local Authority School Governor Nomination Sub-Committee	No	Other Meetings	5	4

*General Appeals Sub-Committee and Staffing Appeals Committee Members chosen from a pool of 10.

**General Licensing Act Sub-Committee and Licensing Act Sub-Committee Members chosen from among the 15 Licensing Committee Members.

Source: Democratic Services team administrative data (provided during July-October 2023). Notes: [1] Figures include reserves and non-voting members. [2] Figures in the last column based on meetings held in the 12-month period ending mid July 2023. [2] Electoral Review Sub-Committee not appointed until July 2023. [3] As noted in the "Licensing" section of this submission, the General Licensing Sub-Committee has met only once in the last 18 months, due to a lack of business.

Appendix 5: Council sizes and ratios for Cheshire East and similar local authorities

(Shaded rows indicate councils with a population that was within 20% of the Cheshire East as of 2021. Bold font indicates those authorities identified by CIPFA modelling (https://www.cipfa.org/services/cipfastats/nearest-neighbour-model) as most comparable to Cheshire East.)

Name	Population (from 2021 Census)	Local government electors as of Dec 2022	Current number of councillors	Ratio of electors to councillors	New number of councillors proposed or recommended by LGBCE, if applicable *(see Note [3] below)*	New ratio, if applicable *(see Note [3] below)*
Buckinghamshire	553,100	412,800	147	2,800	97	4,300
Central Bedfordshire	**294,200**	**219,900**	**63**	**3,500**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Cheshire East	398,800	310,600	82	3,800	N/A	N/A
Cheshire West and Chester	**357,200**	**262,600**	**70**	**3,800**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Cornwall	**570,300**	**431,200**	**87**	**5,000**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Dorset	379,600	297,500	82	3,600	N/A	N/A
Durham	522,100	390,300	126	3,100	98	4,000
East Riding of Yorkshire	342,200	270,100	67	4,000	N/A	N/A
North Northamptonshire	359,500	264,500	78	3,400	68	3,900
North Somerset	**216,700**	**165,500**	**50**	**3,300**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Northumberland	320,600	251,600	67	3,800	69	3,600
Shropshire	**323,600**	**250,100**	**74**	**3,400**	**74**	**3,400**
Solihull	**216,200**	**160,800**	**51**	**3,200**	**51**	**3,200**
South Gloucestershire	**290,400**	**212,000**	**61**	**3,500**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Stockport	**294,800**	**222,800**	**63**	**3,500**	**N/A**	**N/A**
West Northamptonshire	425,700	298,500	93	3,200	76	3,900
Wiltshire	**510,400**	**382,700**	**98**	**3,900**	**N/A**	**N/A**

Sources: [1] List of comparable local authorities identified by CIPFA, LGBCE email to Cheshire East Council, 21st July 2023. [2] 'Population and household estimates for England and Wales: Census 2021' (the first release of results from the 2021 Census of Population for England and Wales), Office for National Statistics (ONS), 28th June 2022. [3] December 2022 local government elector data: 'Electoral statistics, UK, December 2022' data file from ONS 'Electoral statistics for the UK' release, 20th April 2023: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/elections/electoralregistration/datasets/electoralstatisticsforuk [4] Councillor numbers: LGBCE electoral data spreadsheet file, downloaded on 14th April 2023 from https://www.lgbce.org.uk/electoral-data

Notes: [1] These authorities are ones that were either identified by CIPFA as being comparable to Cheshire East, or which met all the following criteria: English unitary authority; a substantial rural area/ rural population; population (as of 2021) at least half that of Cheshire East, but no more than 50% greater than Cheshire East. [2] Ratios based on local government electorate as of December 2022. [3] Entries in the final two columns applicable only where a review is currently underway or changes from a concluded review have yet to take effect. These two columns take account of LGBCE review proposals and decisions published up to 11 October 2023.

Appendix 6: Workload per councillor, by council size

Number of councillors	Average number of Committee positions per councillor (i)	Average number of positions held, including outside organisations (i, ii)	Average number of hours spent per week (over a typical three-month period) – see 'CALCULATION APPROACH' note below					Electors per councillor, July 2023	Electors per councillor, December 2029
			Committee work (iii)	Casework/ ward issues	Additional duties (iv)	Work for outside bodies (v)	Total (all council business) (vi)		
77	2.8	6.0 (5.1)	4.0	7.8	14.0	2.6	28.3	4,087	4,381
78	2.8	5.9 (5.0)	3.9	7.7	13.8	2.5	27.9	4,034	4,325
79	2.7	5.9 (5.0)	3.9	7.6	13.6	2.5	27.6	3,983	4,270
80	2.7	5.8 (4.9)	3.8	7.5	13.5	2.5	27.2	3,934	4,217
81	2.7	5.7 (4.9)	3.8	7.4	13.3	2.4	26.9	3,885	4,165
82	**2.6**	**5.6 (4.8)**	**3.8**	**7.3**	**13.1**	**2.4**	**26.6**	**3,838**	**4,114**
83	2.6	5.6 (4.7)	3.7	7.2	13.0	2.4	26.3	3,791	4,064
84	2.6	5.5 (4.7)	3.7	7.1	12.8	2.4	25.9	3,746	4,016
85	2.6	5.4 (4.6)	3.6	7.0	12.7	2.3	25.6	3,702	3,969
86	2.5	5.4 (4.6)	3.6	6.9	12.5	2.3	25.3	3,659	3,923
87	2.5	5.3 (4.5)	3.5	6.9	12.4	2.3	25.0	3,617	3,877

CALCULATION APPROACH: Apart from Democratic Services team administrative data recording the average length of Committee meetings, the statistics on the average number of hours spent on council business are derived from the Members Survey undertaken in September-October 2023. As the survey questions asked Members to select a time band (e.g. "Up to two hours", "Two to four hours", etc), it has been assumed for the purposes of the above calculations that the time spent by Members on each activity will, on average, fall within the middle of the band they selected. For example, it is assumed for the above calculations that Members who spent "Four to six hours" a week on casework/ ward issues worked an average of five hours a week on these issues. In cases where Members picked a time band with no upper limit (e.g. "Over twenty hours"), the assumed average for the responses within that band is based on the overall distribution of times selected by the Members who answered that particular question. In particular:

- For preparation/ reading time for each committee meeting, nine hours was taken as a reasonable average to assume for those who said "More than eight hours". This was because only 2% of the committee meetings that Members reported on in the survey were within this band and so the average time taken in these cases is unlikely to be much more than eight.
- When asked about the average amount of time spent per week on casework/ ward issues, nearly half of respondents (46%) said "More than eight hours". Hence it was assumed that the average time for the respondents in this band would be significantly greater than eight. An average of 10 hours is therefore assumed, though this could potentially be an underestimate.

- Given that nearly a quarter (24%) of Members reported spending "Over twenty hours" on dealing with additional duties, it is assumed that the average time spent by the Members in this band is significantly above 20. Given the lack of information about how far beyond 20 hours these working hours might range, it has been assumed that the averages for Members in this band are evenly distributed between 21 and 25 and therefore average out at 23.

Sources: [1] Committee structure and meetings web pages (http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1). [2] Democratic Services Team, Cheshire East Council, July-September 2023. [3] Electorate forecasts produced by Cheshire East Council for the current electoral review. [4] Members Survey, September-October 2023.

Notes relating to specific data columns: (i) Figures for committee positions exclude Full Council, which meets an average of six times a year. (ii) For each council size, there are two figures given for the average number of positions held. The first figure (outside the brackets) includes all internal committees/ working groups/ boards/ panels and other outside organisations, including town/ parish council positions. However, the figures in brackets exclude town/ parish council positions. (iii) The figures for hours spent on Committee work include reading/ preparation and travel time as well as time spent in the actual meetings. (iv) 'Additional duties' includes the following roles: Committee chair/ vice-chair, Executive Board member, Group Leader, Group Administrator, Mayor, Town/ Parish Councillor. (v) 'Outside bodies' means only those that Members have been appointed to by the Borough Council. (vi) The figures in the 'Total (all council business)' column are the sum of those in the preceding four columns.

Appendix 7: Member Survey results

Overview
This Appendix sets out in detail the results from the Council's recent survey of Members, which was undertaken to inform the Council's response to the Electoral Review. This survey was open from 8th September until 4th October 2023 and 57% (47) of Cheshire East's 82 Members responded.

Assessment of the survey's representativeness
Comparisons of the survey data with the Council's administrative data suggest that those who responded were broadly representative of all 82 Members. For example, the 47 survey respondents had, on average, 2.7 committee positions (excluding Full Council), which closely matched the average shown in the administrative records (2.6). In addition, the proportion of survey respondents who said they had been appointed to outside bodies (63%) was close to the proportion for all 82 Members (with 50 of them, or 61%, being on such bodies). "Twin-hatted" Members (those who are also town or parish councillors) were a little under-represented: as noted earlier in this submission, 76% of all Members are twin-hatted, but only 62% (29) of the survey respondents were. In that respect, the survey responses may understate the average volume of work arising from town/ parish councillor positions. However, the survey respondents' answers (based on their personal estimates or recollections of meeting frequencies) indicated an average of 8.1 meetings per year for the committees they sat on, compared to administrative records showing this average to be 6.2 when all Members are included. Therefore the survey responses may overstate the average volume of work arising from committee positions. Taking all the survey sample's variances from the 82-Member "population" into account, though, there is no reason to think that the total workload levels indicated by the survey data are significantly skewed, either upwards or downwards, by who did or did not respond to the survey.

Other notes
The final survey question ("Do you believe that you currently have sufficient time and capacity to properly undertake your Councillor duties?") was followed by an invitation for Members to add any comments. To avoid potentially identifying individuals, these comments are not listed in full in this submission. However, some key points are cited in the 'Summary' section of the submission and the collective feedback from these open comments will be followed up internally.

Q1. Please provide your name and the name of the ward which you represent in the space below.

Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Name (First name, Family name)	100.0%	47
2	Ward Name	100.0%	47
		answered	47
		skipped	0

Q2. How long have you been a ward Councillor?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 year or less	38.3%	18
2	2 - 5 years	25.5%	12
3	6 - 10 years	14.9%	7
4	11 + years	21.3%	10
		answered	47
		skipped	0

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Q3. What were your reasons for seeking election to Cheshire East Council?

Please tick all that apply

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	To make a difference	91.5%	43
2	Develop my leadership skills	12.8%	6
3	Have a direct involvement in local decision making	85.1%	40
4	Improve my skills and knowledge	31.9%	15
5	Serve my ward/community	93.6%	44
6	The political "cut and thrust"	14.9%	7
7	Other (please specify):	10.6%	5
		answered	47
		skipped	0

Q4. In addition to your role as a ward Councillor, what other position(s) do you hold within the Council?

Please tick all that apply

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Chair of Committee	27.7%	13
2	Vice Chair of Committee	19.1%	9
3	Executive Board member	6.4%	3
4	Group Leader	6.4%	3
5	Group Administrator	6.4%	3
6	Mayor	6.4%	3
7	Parish/ Town Councillor	61.7%	29
8	None	12.8%	6
9	Other (please specify):	29.8%	14
		answered	47
		skipped	0

Q5. On average, how much time per week do you spend dealing with your areas of additional responsibility?

Please select one option only, and estimate your average weekly workload, over a typical three-month period

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Up to five hours	8.9%	4
2	Six to ten hours	26.7%	12
3	Eleven to fifteen hours	13.3%	6
4	Sixteen to twenty hours	22.2%	10
5	Over twenty hours	24.4%	11
6	N/A	4.4%	2
		answered	45
		skipped	2

Q6. Have you been appointed by the Council to any outside bodies?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	63.0%	29
2	No	37.0%	17
		answered	46
		skipped	1

Q7. On average, how much time per week do you spend dealing with work for outside bodies?

Please select one option only, and estimate your average weekly workload, over a typical three-month period

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Up to five hours	45.5%	20
2	Six to ten hours	13.6%	6
3	Eleven to fifteen hours	2.3%	1
4	Sixteen to twenty hours	0.0%	0
5	Over twenty hours	0.0%	0
6	N/A	38.6%	17
		answered	44
		skipped	3

Q8. How many Committee(s) are you appointed to?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1	12.8%	6
2	2	21.3%	10
3	3	46.8%	22
4	4	19.1%	9
		answered	47
		skipped	0

Q9. Thinking about the committees which you have been appointed to, how often do they meet?

If you are appointed to one Committee, please complete the first row, two Committees rows 1 and 2, three Committees 1, 2 and 3 and four Committees 1, 2, 3 and 4.

	Answer Choice	Each month	Every other month	Quarterly	Twice a year	Ad hoc	N/A	Response Total
1	Committee 1	25	18	2	0	2	0	47
2	Committee 2	13	19	6	0	3	1	42
3	Committee 3	6	13	8	0	4	2	33
4	Committee 4	3	4	2	0	2	3	14
							answered	47
							skipped	0

Q10. Thinking about the committees to which you have been appointed to, at what time of the day are the meetings usually held?

If you are appointed to one Committee only, please complete the first row, two Committees rows 1 and 2, three Committees 1, 2 and 3 and four Committees 1, 2, 3 and 4.

	Answer Choice	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	N/A	Response Total
1	Committee 1	33	13	0	1	47
2	Committee 2	23	15	0	2	40
3	Committee 3	14	15	1	2	32
4	Committee 4	3	7	0	2	12
					answered	47
					skipped	0

Q11. Thinking about the committees to which you have been appointed to, at which venue are the meetings usually held?

If you are appointed to one Committee, please complete the first row, two Committees rows 1 and 2, three Committees 1, 2 and 3 and four Committees 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Answer Choice		Municipal Buildings, Crewe	Town Hall, Macclesfield	Westfields, Sandbach	N/A	Response Total
1	Committee 1	5	10	31	1	47
2	Committee 2	2	11	27	2	42
3	Committee 3	1	2	25	5	33
4	Committee 4	0	1	8	4	13
					answered	47
					skipped	0

Q12. On average, how much time do you spend travelling from your home to each Committee location?

If you are appointed to one Committee only please complete the first row, two Committees rows 1 and 2, three Committees 1, 2 and 3 and four Committees 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Please estimate your average travel time, to each committee that you are appointed to, over a typical three-month period

Answer Choice		Up to two hours	Two to four hours	Four to six hours	Six to eight hours	More than eight hours	N/A	Response Total
1	Committee 1	39	3	1	3	0	0	46
2	Committee 2	35	3	0	3	0	1	42
3	Committee 3	26	2	0	2	0	3	33
4	Committee 4	10	0	0	1	0	2	13
							answered	46
							skipped	1

Q13. On average, how much time per week do you spend preparing/ reading papers for a meeting?

If you are appointed to one Committee only, please complete the first row, two Committees rows 1 and 2, three Committees 1, 2 and 3 and four Committees 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Please estimate your average weekly workload over a typical three-month period

Answer Choice		Up to two hours	Two to four hours	Four to six hours	Six to eight hours	More than eight hours	N/A	Response Total
1	Committee 1	17	17	7	3	3	0	47
2	Committee 2	15	17	6	2	0	2	42
3	Committee 3	15	10	3	1	0	3	32
4	Committee 4	4	7	0	0	0	2	13
							answered	47
							skipped	0

Q14. On average, how much time per week do you spend dealing with case work/ ward issues?

Please select one option only and estimate your average weekly workload over a typical three-month period

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Up to two hours	6.5%	3
2	Two to four hours	10.9%	5
3	Four to six hours	13.0%	6
4	Six to eight hours	23.9%	11
5	More than eight hours	45.7%	21
		answered	46
		skipped	1

Q15. On average, how much time per week do you spend (if you are able to tell) on dealing with *unregistered voters?

***"unregistered voters" i.e. those who are eligible to vote, but who choose not to be on the Electoral Register, or inadvertently fail to get themselves on the Register**

Please select one option only and estimate your average weekly workload over a typical three-month period

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Up to two hours	17.8%	8
2	Two to four hours	4.4%	2
3	Four to six hours	4.4%	2
4	Six to eight hours	0.0%	0
5	More than eight hours	0.0%	0
6	Don't know	73.3%	33
		answered	45
		skipped	2

Q16. Is the time you spend on council business (work as a Councillor) what you expected when you first became a Councillor?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	36.2%	17
2	No – I spend more time on council business	63.8%	30
3	No – I spend less time on council business	0.0%	0
		answered	47
		skipped	0

Q17. Has the time you spend on council business (work as a Councillor) increased from when you were first elected?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	89.4%	42
2	No	10.6%	5
	answered	47	
	skipped	0	

Q18. If yes, by how much has your workload increased?

Please select one option only

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Up to 20%	21.4%	9
2	21 - 40%	33.3%	14
3	41 - 60%	21.4%	9
4	61 - 80%	9.5%	4
5	81 - 100%	14.3%	6
		answered	42
		skipped	5

Q19. When considering what you believe to be a reasonable expectation of a Councillor, and taking into account work/life balance and other considerations, do you consider that your workload as a Councillor keeps you:

Please select one option only

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under occupied	0.0%	0
2	Appropriately occupied	21.7%	10
3	A little over occupied	45.7%	21
4	Very over occupied	32.6%	15
		answered	46
		skipped	1

Q20. When are workload (working as a Councillor) demands placed on you the most?

Please tick all that apply

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	All days/ times of the week	60.0%	27
2	Monday - Friday daytime	35.6%	16
3	Monday - Friday evening	13.3%	6
4	Saturday – daytime	11.1%	5
5	Saturday – evening	0.0%	0
6	Sunday – daytime	11.1%	5
7	Sunday – evening	4.4%	2
		answered	45
		skipped	2

Q21. Do your workload demands impact upon your work-life balance and wellbeing?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	76.1%	35
2	No	23.9%	11
		answered	46
		skipped	1

Q22. If yes, how significant is this impact?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Not at all significant	9.8%	4
2 Significant	73.2%	30
3 Very significant	4.9%	2
4 N/A	12.2%	5
	answered	41
	skipped	6

Q23. Do you believe that you currently have sufficient time and capacity to properly undertake your Councillor duties?

Please select one option only

Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Yes	63.8%	30
2 No	36.2%	17
If you have any comments, please use the space provided below		33
	answered	47
	skipped	0