

# Council Size Options Paper - Councillor Numbers

## Executive Summary

- In July 2020 the Standards & General Purposes Committee (the Committee) established a Member Working Group to formulate the Council's response and recommendations to the Boundary Commission's Electoral Review of the Council. That Working Group has met 10 times since July 2020 and has sought the advice and guidance of the Boundary Commission in the formulating of this Options paper who have attended many of its meetings.
- This Options paper, together with the completed Council size template, is the culmination of the Working Group's deliberations and concludes with a recommendation that the Council should submit to the Commission a proposal for a Council size of 120 elected Members.
- The Working Group have set out what it considers to be the key considerations that has informed its conclusions, including: the future agenda for the Council; its ambitions concerning the involvement of Members in the strategic direction of the Council; the Scrutiny and Regulatory functions; and the role of Members as leaders in their localities. Evidence is provided of comparator unitary Councils largely drawn from recent data, but also referencing the earlier Ernst & Young report and the Unitary proposal from the former Buckinghamshire County Council.
- The Working Group has undertaken an analysis of workload on Councillors by reference to Council size and outlined their concern that a smaller size could increase workload to such an extent that it would necessitate a departure from its 'Member-led' ambitions.
- The strong conviction of the Working Group was that Councillors should be drawn from the widest range of backgrounds, ages, knowledge and experience to better represent the communities served and that the amount of time required to be an effective Councillor – to prepare for and attend meetings and attend to casework - should not be at a level that is prohibitive, particularly for those who are employed or in a caring role, or just wish for a balanced life. It should not be considered a full-time role.
- In addition, there needs to be a sufficient number of Members to ensure that the Cabinet is held to account by the Members through the relevant Committees and with an appropriate level of Scrutiny, but to also create additional Committees and working groups to cope with future challenges facing Buckinghamshire. The desire

to ensure that Councillors remain directly connected to residents, Town & Parish Councils, Residents' Associations and community groups and to further develop and embed the new Community Boards in Buckinghamshire also necessitates enough Councillors so as to be fulfilled.

- 120 Councillors would equate to 3,500 electors per Councillor, a number projected to increase over the next few years, and in line with a number of comparable Unitary Councils.

**Cllr Jonathan Waters**  
**Chairman: Standards & General Purposes Committee**

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