

Full Council

# Council Size Submission

Melton Borough Council

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## How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

## About You

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

This submission is made by Melton Borough Council and is due to be approved and signed off by Full Council at the meeting held on 8 February 2024.

## Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

N/A

## 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?

In 2019, Melton Borough Council changed its governance model from the Committee System to the Cabinet Model. These arrangements are reflected in the Constitution. The impact upon the effectiveness of the organisation has been that there is greater certainty around the decision-making process and that decision makers are fully accountable. The powers of the Cabinet are balanced by an active Scrutiny function. There is an Officer dedicated to supporting Scrutiny Members in exercising their responsibilities and holding the Cabinet to account. In addition, Scrutiny has become more involved with the policy development process and has helped shape policy for the better during its development.

Alongside the changes in the governance model and the greater accountability, Members accepted the responsibility of making the decisions that need to be taken and recognise that open, transparent, consistent decision making with clear accountability benefits the Council and the residents they serve. In addition to this Officers have the confidence to work on strategically important projects knowing that there is a clear governance pathway in getting decisions approved. Members are able to focus on the strategic functions of the Council knowing that Officers are focusing on the operational functions and that decisions taken operationally are open, transparent and accountable via the decision notice process.

In May 2023, the administration of the Council changed. Now whilst the new administration has retained the current governance model, there is a desire to review that model in order to move away from the 'strong Cabinet' into what is viewed as a more inclusive decision-making process.

Given the impact of the governance changes in 2019 upon the effectiveness of decision-making at Melton and the current administration's view of a more inclusive decision-making process, then the proposal is that we retain 28 elected Members. It is our view that this will allow the Council to remain effective and will enable Members to deliver strategic and community leadership and remain accountable. Since 2021, there has been an average of 46 meetings (either Council, Cabinet or Committee) per year and the average length of each meeting is 1.5 hours. In addition to this Councillors spend time reading the reports and background papers, possibly attending a site visit and possibly attending a briefing. On average Councillors would spend 3-4 hours preparing and attending a meeting and this does not include any travelling to the meeting they would have to do. It is possible that Councillors spend in excess of 4 hours preparing and attending a meeting depending on the business to be considered, whether they are required to make a site visit and whether they are required to attend a briefing. This position is served well by the existing number of

Councillors meaning that if the Council was to reduce in size, then an additional strain would be borne upon the smaller number of Councillors.

If the Council was to reduce in size, then the impact upon the decision-making process would therefore be negative. Members would not be able to effectively represent their communities due to having to prepare for more meetings and attend them. It would also mean that case work and outside bodies appointments would be spread across fewer Members.

If the size of the Council was to increase significantly, then the risk is that this could cause additional challenges to the decision-making processes by diluting accountability and increasing inefficiencies. There is also the extra financial burden that would be caused if the Council has to pay out for more basic allowances, which currently stands at £5329.82 per annum.

### 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?

Melton, placed in the heart of north-east Leicestershire, presents a distinctive geographic profile characterised by its rural nature and the historic prominence of Melton Mowbray as a market town. The borough extends its influence across a network of approximately 70 small villages, each contributing to the overall fabric of the borough. Notable among these villages are Asfordby, Long Clawson, Waltham on the Wolds, and Bottesford in the Vale of Belvoir, each with its own unique character and significance.

The predominant rural landscape of Melton signifies a geographical dispersion of settlements, with a centralisation of activities in Melton Mowbray. This dispersed settlement pattern can have implications for governance, as rural areas often contend with challenges related to connectivity, accessibility, and the equitable distribution of services. Melton Mowbray sits at the crossroads of the A606 (Nottingham-Stamford (for Peterborough)) and A607 (Leicester-Grantham-Lincoln) and A6006 to Loughborough, and the growth of road traffic has led to the need to build the relief road around the eastern side of the town. Melton Borough is therefore reasonably well-connected by road and rail to major population centres (Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham), but is itself rural and sparsely populated; Melton

Borough Council is a member of the SPARSE group of local authorities, with a population density of just over 1 person per hectare.

The population of Melton grew 2.7% from 50,390 to 51,773 between the 2011 and 2021 censuses. The number of people aged 65 to 74 increased by 34.1% and the number of residents between 35 and 49 decreased by 20.7%. This suggests that the aging of the population of Melton is a significant trend. The median age in the Borough is higher than the East Midlands: 47 versus 41. The ethnic composition of the Melton population is predominantly White at 96.9%, which is higher than Leicestershire (87.5%), East Midlands (85.7%) and England (81%). In Melton, 47.82% of the population reported to be in very good health, followed by 35.14% in good health, 13.06% in fair health, 3.13% in bad health, and 0.85% in very bad health. In the latest census, around 47,100 Melton residents said they were born in England. This represented 91.0% of the local population. The figure has risen from around 46,300 in 2011, which at the time represented 91.9% of Melton's population.

In contemplating council size, Melton's unique blend of urban and rural dynamics calls for a governance structure that can adeptly address the diverse needs of both settings. There has already been a shift to greater urban versus rural representation with the increase in urban councillors in 2003 to 15, as opposed to 13 for the rural area. The population growth due to housebuilding in Melton Mowbray and Asfordby since 2003 is likely to continue.

Melton faces challenges and changes on the horizon, intricately tied to its aging population and anticipated growth. Tailoring services to cater to the needs of the elderly becomes imperative, alongside strategic planning for new infrastructure, educational facilities, and healthcare services.

### 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.**

Topic		
<b>Governance Model</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the</i></li> </ul>

		<p><i>committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Melton Borough Council currently operates an Executive model of governance, although the current administration is reviewing the governance arrangements. The Executive, known as the Cabinet, can have up to 10 Members including the Leader. The current administration has 5 Members in the Cabinet and the previous administration had 6 Members.</p> <p>To counter the Cabinet, there is 1 Scrutiny Committee comprising of 10 Members. The Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding the Cabinet to account.</p> <p>Policies and strategies are currently developed by the Cabinet. Non-Executive Members contribute at various stages during the process of development, whether that is via a Scrutiny Workshop session, in Committee, or informally via a Member Briefing session. In terms of strategies, these are approved at Council and all Members have the opportunity to comment upon them.</p>
<b>Portfolios</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Currently there are 5 Portfolios which allocated to Members of the Cabinet. The Leader is personally responsible for the discharge of all Cabinet Functions and may take any decision in relation to any function, whilst recognising the specific statutory responsibilities placed on individual portfolio holders.</p> <p>The Leader delegates all Cabinet Functions which fall within the portfolio of each Cabinet Member to that Cabinet Member who may take any decision in relations to those functions subject to any reservations that may deemed to be controversial, high profile and/or financially significant.</p>

		<p>Where a Portfolio Holder has delegated powers, Cabinet can still exercise that power in a particular case if it considers it appropriate to do so or the Leader directs them to.</p> <p>For clarity, there are decisions which are reserved to Council and they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• functions which are reserved as Council functions by the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) and by subsequent legislation;</li> <li>• functions which are reserved as Council functions by the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000(as amended) and subsequent regulations under the Local Government Act 2000;</li> <li>• functions set out in Schedule 2 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000:</li> <li>• plans and strategies set out in Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) together with such other plans and strategies as the Council shall identify from time to time for approval.</li> </ul> <p>The role of Portfolio Holder is not a full time role in a traditional sense and functions are to be carried out alongside the Members' Ward work, as well as any outside paid employment the Member has. There is however a Special Responsibility Allowance for the positions of Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder which recognises the workload and responsibility those Members have as a result of taking on those roles. Currently they stand at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader, £15,368.57</li> <li>• Deputy Leader, £10,245.72</li> <li>• Portfolio Holder £6,403.58</li> </ul>
<b>Delegated Responsibilities</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p><b>Officers</b> Chief Officers are delegated authority to take any decision in relation to the functions within their area of service responsibility as detailed within the Melton Borough Council Constitution.</p> <p>This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to exercise within approved budgets, all matters of day to day administration and operational management of</p>



	<p>the services and functions for which they are responsible, take all necessary action to achieve and implement the objectives and actions set out in approved policies, strategies, plans and decisions of the Council, sign licences and notices and place orders for goods and services relevant to their service areas and increase fees and charges in line with the Financial Procedure Rules. For clarity this includes all operational Human Resources matters relevant to their area of responsibility.</p> <p><b>Committees</b>  All Councillors will make decisions at the Council Meeting, which is a meeting of all Councillors where they discharge the functions contained within the Council Functions and Procedure Rules. This meeting also approves the Budget and Policy Framework which is the framework within which Cabinet operates. Councillors also set the Council's budget each year.</p> <p>The Cabinet, of which there are 5 Members, makes decisions within the Budget and Policy Framework as approved at a Council meeting. This means that Cabinet administers the budget set by Council and work within the strategies set by Council. The Cabinet is responsible for all policy decisions which are not Council functions or regulatory (Licensing, Audit &amp; Standards or Planning).</p> <p>The Cabinet also make Key Decisions, which are decisions which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, making savings or generating income of £50,000 or more and/or has a significant impact on two or more wards in the Borough. Key Decisions can also be made by individual Portfolio Holders and/or Officers.</p> <p>Functions and decisions made by the Licensing Committee, Audit &amp; Standards Committee and Planning Committee are either outlined by the Constitution or enshrined in legislation.</p> <p><b>Councillors</b>  The Cabinet Scheme of Delegation outlines what functions/decisions are reserved to Cabinet, what functions/decisions are reserved to the Leader and what functions/decisions are delegated to Portfolio Holders.</p>
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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	
<b>Internal Scrutiny</b>	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i></li> </ul>
Analysis	<p>Since the change in governance arrangements in 2019, there has been 1 Scrutiny Committee comprising of 10 Members, whose role is defined in the Constitution as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any function.</li> <li>• To make reports or recommendations to Council or the Cabinet as appropriate with respect to the discharge of any function.</li> <li>• May recommend that a decision made but not yet implemented, be reconsidered by the Cabinet through the Call In Procedure.</li> <li>• To fulfil all the functions of the Council’s designated Crime and Disorder Committee under the Police and Justice Act 2006.</li> <li>• To fulfil all the functions conferred on it by virtue of regulations under the National Health Service Act 2006 (local authority scrutiny of health matters).</li> </ul> <p>The Scrutiny Committee agree a Work Programme and on the programme there are a number of topics Members agree to focus on during the year. The Scrutiny Committee decide how to scrutinise the topics and whether it should be by report at Committee, Task and Finish Groups or Workshops.</p> <p>Workshops are like Task and Finish Groups in the sense that the Committee will spend time on focusing on one topic (or</p>

	<p>aspect of a topic) but would do this during the course of a one-off meeting, as opposed to a series of meetings. The mechanism, which has been used frequently at Melton is usually used during the policy development stage of the process, therefore a report isn't usual produced however comments for consideration by the Cabinet are. The workshops have proven useful for Scrutiny to be able to shape policy as it develops. Between 2021-2023, there have been 11 workshops which have lasted between 1-3 hours. All Committee Members are invited to the Workshops and usually this translates to an attendance rate of between 7-10 Members.</p> <p>Since 2019, there have been 4 Task and Finish Groups, each having between 4-5 meetings lasting 1-2 hours each time. On each Task and Finish Group there are 3-5 Members. The Constitution states that there can't be more than 2 Task and Finish Groups running at one time, meaning that potentially 10 Members could be working on a Task and Finish at one time.</p> <p>10 Members on the Scrutiny Committee represents 35% of the total number of Members in the Council. Also the membership of the Committee is politically balanced meaning that the Scrutiny Committee is a representative sample of the Council containing a variety of different view resulting in more balanced and well thought comments and recommendations. This is opposed to having more Members on the Committee potentially making debate unmanageable or fewer Members where there is a potential that one or two Members could dominate the discussion.</p>				
<p><b>Statutory Function</b></p>	<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>				
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="355 1489 539 1859"> <p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> </td> <td data-bbox="539 1489 1460 1859"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="355 1859 539 2049"> <p>Analysis</p> </td> <td data-bbox="539 1859 1460 2049"> <p>Currently there is one Council-wide Planning Committee. The Committee has 11 Members (deliberately uneven in order to break deadlocks) and Cabinet Members are permitted to serve on the Committee. Executive Members are entitled to, and do, serve on the Planning Committee.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Currently there is one Council-wide Planning Committee. The Committee has 11 Members (deliberately uneven in order to break deadlocks) and Cabinet Members are permitted to serve on the Committee. Executive Members are entitled to, and do, serve on the Planning Committee.</p>
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<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Currently there is one Council-wide Planning Committee. The Committee has 11 Members (deliberately uneven in order to break deadlocks) and Cabinet Members are permitted to serve on the Committee. Executive Members are entitled to, and do, serve on the Planning Committee.</p>				

		<p>Planning Committee meetings are scheduled every four weeks meaning that there are 13 meetings scheduled per year, although this can be affected by the amount of applications that is required to be determined. For the last three years the number of Planning Committees has been as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 – 11</li> <li>• 2022 – 13</li> <li>• 2023 – 11</li> </ul> <p>In terms of time commitment, in a survey of Melton Borough Councillors, 71% of respondents stated that they spend more than 4 hours per application. This includes reading the report and background papers, attending a site visit, discussion of the application in the Planning Briefing and determination of the application at the Planning Committee. Taking 4 hours as a benchmark. On average Planning Committee Members determine 30 applications per year* meaning an average 120 hours per year per Member is spend determining Planning applications.</p> <p>The percentage of Planning applications determined by Members at Committee is 3.125%.</p> <p>*The figure is an average, calculated using the number of applications considered in the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.</p>
<b>Licensing</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>A Licensing Committee containing 10 Members and 6 Substitute Members meets twice every year. Should a Sub-Committee be needed (e.g. to determine whether a taxi driver has committed an infringement), then 3 Members are selected out of the possible 16 Members to form the Sub-Committee. Over the last three years there have been 10 Sub-Committee meetings. They are formed ad-hoc when required.</p> <p>The time commitment for Licensing Committees is approximately 4 hours in total, e.g. meeting and reading of the papers. For Sub-Committees the time commitment is between 5 and 7 hours depending on what is being considered.</p> <p>Members and Substitute Members of the Licensing Committee can sit on the Sub-Committee for a particular hearing. Those Members who are available volunteer with those volunteering first being selected to participate.</p>

<b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></p>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has two other Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit and Standards (10 Members)</li> <li>• Employment (7 Members)</li> </ul> <p>The Employment Committee only meets when required, e.g. when a senior officer needs to be appointed. The functions of the committee are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To appoint Chief Officers (except Chief Executive) subject to any notice requirements;</li> <li>• To recommend appointment of Chief Executive to Council subject to any notice requirements;</li> <li>• To dismiss Chief Officers (except statutory officers) subject to any notice requirements;</li> <li>• Disciplinary Action against Chief Officers;</li> <li>• To recommend dismissal of Statutory Officers which will be supported by a report from the Council's Independent Person (following a determination by the Employment Appeals Committee if necessary) to Council subject to any notice requirements;</li> <li>• To deal with matters of capability (performance and sickness) relating to Chief Officers;</li> <li>• To determine appeals from Chief Officers against disciplinary action, capability, grievance and harassment claims;</li> <li>• To deal with appeals from Chief Officers against dismissal, and</li> <li>• To deal with grievance and harassment complaints against the Chief Executive.</li> </ul> <p>There have been 2 Employment Committee's in the past 3 years. An average of 4-5 hours of time is needed per meeting attendance, this included any time to prepare and read papers.</p> <p>The functions of the Audit and Standards Committee are as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To approve the internal audit charter and monitor the performance of Internal Audit;</li> <li>• To receive reports on the progress against the annual internal audit plan;</li> <li>• Monitor and ensure performance of Internal and External Audit recommendations;</li> <li>• To consider the appointment of the External Auditor, the audit fee, the provision of any non-audit services by the external auditor and any questions of resignation or dismissal of the external auditor;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Head of Internal Audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions;</li> <li>• To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements;</li> <li>• To provide free and unfettered access to the Chair for the Head of Internal Audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the Committee;</li> <li>• To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by PSAA or the authority's auditor panel as appropriate;</li> <li>• To receive the External Audit Annual Plan and discuss, if necessary, with the External Auditor before the audit commences the nature and scope of the audit;</li> <li>• To review and approve the Financial Statements, External Audit opinion and report to Members and monitor Management Action in response to any issues raised;</li> <li>• To receive the Internal Audit Annual Plan for the Council and Annual Internal Audit report, addressing key internal control issues as required;</li> <li>• Review and adopt the Annual Governance Statement;</li> <li>• To consider the Councils Code of Corporate Governance and approve the Annual Statement in that respect;</li> <li>• To consider the External Audit findings from their review of the Statement of Accounts;</li> <li>• To consider and approve after review by the External Auditor the Statement of Accounts and report such to Council;</li> <li>• To review and adopt the detailed and summary Annual Governance Statement after review by Internal Audit;</li> <li>• To provide comments to Council on amendments to the Constitution;</li> <li>• To deal with all matters relating to the Mayoralty which are not reserved to Council;</li> <li>• To approve Strategies and Policies relevant to the functions of the Committee as determined by Chief Finance Officer;</li> <li>• To approve the Gifts and Hospitality Annual report;</li> <li>• To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members including Parish Councils;</li> <li>• To approve the provision of training, guidance and support in the context of the Member Development Programme;</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispensations to Members and co-opted Members relating to interests set out in the Members Code of Conduct;</li> <li>• To determine complaints against Members including Parish Councillors;</li> <li>• To grant exemptions for politically restricted posts, and</li> <li>• To adopt the RIPA Policy.</li> </ul> <p>There are an average of 5 meetings per year. As the Audit and Standards has, on average, more items for consideration than other Committees, then Members have to allow for 5-7 hours per meeting including preparation.</p>
<b>External Partnerships</b>		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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	The Council currently has 11 out of 28 Members appointed to 19 outside bodies. 11 out of 19 appointments are Members of the Cabinet. The total of the workload and responsibility varies from appointment to appointment dependent on the remit of the Outside Body and its contribution towards the Council's strategic priorities. Some bodies are small and locally based, which value from having input from local Elected Members, others are highly significant locally or regionally. We also know that many of our Elected Members also serve on various organisations that support their local communities as part of their community leadership role, e.g., school governors and local community groups. We also have one Member serving on Leicestershire County Council and is currently that organisation's Vice Chairman.

## Community Leadership

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

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>Councillors engage with their electorate either in person, e.g. surgeries or via technology. In a survey completed by Melton Borough Councillors, 100% of respondents stated that they had used technology to interact with their electorate. Respondents stated they interacted with the electorate in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgeries (66% of respondents stated they had used this method)</li> <li>• Holding Public Meetings (33% of respondents stated they had used this method)</li> <li>• Maintaining Blogs/Social Media (55% of respondents stated they had used this method)</li> </ul> <p>Councillors are expected to attend some external meetings in order to keep informed or provide information, e.g. attending a Parish Council meeting as a Councillor, or to fulfil an obligation, e.g. at the Council's appointed representative on an external organisation. All respondents stated that they attend external and/or community meetings in their role as a Councillor. The following external meetings were attended by Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Council Meetings (attended by 55% of respondents)</li> <li>• Residents Associations Meetings (attended by 44% of respondents)</li> <li>• Outside Organisations when appointed by Council (attended by 55% of respondents)</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations/Groups supporting local business (attended by 55% of respondents)</li> <li>• Charity Groups (attended by 66% of respondents)</li> </ul> <p>The reasons for attending the meetings are varied and include: being an active Member of the Parish Council or group; an observer; to participate in discussions as a Councillor; receive feedback on Council services/planning queries and to offer assistance.</p> <p>66% of respondents stated that they attend 1-3 external meetings per month, with all respondents stated that each meeting lasts between 1 and 3 hours.</p> <p>The Council does not have any Area Committees. How Councillors interact with Parish Councils is either by attending Parish Council meetings on a regular basis or via the Parish Council Liaison Meeting which has previously been held twice a year but which is currently being reviewed and potentially reconfigured in order to improve the dialogue between the Council and Parish Councils.</p> <p>Currently there is one user group (Action for Melton Youth) which assists Councillors in interacting with youth people and help them understand the needs and requirements of young people throughout the Borough. Other than this, there are no other mechanisms to assist Councillors with this nor are there any mechanisms to assist Councillors in interacting with minority groups.</p>
<b>Casework</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>In a survey completed by Melton Borough Councillors, 77% of respondents stated that they spent 8 or more hours on case work per week. 66% of respondents stated that they handle the casework themselves. 77% of respondents stated that that their electorate prefers to interact with them as opposed to a Council Officer and that 77% respondent to say that their electorate prefer face to face meetings.</p> <p>The survey also found that 100% of the respondents used technology to interact with their electorate with the following mechanisms being used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emails (100% of respondents stated they had used this mechanism)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Meetings (44% of respondents stated they had used this mechanism)</li> <li>• Social Media (55% of respondents stated they had used this mechanism)</li> <li>• Instant Messaging (66% of respondents stated they had used this mechanism)</li> </ul> <p>77% of survey respondents stated that the increased use and availability of technology has made it easier to interact with their electorate.</p> <p>The Council has an easy to use complaints form which can be found on the Council website and can be used by the public to provide feedback or complain about a service the Council provides, however 44% of survey respondents disagreed that it was an effective way of resolving complaints in the majority of cases. Respondents may have stated this because of the time spent on casework and the perception that their electorate prefers interaction with them as opposed to the Council.</p>
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**Other Issues**

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

There are no other issues of relevance to bring to the attention of the Commission.

**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.

The proposal is that Melton Borough Council retains 28 elected Members. Given the impact of the governance changes in 2019 upon the effectiveness of decision-making at Melton and the current administration’s view of a more inclusive decision-making process, it is our view that this will allow the Council to remain effective and will enable Members to deliver strategic and community leadership and remain accountable.

If the Council was to reduce in size, then the impact upon the decision-making process would be negative. Members would not be able to effectively represent their communities due to having to prepare for more meetings and attend them. It would also mean that case work and outside bodies appointments would be spread across fewer Members. The results of the survey shows that 77% of Councillors spend more than 8 hours on casework per week and 1-3 hours on each external meeting attended (with the average number of external meetings being attended each month ranging from 1 to 3) meaning that fewer

Members would mean more time spent per Councillor on casework and attending external meetings.

If the size of the Council was to increase significantly, then the risk is that this could cause additional challenges to the decision-making processes by diluting accountability, increasing inefficiencies and therefore affecting Councillors ability to provide effective strategic leadership. There would also be the extra financial burden to consider if the Council had additional Councillors. Currently the basic allowance stands at £5329.82 per annum.