

Brentwood Borough Council

# Council Size Submission

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## How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

## About You

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

This is a submission by Brentwood Borough Council (the Council), which was approved by an Ordinary Council on the 16 March 2022

## 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.*

## 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?

The population of the Borough of Brentwood is approximately 76,550, making it the second smallest local authority in Essex.

A review of the governance of the Council including reviewing the election cycle was undertaken in 2019. For this review officers, briefed Members on moving to all out elections and the different governance models, please see slides in annex A.

The Government has on the 2 February 2022, released the White Paper on the Levelling Up agenda, there is still further clarity needed as to how the Local Government Reform agenda will affect District Councils. Therefore, Brentwood Borough Council has been exploring alternative ways in which to secure an effective and efficient way of delivering its services.

We have been creating a Strategic Partnership with Rochford District Council since November 2020, leading to the interim appointment of Jonathan Stephenson being appointed as Joint Head of Paid Service and Designated Chief Executive for both Council's from the 1 August to 28 February 2022.

Further work was carried out regarding the feasibility of the interim arrangements under s113 to become a permanent appointment, with a report taken to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on the 12 January 2022.

An Extra Ordinary Council at Rochford District Council approved the arrangement on 25 January 2022, with Brentwood Borough Council approving on the 26 January 2022 at an Extra Ordinary Council.

As we have been going through this process the view is to look in depth at shared services, and governance matters will be addressed later in 2022. This will mean more joint working on the vision to align those policies, and services that can be, this will entail a transformation board that will work with services to produce business plans to go to BBC's Policy, Resources and Economic Development prior to Council. The transformation work over the next 2.5 years will have an impact on Members workload, in that they will be expected to liaise with Rochford Members, especially Chairs and Portfolio holders. This will depend on what services are to be realigned, there is likely to be more stakeholder involvement including Members, which as the Strategic Partnership evolves more business cases will need to be approved at Committee and Council meetings.

We know from previous experience that strategic partnerships work for example we have successful partnerships with Basildon Borough Council who delivers our Revenue and Benefits function, Braintree District Council who delivers our pay-roll function, and Thurrock Council who provide assistance with Environmental Health, Licensing and Planning.

In November 2021, the Council had a Peer review undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA), during which they interviewed over 90 Officers, Members and External Stakeholders. The feedback from the review indicated that the Council had strong leadership both from Officers and Members, sound financial management, excellent relationship with businesses and effective positive relations with schools.

The Council has its own commercial wholly owned company, the Council also has an ambitious strategy to deliver more homes, and more employment regeneration of the Borough. This has meant complex financial and legal due diligence, in order to fully engage Members they are required to attend regular all Member briefing of the Council, to be able to engage with the electorate when explaining the Council's strategic plan.

As the Local Development Plan has been found sound, this will be going to an Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 23 March 2022. Once adopted the identified housing and employment land will be coming forward for planning permissions, which will increase the number of Member briefing sessions they will be expected to attend and also increase the number of Planning Committee meetings that are likely to be needed.

In order for the Members to be able to effectively engage with residents of the Borough, our Strategic Partner, and joint committee, further that due to the green agenda, including adopting a Climate Strategy, and strategic housing development the Committee numbers may well increase from five to six or seven. This will have an impact on the number of hours the Members will be expected to commit to their workload. Whilst technology has become wider used, Committees and meetings of the Council can no longer be remote or hybrid, which increases the time the Members spend at meetings.

### 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?

Covering an area of approximately 153 square kilometres, the Borough of Brentwood is the ninth largest local authority in Essex in terms of area and is located 20 miles north-east of central London, just outside the M25.

At the centre of the borough is the market town of Brentwood and its suburban areas. The town is surrounded by countryside, within which are several villages. These villages are linked to Brentwood and use the town for services and facilities. The unique nature of our market town and surrounding villages set amongst the countryside is fundamental to the borough’s character which is 89% greenbelt.

The borough has excellent connectivity through rail and road connections including links with the M25 and A12 and fast rail links with London and East Anglia. The airports of Stansted, London City and Southend are a 30-minute drive away. The Dartford Tunnel and Tilbury Docks are also within easy reach.

With a good mix of shops, schools, employers, and recreational facilities; the town centres of Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone; and being surrounded by open countryside, the borough of Brentwood has a locational advantage that is attractive to businesses and offers the best of both worlds to its residents’.

In 2018, the total population of the of the Borough of Brentwood was an estimated 76,550 people making it the second smallest local authority area in Essex in terms of population size.

The proportion of broad age groups in the Brentwood Borough looks similar to the county average with 0–15-year-olds (18.7%), 16 to 64 years olds (61%) and people aged 65+ (20.3%) all being within close to the percentages for Essex as a whole (18.9%, 60.6% and 20.5%).

Being predominately in the Green Belt planning takes up a large proportion of Members’ time including unlawful developments within their wards, the development of the borough in general, and with cross border developments with neighbouring local authorities.

The Council has its own housing stock, which means housing is another issue that makes up a significant part of Members most asked about subjects.

Also having our own depot and waste/recycling teams means that Members are engaged with the community as part of their workload.

The Council has committed to reducing its carbon footprint, issues regarding recycling, electric charging points, sustainability, looking at how to reduce pollution and deliver effective, efficient and greener solutions for the borough also takes up a high proportion of Members time.

We have close links with the Community and local businesses, including the three High Streets within the borough, Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone, for example holding a Business Showcase and Stars of Brentwood Awards in October 2021. Further on the 11 January 2021 a Town Centre Conference involving, the Council, local businesses, the police, and stakeholders the community took place.

This engage is illustrated by the level of turnout for elections of all types:

- Borough elections average turnout is 34.45% compared with the national average of 30%
- Local election turnout has increased from 33.93% in 2015 to 37% in 2021.
- EU Referendum (2016) for Brentwood was 79.5% compared to UK average of 72.2.%

- EU Parliamentary Election 23 May 2019 Brentwood turnout was 37.9 compared to the UK average of 36.4%
- UK Parliamentary Election 2019, turnout for Brentwood was 70.4% compared to the UK average of 67.3%.

Community engagement has increased during the pandemic, this has resulted in more engagement between Members and residents.

### Social demographics

MOSAIC is a tool for identifying the characteristics of households within an area. There are 66 different household types in MOSAIC and some or all of them can be present in an area. The top three most prevalent household types in Brentwood, representing 21% of households are:

"J40 Career Builders" 7.6% of households	"F22 Legacy Elders" 6.6% of households	"B07 Alpha Families" 6.4% of households
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s without children.</li> <li>• Renting or owning nice apartments in pleasant neighbourhoods.</li> <li>• Good incomes of £20-49k from career jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly singles, with average age of 78.</li> <li>• Now mostly living alone in their own comfortable suburban homes on final salary pensions.</li> <li>• Household incomes of £under 30k.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-achieving families with school age children.</li> <li>• Married couples aged 36-55 with two professional careers.</li> <li>• High salaries – household incomes of over £70k - and large mortgages.</li> </ul>

The average weekly income for a Brentwood resident working full time in 2018 was £788.40, £135.50 (18%) higher than the average for Essex and £179.20 (23.8%) higher than the average for England. This was the highest average income out of 12 Districts in the county.

The average house price in Brentwood is £452,606.

Claimant levels in the borough are 10% lower than the national average.

Deprivation in the borough is lower than average, however about 10.8% children live in poverty.

Out of which 59,705 were eligible to vote in 2021 this is predicted, using the challenge data, to raise to 70,877 by 2028.

The proportion of broad age groups in the Brentwood Borough looks similar to the county average with 0–15-year-olds (18.7%), 16 to 64 years olds (61%) and people aged 65+ (20.3%) all being within close to the percentages for Essex as a whole (18.9%, 60.6% and 20.5%).



## Economy

Located in the heart of Essex, Brentwood is an attractive location for business, combining a high-quality environment with close proximity to London and a well-qualified workforce.

There are four rail stations located in the borough, with direct lines to London Liverpool Street Station into Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, and between London Fenchurch Street Station and Southend-on-Sea. A high proportion of the population commute to London, approximately 20,000 who to commute out of Brentwood for work, and around 17,500 people who commute to Brentwood. These figures are pre Covid levels, we do not have data over the pandemic period, we would assume to the geographical reach to London and Southend these figures would return or increase due to the future development of the borough.

Brentwood has a diverse economy, which prior to the pandemic had 4,455 businesses providing more than 35,000 jobs (NOMIS UK business count 2021). With a thriving entrepreneurial culture, there is an above average rate of business start-ups.

In summary the Borough has highly populated areas where density will increase over the next few years, including the Town Centre, various small sites, our Local Plan has been found sound by the Inspector and will go before an Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 23 March for adoption. The total housing provision is 7,146 within the local plan it is expected that the previous delivery of 55% will increase. Which will see a significant increase in the number of electors within the Borough. This increase in electors will have an impact on Members ability to provide the leadership and strategic direction for the Council.

## 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		
Governance Model	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</li> <li>➤ If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</li> <li>➤ 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?</li> <li>➤ 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.</li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Council operates under the Committee system with a Ceremonial Mayor elected from the members annually.</p> <p>At Annual Council in May the Leader and Deputy are elected for up to a four-year term.</p> <p>Currently the Council has six committees, one of which is an Emergency Committee that meets only in exceptional circumstances, the Monitoring Officer has to provide written reasons why the Committee needs to convene. The Committees are:</p> <p>Policy, Resources and Economic Development (PRED) (9 members)          Planning and Licensing (P&amp;L) (12 members)          Audit and Scrutiny (A&amp;S) (9 members)          Community and Health (C&amp;E) (9 members)          Environmental Enforcement and Housing Committee. (EE and H) (9 members)          Emergency Committee (10 members)</p> <p>The Leader of the Council is currently looking if Housing should be a separate committee, as the Council has an ambitious Strategic Housing Development Plan. The Council also has an ambitious climate change agenda, including adopting a Climate Strategy, that supports that there will need to be at least one more committee of the Council. This will inevitably mean an increase in the workload of Members. The agenda also includes community engagement and consultation.</p>

	<p>The Strategic Housing programme includes regeneration of existing sites and developing new homes on small sites throughout the Borough including former garage sites which will contribute the circa 3000 new home that will be online the next 5 years.</p> <p>The Council retains its own housing stock and part of the Strategic Housing Strategy is not only looking at external agreements (s106) regarding affordable housing but to build and develop its own housing stock, also to build homes for sale and affordable rents</p> <p>Each Committee is proportionally represented, using Widdicombe rules. A small increase in the pool of availability of Members would effectively assist Members in time management..</p> <p>Policy, Resources and Economic Development (PRED) is the main Committee where policies and strategies are approved.</p> <p>The Council has member working groups to develop the Vision for the Borough and has set its Corporate Strategy 2020 -2025, annual strategic objectives are agreed by the Chairs of the Committees which are then incorporated into a yearly plan that is reported at the end of the year to PRED, then to Ordinary Council on the 16 March 2022.</p> <p>Examples of the working groups that operate are:</p> <p>Constitution Working Group membership is cross party, the CWG meet to discuss and make recommendations to Full Council on amendments to the Constitution.</p> <p>There is a Financial Incentives Group that explore various projects to ensure the Council can optimise opportunities to benefit the borough.</p> <p>There are also various task and finish groups that are set up by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee that can scrutinise decisions both pre and post adoption.</p> <p>Each Chair is expected to contribute to the strategic agenda of the Council aligning business with the key priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2020 -2025 (at Annex B) which are:</p>
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- Growing our Economy
- Protecting our Environment
- Developing our Communities
- Improving Housing
- Delivering an Efficient and Effective Council

The Leaders key role is to:

- Provide political leadership to the Council
- Represent the Council on strategic partnerships for example on ASELA (Association of South Essex Local Authorities) and the Rochford and Brentwood Strategic Partnership.
- Be an ambassador for the Council.
- Work with Officers to lead the organisation.
- Work with Officers to set the strategic vision for the Council.
- Lead in partnership and community work.
- Uphold high ethical standards of behaviour and governance

The Council is not planning to change its governance model as it believes that the Committee system is democratic and enables all parties to participate in setting strategies and making decisions. Reports are taken to Committees, debated and voted on by representatives of each political group. We are looking to increase the amount of Committees to enable the Corporate Priorities to be delivered.

The Council does believe that due to its strategic delivery programme including, housing, climate change and regeneration has had an impact on Members ability to continue to provide in depth leadership to their communities. By increasing by two there will be small be significant shift of members being available to attend Committees and meetings and to deliver the strategic leadership required. Further and greater use of the scrutiny functions, for example the bringing of business cases for service delivery under the Strategic Partnership will be subject to scrutiny prior to be recommended to Full Council for approval. The Council's ambitious strategic plans will mean greater demands on the Members.

<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>
	Analysis	Not applicable the Council does not operate a Leader and Cabinet system, but is due to its ambitious strategic programme developing the Chairs of Committee to have oversight and scrutiny of the scope of the Committee. More delegations to officers and Chairs will be needed to ensure that the business of the Council can be moved forward after the decision has been made by the appropriate committee, further there will be greater use of the scrutiny function of the Council.
<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>
	Analysis	<p>The Terms of References for each Committee are in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. Part 4 of the Constitution sets out the Rules of Procedure on how meetings should be conducted, decisions are decided on a simple voting system, which can be recorded if the request is supported by five other members present.</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegations to Officers are in Annex A to the Constitution and are updated to reflect changes in legislation, roles and directorates as necessary.</p> <p>The Council will be looking to align as much as possible its own Constitution with that of Rochford District Council, though having different governance models. Due to the highly complex nature of the work that the Council is undertaking to deliver its strategic goals means more recommendations include delegated authority for officers to make decisions but in consultation with Chairs and the Leader. This has also meant an increase in the work of the Members.</p>

### 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.**

<b>Topic</b>	
<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>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>The Council has one Audit and Scrutiny Committee to discharge the functions under section 21 Local Government Act 2000, the detail of its terms of reference are in Part 3 of the Constitution. The Committee consists of nine members representing all parties.</p> <p>The Committee manages its work through the annual work programme which is set by each Committee and reported to Council each year. The content of the work programme is aligned with the Corporate Priorities and Council ambitions.</p> <p>The Committee is aligned to ensure that the workload is beneficial to the efficient and effective running of the Council.</p> <p>In its recent Peer Review the Council was commended for its strong financial management and forecasting to ensure that the Council could deliver a balanced budget despite the pandemic.</p> <p>The Committee workload includes scrutinising the performance of the Council operations including key performance indicators, reporting to Council and committees as necessary.</p> <p>Working groups are setup where necessary to undertake more detailed scrutiny and investigations. Officers and Members can be asked to attend the Committee as required.</p>

	<p>Members outside the largest political group can Chair the Committee.</p> <p>The Committee covers a wide remit including all aspects of the Council's work and performance of external organisations and stakeholders. For example, to scrutiny the Council's contract with AXIS, who maintain and improve the Council's housing stock.</p> <p>The Council has an ambitious strategic vision for the next five years including delivering more housing, more employment regeneration, creating more economic opportunities, improve the well-being of its residents and delivering all this financially sustainable. Also ensuring that there is transparency in decision making to ensure both Member and resident engagement. This includes more public engagement and looking to ensure community cohesion of understanding place and what that means to communities.</p> <p>To ensure that these decisions are open and transparent the role of pre-scrutiny of proposals will become a key element of the Members work, for example each change to service delivery in the Strategic Partnership will come before the Audit &amp; Scrutiny Committee prior to going before a Council meeting. This will have an adverse impact on Members' time meaning more attendance at meetings.</p>	
<b>Statutory Function</b>	<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>	
<b>Planning</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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 style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>The Council has one Planning and Licensing Committee consisting of 12 members, the membership is politically balanced. The Planning Committee is scheduled to meet 10 times a year, the Council has no scheduled meetings in August, nor during the Pre-Election Period. This may need to change due to the Local Plan being found sound, once adopted larger and more strategic applications will be made, to ensure each can be examined, debated and deliberated prior to decisions being made.</p> <p>The forward plan is flexible, and the Committee can be called to consider applications as necessary on other occasions.</p> <p>The main function is to determine planning applications that are reported to them, including those referred by ward members. The Committee meets on a regular basis to ensure that the local planning authority meets its statutory timescales for determining applications, majors within 13 weeks and all others within 8 weeks.</p> <p>Brentwood Borough is predominately within London's Green Belt (89% of the total area), along with conservation areas and other distinct characteristics. Member briefings are used to ensure that the committee has a local understanding of specific planning applications and wider issues, which are often open to all other members to attend as part of the open sharing of information.</p> <p>The Council offers pre-application service to provide advice prior to applications being submitted. This is in place to aid applicants understand planning policies and requirements. The Committee recommends to Ordinary Council changes to planning policies, guidance and strategies.</p>
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		<p>Ward Members who are not part of the Committee can speak to the Committee, also members of the public can provide notice that they wish to speak at Committee.</p> <p>There are often contentious issues to be determined with polarised positions. Members of the Committee are aware that decisions can lead to appeals and substantial costs being awarded against the Council where an inspector decides the Council has not made the correct decision. Therefore, the Council expects members of the Committee to have the requisite knowledge to determine applications fairly and transparently. No member can sit on the Planning Committee until they have completed appropriate training. Training is refreshed at least annually, specific topical training may be provided throughout the year as necessary.</p> <p>The Council has a scheme of delegations that enables officers to determine certain applications.</p> <p>Planning matters and enquiries including enforcement make up a significant proportion of work for ward members.</p> <p>Due to the complexity of the planning applications coming before Council all members are expected to attend all member briefings, including those on the Committee.</p>
<p><b>Licensing</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>

	<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>The Planning and Licensing Committee consists of 12 members politically balanced. The Licensing function of the Committee is responsible for reviewing the policies of the Council that relate to licensing and regulatory functions. It has responsibility for all fees and charges, licensing and registration matters relating to gambling and licenced activities.</p> <p>The Council appoints Licensing Sub-Committees to consider and hear applications that do not sit in the scope of officer delegations. Including appeals against refusal or revocation of licences for premises, hackney, or private hire drivers.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee consists of three members of the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings can be held in the day or evening as required. As more regeneration takes place for example the Baytree Centre there will be more licenced premises in the Town Centre which will lead to an increase in the Committee and Sub-Committees workload.</p> <p>The Borough has an extensive night-time economy which can lead to complaints and community safety issues this is a significant proportion of ward members enquiries.</p> <p>The ambitions of the Council to grow our economy and regenerate the Town Centres including the Bay Tree Centre will lead to an increase in both licensing and enforcement activity, which will impact on Members time undertaking Council business this will be an increase.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Other Bodies</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></li> </ul>

	Analysis	<p>The Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee, also scrutinises the Council's annual accounts and is integral to the process of setting the budget. It also, considers risk management, performance data, internal and external audit plans, monitors internal audit and monitors the recommendations of both internal and external audit. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee meets at least four times a year and will have met six times in the municipal year 2021/22.</p>
<b>External Partnerships</b>	<p>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.</p>	
<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>	
Analysis	<p><b>ASELA</b>  The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) is a partnership of neighbouring councils that have come together to deliver growth and prosperity in the region.</p> <p>The local authority partners are Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council.</p> <p>In January 2018, the partnership agreed to work together and signed a Memorandum of Understanding. ASELA has spent three years looking at how working together across existing local government boundaries will help deliver improved infrastructure and economic growth.</p> <p>With the added impact COVID-19 has had on our businesses and communities, there is an opportunity to collectively grasp this moment and deliver economic, social and public service transformation.</p>	

ASELA wants to be at the forefront and support the south Essex region to be a UK leader in economic recovery, and drive sustained economic growth and prosperity within its communities. There is a bold and ambitious plan to create greater prosperity and quality of life for all its residents and for the benefit of the UK. Part of this plan must now be to ensure its businesses and residents recover, improve the economy locally and nationally as well as deliver the housing targets set by government.

The six District Councils have agreed to form a Joint Committee, with Essex County Council under the Local Government Act 1972, to ensure good governance and transparency of meetings. Essex County Council will shortly be taking a paper for a decision to join the Committee.

ASELA has also formed a Financial Investment Working Group that will collaborate to seek income generation to deal with current and future financial pressures.

Brentwood have traditionally played a leading role in ASELA and currently Councillor Hossack is the Chair.

### **BEBA**

Brentwood Environmental Business Alliance (BEBA) is a new initiative that brings together businesses across and beyond the borough. It was designed to enable a platform for the council to engage and work with businesses to develop the boroughs' development towards being a carbon neutral area by 2040. Businesses sign up to the pledge and the commitment to work together to reduce their own CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, whilst also working to transfer ideas, knowledge and experiences, including best practice in the sustainability and decarbonisation fields.

### **Rochford Partnership**

The Council at an Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 26 January 2022 made the decision to enter into a strategic partnership with Rochford District Council. The Councils cannot merge due to not being co-terminus, have agreed to look at how they can work together to maximise efficiencies to enable both Councils to offer effective and transparent decision making. The partnership will assist all Councillors to have the support from Officers to ensure they can carry out their decision making equally and fairly.

	<p><i>The Council and its members are active in participation with other partnerships. Some of which are listed below:</i></p> <p>Thames estuary growth board,          Opportunity South Essex          Thames Chase          Brentwood Biz Partnership          Community Safety Partnership          Police, Fire and Crime Panel</p> <p>This partnership working identified above, plus the Strategic Partnership mean that Members' are spending more time than previously on Council business. This will naturally increase as the number of residents increase.</p>
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### Community Leadership

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

Topic		Description
<b>Community Leadership</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>The Local Government Association undertook a census of local authority members in 2018 reporting in 2019. Within the responses they found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members spent, on average, 22 hours per week on council business, the largest chunk of which was on council meetings (8 hours);</li> <li>• 39 per cent of councillors were also members of another public body;</li> <li>• 85 per cent of Members became Members in order to serve their community;</li> <li>• 60 per cent thought that representing local residents was among the most important role of Members, and 51 per cent thought the same of supporting local communities;</li> </ul> <p>All members are contactable by email, this is often a preferred route. The members can use the Members Enquiries system to contact officers with residents’ concerns.</p> <p>Whilst technology has become more widely available there are pockets within the Borough that has little or no band width, thus making remote connection with residents difficult. This has led to some work having to be undertaken by the use of newsletters, which are time consuming to put together.</p> <p>There are nine Parishes within the Borough. The Council is currently reviewing its current arrangements with the Parish Councils. There are six monthly liaison meetings with the Parish Council’s which involve the Leader and the Ward members for that Parish.</p> <p>There are various double hatters at the Council both County Council Members and BBC, and Parish and BBC, the Police Fire Crime Commissioner is also a Member of the Council.</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>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<p>A short survey was sent to all Members to determine the work load out of 37 Members 21 responded with the following averages:</p> <p>Attendance at Council meetings, Committee etc (including preparation): 6.98 hours</p> <p>Virtual, hybrid and face-to-face activities: 3.19 hours</p> <p>Engaging with constituents, surgeries, enquires (including preparation): 8.09 hours</p> <p>Working with community groups, community engagement etc (including preparation): 2.93 hours</p> <p>Other - External meeting, seminars training, council related travel: 2.5 hours</p> <p>Total spent on Council business: 23.69 hours from the survey is mostly spent on Council meetings both Committees and briefings.</p> <p>The above needs to be looked at against the diversity of the Members, we are increasingly seeing Members elected who also work full time and have demanding careers. To encourage diverse participation within the democratic process the work load for Members must appear manageable for them to provide the strategic directions to ensure that residents voices are heard and can engage and influence decision making within the Council. If the workload is perceived as being too much we will not be able to accomplish this goal.</p>

## Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance 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 Council has an ambitious Corporate Plan and Vision which along with the Strategic Partnership with Rochford, ASELA, BEBA and other partnerships will mean the Members case work will increase. The ambition to regenerate the Town Centre, Brentwood Centre and other key employment sites along with an increase in the housing provision, over 7000 identified in the Local Plan and the additionally properties in the Strategic Housing Plan the Council will deliver, In order to prevent this having a detrimental effect on the residents of the borough, the Council has carefully considered the question of Council size, we have considered the predicted electoral figures based on the challenge data, the Council believes that an increase by two to 39 Members would be appropriate.

The reasons for the conclusion is set out below.

We have looked at the different types of Governance model, including changing from the current committee system to Cabinet and Leader. At this point it has been concluded that due to the emerging Strategic Partnership with Rochford District Council , that this is not the appropriate time to undertake a change of governance.

Having proportional representation on the Committees including the main Committee, PRED, we believe that this is the most democratic Governance model, enabling participation by all parties in decisions making and strategic goal setting of the Council.

The Audit and Scrutiny Committee, provides adequate scrutiny to hold decision makers to account, the number of Members on this committee we believe is the minimum required.

An Extra Ordinary Council at Rochford District Council approved the arrangement on 25 January 2022, with Brentwood Borough Council approving on the 26 January 2022 at an Extra Ordinary Council.



The Rochford Strategic Partnership will mean more engagement, including training across the partnership, member involvement on a Panel during the transformation period and after.

As we have been going through this process the view is to look in depth at shared services, and governance matters will be addressed later in 2022. This will mean more joint working on the vision to align those policies, and services that can be, this will entail a transformation board that will work with services to produce business plans to go to BBC's Policy, Resources and Economic Development prior to Council. The transformation work over the next 2.5 years will have an impact on Members' casework, in that they will be expected to liaise with Rochford Members, especially Chairs and Portfolio holders. This will depend on what services are to be realigned, there is likely to be more stakeholder involvement including Members, which as the Strategic Partnership evolves more business cases will need to be approved at Committee and Council meetings.

We know from previous experience that strategic partnerships work for example we have successful partnerships with Basildon Borough Council who delivers our Revenue and Benefits function, Braintree District Council who delivers our pay-roll function, and Thurrock Council who provide assistance with Environmental Health, Licensing and Planning.

In order for the Members to be able to effectively engage with residents of the Borough, our Strategic Partner, and joint committee, further that due to the green agenda, including adopting a Climate Strategy, and strategic housing development the Committee numbers may well increase from five to six or seven. This will have an impact on the number of hours the Members will be expected to commit to their workload. Whilst technology has become wider used, Committees and meetings of the Council can no longer be remote or hybrid, which increases the time the Members spend at meetings.

The Borough has highly populated areas where density will increase over the next few years, including the Town Centre, various small sites, our Local Plan has been found sound by the Inspector and will go before an Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 23 March for adoption. The total housing provision is 7,146 within the local plan it is expected that the previous delivery of 55% will increase. Which will see a significant increase in the number of electors within the Borough. This increase in electors will have an impact on Members' ability to provide the leadership and strategic direction for the Council.

The Leader of the Council is currently looking if Housing should be a separate committee, as the Council has an ambitious Strategic Housing Development Plan. The Council also has an ambitious climate change agenda, including adopting a Climate Strategy, that supports that there will need to be at least one more committee of the Council. This will inevitably mean an increase in the workload of Members. The agenda also includes community engagement and consultation.

The Strategic Housing programme includes regeneration of existing sites and developing new homes on small sites throughout the Borough including former garage sites which will contribute the circa 3000 new home that will be online the next 5 years.

The Council does believe that due to its strategic delivery programme including, housing, climate change and regeneration has had an impact on Members' ability to continue to provide in depth leadership to their communities. By increasing by two there will be small be significant shift of members being available to attend Committees and meetings and to deliver the strategic leadership required. Further and greater use of the scrutiny functions, for example the bringing of business cases for service delivery under the Strategic Partnership will be subject to scrutiny prior to be recommended to Full Council for approval. The Council's ambitious strategic plans will mean greater demands on the Members.

The Committee covers a wide remit including all aspects of the Council's work and performance of external organisations and stakeholders. For example, to scrutiny the Council's contract with AXIS, who maintain and improve the Council's housing stock.

The Council has an ambitious strategic vision for the next five years including delivering more housing, more employment regeneration, creating more economic opportunities, improve the well-being of its residents and delivering all this financially sustainable. Also ensuing that there is transparency in decision making to ensure both Member and resident engagement. This includes more public engagement and looking to ensure community cohesion of understanding place and what that means to communities.

As the Local Development Plan has been found sound, this will be going to an Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 23 March 2022. Once adopted the identified housing and employment land will be coming forward for planning permissions, which will increase the number of Member briefing sessions they will be expected to attend and also increase the number of Planning Committee meetings that are likely to be needed.

The Council has one Planning and Licensing Committee consisting of 12 members, the membership is politically balanced. The Planning Committee is scheduled to meet 10 times a year, the Council has no scheduled meetings in August, nor during the Pre-Election Period. This may need to change due to the Local Plan being found sound, once adopted larger and more strategic applications will be made, to ensure each can be examined, debated and deliberated prior to decisions being made.

Due to the complexity of the planning applications coming before Council all members are expected to attend all member briefings, including those on the Committee. The planning function of the Council is of particular relevance to the Council size. The Local Development Plan (LDP) identifies growth up to 2033, including over 8,000 new homes. This is critical for growth given the need to allocate current Green Belt land for future development, therefore unlocking significant growth well above historic rates of housebuilding in the borough.

We also have a Strategic Housing Development Plan that will see the Council regenerating land and assets to deliver new homes, meaning greater numbers of electors being present in the Borough which will increase member's workloads significantly.

The Borough will grow from 59,685 to 70,877 households, an 18.75% increase.

The ambitions of the Council to grow our economy and regenerate the Town Centres including the Bay Tree Centre will lead to an increase in both licensing and enforcement activity, which will impact on Members time undertaking Council business this will be an increase

ASELA has a Joint Committee under s101 of the LGA 1972, the current Chair is the Leader of the Council, the vice-chair is the Leader of Rochford District Council. This Partnership has a strategic focus to deliver housing across the south of Essex, including infrastructure and digital infrastructure. Reports from that Committee need to be ratified by the separate member Councils, as the Vision for ASELA is evolved more casework and Committee attendance will be required of Members, including Full Council attendance.

The burgeoning green agenda and Climate Strategy forms part of the Corporate Strategy and Vision for the Borough. For this to be achieved the Council is looking at separating the Environmental into a Committee of its own, this would mean that if the Members were to reduce there would be a smaller pool, which would lead to an increase in the casework each Member would need to undertake. There BEBA partnership will increase stakeholder engagement, again linking to an increase in casework for Members.

We believe that the number of Councillors proposed considers the increase in work that will occur due to the increase in electors. Further working in partnership with ASELA, BEBA and Rochford will increase the workload of some members. Though an increase from the current 37, this is felt justifiable to provide effective and efficient access to democracy for the residents of the Borough.

The increased use in technology by residents has also impacted on the work of Members, providing the ability for example of using email to make contact and answering of enquiries quicker. We have taken this into consideration when calculating the number of Members needed to enable the Council to be effective in its decision making, transparency and resident engagement. The ability to connect and respond by using non-traditionally face to face meeting mean that Members can take on more on an individual basis hence the confidence of the Council to round down from 42 to 39 Members as the size submission.

The Council has looked at whether the Members could provide the support necessary to the residents to ensure that their voices are heard by reducing the number of Members to 33 or 36. By looking at the fact the number of Committees is likely to increase the pool of Members available to sit on these would be diminished. If you then take the increase in the number of electors per Member and the additional enquiries this would create could have an adverse effect on the Members ability to continue to lead and ensure that residents voices are heard, and meaningful decisions and discussions take place to ensure harmonising and community cohesion continues to be improved. To enable the Council to be held accountable for the decisions or proposals that need to move forward the ambitious strategic vision forward.