

# Council Size Submission: Template

Dudley Metropolitan 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 is a submission by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council under powers delegated to the Chief Executive as approved by the Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 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.*

## Identified by the Commission

## 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 Council continually reviews its governance arrangements to ensure they remain effective and fit for purpose. The Constitution is reviewed annually by the Monitoring Officer. The existing Cabinet with Leader system has worked effectively since its adoption following the Local Government Act 2000. There have been changes over the years to the designation of Cabinet Members and the number/remit of Scrutiny Committees to reflect key strategic and service developments. Overall, the governance arrangements enable the Council to focus on strategic policy development, budget issues and national policy trends.

No major concerns have been raised regarding our ongoing governance arrangements. The Council continues to respond positively to any issues or observations raised periodically in reviews/reports from external organisations such as the Local Government Association, Ofsted, External Auditors and the Local Government Ombudsman. For example, the Council has taken part in an LGA Corporate Peer review, which recommended that a review and refresh of the governance arrangements be undertaken to see if they are fit for purpose in the changing political

environment and financial situation. The Council has developed and evolved its arrangements for overview and scrutiny given the size of the authority and makes arrangements for the effective discharge of statutory and regulatory functions. The existing governance arrangements are expected to continue subject to ongoing review to monitor their effectiveness.

In 2017, the Council undertook public consultation concerning potential [changes to our electoral arrangements](#). Based on the outcome of that consultation, the Council decided to retain the current process of election by thirds. Election by thirds provides a degree of continuity and stability that assists with the effective leadership and governance of the Council.

### 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?

The Metropolitan Borough of Dudley was created in 1974 following the Local Government Act 1972, through a merger of the existing Dudley County Borough with the municipal boroughs of Stourbridge and Halesowen.

Dudley borough is made up of four major towns: Dudley as the civic centre, Brierley Hill, Stourbridge, and Halesowen.

Dudley is the historic capital of the ‘Black Country’ and has rich well documented history, ranging from its past as an Anglo-Saxon settlement, through to its globally significant role in the Industrial Revolution right up to its current position as a renowned centre for business and innovation.

Whilst industrial sites are a key component of the future city area, a surprising 30% of the borough is made up of beautiful greenspaces and nationally recognised parks and nature reserves. This includes Wren’s Nest at the centre of the UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark - one of just eight geoparks in the United Kingdom and was the first large scale urban area to receive this status.

Dudley Borough is a centre for tourism and is home to a number of famous visitor attractions including the Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Canal & Caverns. In 2019(pre-pandemic) The Black Country Living Museum alone received 358, 871 visitors and the entire borough's visitor figures were over 1 million.

Dudley borough covers an area of 38 square miles (98 sq km) and has a current population of 322,400, according to estimates published by the Office for National Statistics in 2020. This makes Dudley one of the largest metropolitan boroughs in England.

The borough contains 140,324 residential properties.

The population has seen sustained growth in recent years, with approximately 17,700 more people in the Borough now compared to the estimate in 2000, with 18.1% of the population being aged under 15 and 20.4% being 65 and over.

Population projections based on the 2018 estimates predict that the population of Dudley Borough will increase to 350,100 by 2040, an increase of 8.6% from the 2020 figure. Those aged 40 to 50 and over 65 are expected to undergo the largest increase in numbers over this time period.

The largest ethnic group within Dudley is White British with 277,050 residents, equivalent to 88.5% of the population. This is notably higher than the figure for England (79.8%). The second largest ethnic group in Dudley is Pakistani with 3.3% of the population, compared to 2.1% for England as a whole. (Census 2011)

Dudley has continued to welcome people who want to make the borough their home and Dudley is proud of its diverse, multicultural make-up with 11% of the population being from Black, Asian and minority ethnic background. This diversity is demonstrated through Dudley's education system where more than 100 different languages are spoken by children where English isn't their first language.

Dudley is the 104<sup>th</sup> most deprived of 317 local authorities in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation, Indices of Deprivation 2019) ranking it as less deprived than five of the other six districts in the West Midlands conurbation.

28.6% of the Dudley population live amongst the 20% most deprived in England, these are principally found in a zone covering Dudley, Pensnett, Netherton and Brierley Hill, but also include parts of Coseley, Lye, Halesowen and Stourbridge. Conversely 16.9% of the population live in areas amongst the 20% least deprived in England. Wards with social deprivation typically have high social housing concentration and significant health issues. This will inevitably lead to high volumes of complex casework and lead to high workloads for Councillors.

### 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		
	Key lines of explanation	<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 committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i></li> <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>
Governance Model	Analysis	<p>Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has 72 Councillors, elected by thirds. The Council's political composition in 2022/23 is Conservative 46, Labour 26.</p> <p>Dudley Council's governance structure and arrangements are defined in our <a href="#">Constitution</a>.</p> <p>The Council operates under the 'strong Leader with Cabinet' model in line with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation. The Council has operated the Leader with Cabinet/ Executive system of governance since 2000. Our governance arrangements are kept under review by the Monitoring Officer who undertakes an annual review of the Constitution.</p> <p>The full Council comprises all 72 elected members and meets approximately 8 times per year. It has responsibility for approving the overall policy framework including the budget. It retains responsibility for certain functions, however, most of its powers and duties are delegated to the Cabinet, Cabinet Members</p>

		<p>or Committees operating within the decision-making structure set out in the Constitution. The full Council also has a key role in holding the Cabinet to account.</p> <p>The Leader is elected for a 4-year term of office (usually at the Annual Council meeting in May). The Leader appoints Cabinet Members and decides the allocation of portfolio responsibilities within the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>The Cabinet comprises 10 Members - namely the Leader of the Council plus 9 other Cabinet Members each with a defined portfolio.</p>
<p><b>Portfolios</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<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>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>For 2022/23, the 10 Cabinet Members have responsibility for the following portfolios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader of the Council (Policy)</li> <li>• Deputy Leader, Finance, Legal and Procurement</li> <li>• Regeneration and Enterprise</li> <li>• Waste Management and Climate Change</li> <li>• Highways and Public Realm</li> <li>• Children’s Services</li> <li>• Housing and Communities</li> <li>• Public Health</li> <li>• Adult Social Care</li> <li>• Commercialisation and Human Resources</li> </ul> <p>The Leader has a number of key areas of responsibility, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing political leadership to the Council</li> <li>- Appointing Cabinet Members</li> <li>- Representing and acting as an ambassador for the Council</li> <li>- Overall responsibility for the policy and strategic direction of the Council</li> <li>- Implementation of the Council Plan objectives and policy framework</li> </ul>



- Chairing and leading the work of the Cabinet
- Participating in the Council's collective decision making
- Working with overview and scrutiny
- Maintaining high standards of governance
- Working closely with the Chief Executive and other Officers to lead the work of the Council.
- Representing the Council on other bodies, locally, regionally and nationally
- Leading on partnership and community work

Cabinet Members have defined areas of responsibility and have key responsibilities, including:

- Leading on their respective portfolios, working closely with other Councillors and Officers
- Responsibility for the policy and strategic direction of functions relating to their portfolio
- Championing issues within their portfolio
- Implementing the Council Plan and policy framework within their areas of responsibility
- Approving and amending policies of a significant/strategic nature in line with powers delegated to them
- Participating in Cabinet meetings and the Council's collective decision making
- Partnership working with other agencies, bodies, organisations and stakeholders
- Representing the Council on other bodies, locally, regionally and nationally
- Attending Overview and Scrutiny Committees (as required)

Collectively, the Cabinet makes decisions affecting local services and makes recommendations to the full Council on the overall policy direction. The Cabinet must make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. Any decisions that are outside the budget or policy framework must be referred to the Full Council.

The Council's Scheme of Delegation provides for the delegation of decision-making powers to Cabinet Members within their defined areas of responsibility. Decisions made by Cabinet Members must be within the overall policy framework and budget approved by the Council.

The Cabinet meets formally and collectively 8 times per year (with extraordinary meetings called as and when necessary). Meetings are chaired by the Leader of the Council. The Opposition Group appoints 10 Shadow Cabinet Members who attend formal Cabinet meetings to speak but not vote.

		<p>The Cabinet also holds regular informal meetings (approximately 2 per month) to discuss policy direction and major issues. The Leader and Cabinet Members work closely with the Chief Executive and Directors in developing the policy direction. Regular briefings take place for Cabinet Members. Shadow Cabinet Members are routinely briefed on issues relating to their portfolios. Scrutiny Committees are also involved in aspects of policy development, as part of the Annual Scrutiny Programme, and are consulted annually on the Revenue Budget Strategy.</p> <p>As senior Members of the Council, the Cabinet Members are appointed to represent the Council on a range of external bodies and other organisations. The demands made by these bodies vary but are a significant call upon the time of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members.</p> <p>The Leader and Cabinet Members are not ‘full-time’ positions. The time commitment required varies depending on portfolio responsibilities. However, the significant time commitment required of the Leader and Cabinet Members is additional to their roles as Ward Councillors. Many Councillors have other outside employment.</p>
<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>The functions and powers delegated to the Cabinet, Cabinet Members, Committees and Officers is set out in part 3 of the Council’s Constitution.</p> <p>Key functions of the Cabinet include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommending the policy framework to the Full Council</li> <li>- Approving other policies, plans and strategies</li> <li>- Recommending the budget and Council Tax to the Full Council.</li> <li>- Implementing the policy framework and approved budget</li> </ul> <p>The Scheme of Delegation provides for decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively at the appropriate level. Where decisions are to be made at Full Council or by the Cabinet, reports are submitted to formally</p>

	<p>convened meetings in line with legislative requirements and the Access to Information Procedure Rules. Provision exists within these Rules for decisions to be made in urgent or emergency circumstances.</p> <p>Where decisions are made by individual Cabinet Members, the Council has a system of 'Decision Sheets' which are published and made available on the Council's Internet site (unless decisions involve confidential or exempt information). Details of Decisions made by Cabinet Members are subject to the usual publication and scrutiny 'call in' rules unless urgency applies in limited circumstances. Summaries of decisions made by Cabinet Members are reported to ordinary meetings of the Full Council.</p> <p>Where decisions are delegated to the Chief Executive, Directors or other Officers, the Council has a system of recording these in Decision Memorandums, which are also routinely published on the Council's Internet site (unless they contain confidential or exempt information).</p> <p>Where major decisions are taken at Full Council, all 72 Members are involved. The 10 Members of the Cabinet make other decisions collectively at their formal meetings (Note: Shadow Cabinet Members attend and speak at all Formal Cabinet meetings but do not vote). The 62 Members of the Council who are not appointed to the Cabinet may be involved in policy development and consultation on key decisions through their appointment to the 5 Scrutiny Committees. In addition, Members who are not appointed to the Cabinet will also serve on statutory and regulatory Committees.</p>
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### Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.

<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<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>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Dudley Council has five Scrutiny Committees, currently with 13 Councillors serving on each. This provides for appropriate levels of Member engagement in the Scrutiny process with adequate proportional representation from both political groups.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committees cover the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- Future Council Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- Health and Adult Social care Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</li> </ul> <p>The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees meet informally on a quarterly basis to discuss scrutiny work, any shared issues of concern or corporate 'cross' cutting issues. Chairs and Vice-Chairs routinely meet with relevant Officers to plan agenda items and discuss progress.</p> <p>The terms of refence are defined in Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution. Their main function is to undertake scrutiny and contribute to policy development relating to the functions of Cabinet Members and Council Directorates. Scrutiny Committee have discretion to invite external partners and others to meetings depending on the business involved. For example, during 2020/21, the Council carried out a major scrutiny review of the Council and partner response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is also a Public Forum on every agenda.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committees have considerable discretion over items to be included in the Annual Scrutiny programme. Scrutiny Committees may undertake in depth scrutiny investigations/inquiries and contribute to policy development in respect of issues/items falling within their terms of reference. Scrutiny Committees may also 'call in' decisions of the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members. Work programmes are 'member-led' and continually monitored to ensure that they remain focussed and relevant.</p>

	<p>The 62 Members of the Council who are not appointed to the Cabinet are eligible to serve on the Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committees are administered by the Democratic Services team with support from Officers in Directorates. We do not have a dedicated Scrutiny support function.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are kept under review as part of the annual review of the Constitution. The Council held a development session with the Local Government Association in March 2022 to consider our internal arrangements and best practice across the sector.</p> <p>Dudley Council previously appointed 4 Scrutiny Committees, which is considered appropriate given the size of the authority, our statutory obligations and the wide range of the Council’s functions. In 2022/23, the Council established another Scrutiny Committee to give a focus to the key priority of Climate Change and the Environment.</p> <p>Each Scrutiny Committee has 5 programmed meetings per year and may call additional meetings as required. In 2021/22 there were 26 Scrutiny Committee meetings. Meetings typically last 2-3 hours each.</p> <p>Each of the 5 Scrutiny Committees has a Scrutiny Working Group, which can be used for informal discussions and to formulate recommendations. Committees hold training/development sessions as and when required.</p> <p>The five Scrutiny Committees submit reports and recommendations to the appropriate decision takers on the outcome of scrutiny investigations, inquiries or reviews.</p> <p>The Council ensures that Scrutiny Committees are ‘outcome focussed’. An annual report is submitted to the Council in April. This provides for a review of the outcomes of past work and the planning of future Scrutiny business.</p> <p>The 5 Scrutiny Committees cover large remits with an ever-increasing volume of potential scrutiny topics. It is possible that the number of Committees or associated meetings/working groups will need to increase in future years to do justice to the workload. Scrutiny agendas can be very weighty and require Members to undertake significant research and reading.</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>

<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>
	Analysis	<p>The Planning Committee comprises 9 Members and deals with planning applications across the whole Borough. The Committee undertakes functions relating to town and country planning and development control, including tree preservation functions. Cabinet Members are not eligible to serve on this Committee. Dudley does not have area-based Planning Committees.</p> <p>Within the Constitution, the Council maintains a scheme of delegation, which is reviewed annually. Only major planning applications, or those with a significant level of public interest, are determined by the Committee. Most routine applications are deal with by Officers under delegated powers or following consultation with the Committee Chair.</p> <p>In 2021/22, there were 9 meetings of the Planning Committee (formerly called the Development Control Committee). 41 applications were submitted to the Committee. Meetings typically last for 2-3 hours. On occasions, Members undertake site visit, however, this is relatively infrequent (4 site visits were undertaken in 2021/22).</p> <p>In common with other statutory/regulatory Committees, there is a significant workload placed on Members serving on those Committees. In addition to attendance at evening meetings, Members are required to undertake a significant amount of pre-reading of complex reports, comments and plans before the formal meeting.</p>

		<p>Arrangements are reviewed annually alongside the Constitution generally. However, we do not currently anticipate any significant changes to the way the Committee operates.</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>The Licensing and Safety Committee comprises 12 Members, with statutory responsibility for licensing functions (apart from hackney carriage and private hire licensing). Cabinet Members are not eligible to serve on this Committee.</p> <p>In 2021/22, there were 3 meetings of the main Committee. Most business is delegated to the Licensing Sub-Committees.</p> <p>There are 4 Licensing Sub-Committees, each with 3 Members. Sub-Committee meetings are programmed fortnightly; however, these only take place if there is business to be transacted.</p> <p>In 2021/22, 15 Licensing Sub-Committee meetings were held. Each meeting typically lasting 2-3 hours during the morning. The Sub-Committees dealt with 21 applications during the last municipal year.</p>
<b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<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 appoints the following Committees to discharge the functions indicated:-</p> <p>Appeals Committee comprises 5 Members – Deal with the determination of all matters where a right of appeal to elected Members exists under any of the Council's policies or procedures. 18 Appeals Committee meetings</p>

were held in the 2021/2022 municipal year dealing with 53 Transport Appeals and 7 Dismissal Appeals. Appeals Committees can be complex in terms of the cases to be dealt with and the hearings can be very time consuming due to their nature. Cases may run over many hours or several days. Not all Members are able to serve on this Committee due to availability and time commitments. We have a pool of trained potential substitute Members and this would be compromised if overall Councillor numbers were reduced.

Appointments Committee comprises 9 Members – Makes recommendations to Full Council on the appointment of a Chief Executive and decides on the appointment of Directors. Only meets as and when required (1 meeting in 2022).

Audit and Standards Committee comprises 9 Members – Undertakes the overview of internal and external audit, risk management, fraud and functions relating to local government standards. Meets 5 times per year on the same basis as Scrutiny Committees. The Committee often has lengthy and complex agendas placing additional requirements on Members to read papers in advance. Many hours of preparation are required in addition to attendance at the meetings.

Standards Sub-Committee (comprises 3 Members) – To determine any complaints against elected or co-opted Members that are referred to them. Two meetings have been held in 2022.

Children’s Corporate Parenting Board comprises 12 Members - To secure cross departmental involvement and commitment throughout the Council to deliver better outcomes for children in care. The Board is responsible for the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and subsequent Delivery Plan, which will ensure the most effective means of achieving sustained service improvements. Two formal meetings of the Board are held per year. Working Groups meet quarterly.



		<p>Ernest Stevens Trusts Management Committee – comprises 6 Members - To undertake the council’s functions as a Trustee in relation to matters concerning the Ernest Stevens Trusts and all Trust land in the Borough. Meetings are held quarterly.</p> <p>Taxis Committee comprises 9 Members – Deals with functions relating to hackney carriage and private hire licensing. 10 Taxis Committee meetings were held in 2021/22. The Committee dealt with 22 cases and 3 policy reports.</p> <p>Full Council, Cabinet and main Committees meet in the evening (normally 6.00pm start). Licensing Sub-Committees, Appointments Committee, Appeals Committee and Standards Sub-Committee meet during the day.</p> <p>Both Scrutiny and Statutory/Regulatory Committees tend to maintain a mix of long-serving Members and newer Councillors within their membership. Longer serving Members provide a wealth of technical, procedural and subject matter knowledge which increases the effectiveness of the various Committees.</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>	
Analysis	Councillors are appointed as representatives on a range of different local, regional and national bodies and organisations. A full list of the (approximately 100 bodies/groups) to which the Council makes nominations is available on the <a href="#">Council’s website</a> . The vast majority of the 72 Councillors will be appointed to one or more of these outside bodies.	

	<p>At a local level, ward Councillors are typically appointed to serve on local community organisations or associations and charities. Depending on how active the individual groups are, these bodies can involve a significant time commitment alongside Members' ward duties.</p> <p>At the Regional level, there has been a significant increase in Member involvement in recent years most notably following the formation of the West Midlands Combined Authority. As well as being represented on the Board of the Combined Authority, Members are nominated to serve on 9 Boards/Committees established by the Combined Authority.</p> <p>Other significant outside body appointments are the association of Black Country Authorities, Birmingham Airport Shareholders, Black Country Consortium, Black Country Joint Executive Committee, Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Dudley Zoo Board, Dudley Health &amp; Wellbeing Board, Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, West midlands Strategic Migration partnership, West Midlands Growth Company, West Midlands Pensions Fund Committee, West Midlands Police &amp; Crime Panel, West Midlands Rail Board, West Midlands Employers and West Midlands Fire &amp; Rescue Authority.</p> <p>Nationally, the Council appoints representatives to serve on the Local Government Association General Assembly.</p> <p>Typically Members are appointed to regional/national bodies as the relevant portfolio holders, however, there are some exceptions taking account of the significant workload required. Members are required to participate in the decision making processes of the bodies concerned as representatives of Dudley MBC.</p> <p>The time commitment required is difficult to quantify as this depends on the activities of the bodies in question and the frequency of their meetings. However, work in connection with external partnerships and organisations is a significant and increasing time commitment for Members, particularly for portfolio holders and shadow portfolio holders.</p>
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### Community Leadership

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

casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>The National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2022 identified the key reason Dudley Councillors sought election was to serve the community. The representative sample from the 2022 Census showed that on average, Dudley Councillors spend approximately 24 hours per week on Council business and a further 5 hours on work in connection with their political groups. This figure will inevitably vary depending on local demands on individual Councillors and the commitments for specific portfolio holders.</p> <p>Individual Members carry out their representational role in various ways across the Borough depending on local circumstances and preferences. Some Councillors hold traditional advice surgeries or local meetings, produce newsletters or use social media. The Council's website makes contact details of Councillors publicly available to encourage residents to make contact depending on individual preferences.</p> <p>Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council held Community Forum meetings across the Borough to encourage residents to attend and raise issues with local Councillors. These are not formally constituted 'Area Committees'. The Forums have standard agenda items to allow the public to raise issues; to allow ward Councillors to raise issues and to consider recommendations on allocating community grant funding. Each ward is allocated £10,000 per annum to be allocated on the recommendations from the Forums. The Forums are advisory.</p>

		<p>The Forums will be re-launched from October, 2022 onwards covering all the electoral wards in Brierley Hill, Dudley, Dudley North, Halesowen and Stourbridge. All 72 Councillors will be invited to attend meetings, which are held quarterly in local venues. The meetings are promoted locally and public attendance is encouraged.</p> <p>The challenges associated with engaging traditionally 'hard to reach' groups is widely acknowledged. The Council has targeted information about Forums to such groups in the past. In addition, the Council maintains and promotes various accessible communication channels to recognise individual preferences.</p> <p>The Council has an annual training and development programme for Councillors. This covers a wide range of subjects such as training on induction, the Members' Code of Conduct, service on various Committees and the responsibilities of Members as data controllers for the purposes of information security. Some training is mandatory prior to Members carrying out their duties. This training programme is reviewed each year to ensure effective ongoing support to Members in carrying out their many and various roles as Councillors and representatives of Dudley MBC.</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>The way in which individual Councillors approach their casework is a matter of personal preference. Members may resolve many issues at source (eg: by telephone call or email) or by referral to the relevant service area depending on the nature of the issue.</p> <p>The Council offers a "Councillor Contact Service", which is administered by Dudley Council Plus (the Council's customer contact centre). The Councillor Contact Service is accessible via each Councillor's Portal Account, by email or by direct telephone contact. In 2021/22, a total of 6,285 cases were dealt with through the formal Councillor Contact channel (compared with 5,049 in 2019/20 and 5,261 in 2020/21).</p>

		<p>The Councillor Contact Service is the corporately agreed route by which Members should raise issues to ensure that queries are logged in the system and properly dealt with to avoid confusion and duplication. The preferred method of raising enquiries is by the online form as this will directly integrate into a case management system.</p> <p>Technology has vastly influenced the way in which local Councillors work; from raising constituents' enquiries to accessing meetings documents and information via the website. Also in communicating and engaging with other Members, Officers, local residents and others. New technology has been embraced, however, some of the more traditional ways of working have been retained such as telephone and face to face meetings depending on local circumstances.</p> <p>Dudley Council Plus advisors will, where possible, provide a response to the enquiry there and then. Where an instant response is not possible, details of the enquiry will be raised on Dynamics case management system and directed to the relevant service area. An Officer from the directorate will provide a response within 10 working days. However, some enquiries may need further investigation and need more time for a response.</p> <p>Dudley Council seeks to be a high performing authority providing excellent public services to local people. We value customer feedback about the services we deliver and the quality of how we deliver them.</p> <p>Details of our complaints procedure is available on the <a href="#">Council website</a>. In general, the Council seeks to resolve requests and complaints at service level, without the need for complaints to be escalated. Complaints should be made in the first instance to the directorate concerned, where they will be investigated. If a customer is not satisfied with the directorate response it can be reviewed by a senior officer.</p> <p>If the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the review they may raise their case with local Councillors or the Ombudsman. Very few cases are escalated for investigation by the Ombudsman. In 2021/22, the Ombudsman undertook 21 investigations and was satisfied that the Council had successfully implemented recommendations in all of these cases.</p> <p>The increasing volume and complexity of casework and other Council commitments supports the case for retaining 3 Councillors per ward. This provides for a breadth of skills and experience allowing the best possible support for constituents.</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.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## 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.

A review of ward boundaries is welcomed to re-establish comparable sized wards with equal electors per elected member.

The authority's preference is to continue with 72 Councillors, covering 24 wards, with 3 Councillors per ward.

The current electorate split over 24 wards would represent 9,763 electors per ward and 3,254 electors per Councillor (August 2022). Based on the electoral forecast for 2028 the current electoral population will increase to 249,161. Split over 24 wards this would represent 10,382 electors per ward and 3,461 electors per Councillor.

If any increase is required, the authority like to remain with 3 councillors per ward for consistency across the Borough.

There is also no appetite on changing from electing in thirds as this is felt the best method for the electorate.

# Council Size Submission: Addendum 08.12.2022

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

The authority's preference is for a Council of 72 Councillors, representing 24 wards of comparable size, with 3 Councillors per ward. This would represent no change in the number of councillors.

Other sizes were considered by the group, however, as the Council wishes to continue to be elected by thirds it looked at options for size that were divisible by three i.e., 75, 72, 69, 66 etc.

The Council currently sits a shade over the 2022 CIPFA electorate ratio group median of 3235 electors per councillor. The projected 2028 electorate would push the electorate ratio to 3461, a figure over the CIPFA group upper quintile. A reduction to just 69 Councillors would push the current ratio above the upper quintile and the forecasted 2028 ratio would be 3611; a number well in excess of the upper quintile and much higher than any of the CIPFA group councils that have been reviewed in the last 5 years. It was felt that given the expected increase in population, that a reduction of just three members would lead to a situation where elected representatives would struggle to perform their representational role and would be spread too thin. This would have a particularly adverse impact on the Council's ability to attract councillors who work or who have commitments outside the Council.

With the Leader and Cabinet model, the 10 Executive Members have significant responsibility in the context of the day-to-day business and decisions of the Council. This number includes the Leader and all members of the Cabinet that have Portfolio responsibilities. The accountability functions of the Council have been customised to

provide services that make a real contribution to the successful operation of the Council.

Our scrutiny committees perform the vital function of holding decision makers to account as demonstrated in other parts of this submission. The scope of scrutiny and its level of activity calls for the participation of no fewer than the existing number of councillor places. Even a small decrease in in Councillor numbers would likely lead to a reduction to the five scrutiny committees currently held. Such a reduction would have a negative effect in the Council's ability to ensure democratic governance and oversight.

Considering the presented evidence, growing demand for services, budget cuts, growing levels of complex casework, electorate growth and the increasing ease via channels such as social media that residents can contact councillors; the council recommends that the council remains the same size to the LGBCE. The council believes that a reduction in the number of Councillors would be detrimental to the residents of Dudley as it would risk of leaving the authority too low on Councillor numbers to adequately perform the representative role that elected members carry out.

We do not believe increasing the council size would be feasible in the light of continued public cuts. The Council believes that retaining the council size whilst introducing further methods of support for councillors facing mounting challenges in their role is the optimum way forward. Therefore, the Council proposes that the current size of 72 Councillors should be retained.



2022 CIPFA Group and Electorate Ratio

