

# Council Size Submission: Template

Nuneaton and Bedworth 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

This response has been prepared by Officers on behalf of the Cabinet and was approved for submission at the Full Council meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2022.

## Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Not applicable.

## The Context for your proposal

The last Boundary Commission Review was carried out over 20 years ago, commencing on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1998 with final recommendations published November 1999 and implemented at the election on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002. The Council size was reduced from 45 members to 34 and wards increased from 15 to 17. The Council moved from a Committee Structure to Executive arrangements in 2002 and from elections by thirds to biennial elections in 2004.

In terms of the local/national policy trends, continued pressure has been brought to bear on the Council's finances, with officers and members working closely together on closing budget gaps, delivering services in new ways and finding opportunities for revenue generation, whilst improving the key services that residents depend on. Like much of Local Government, the new administration is keen to explore new ways of delivering services, through shared services and working closely with other public and private sector partners to deliver services.

This move increases the complexity of the strategic management and scrutiny of service delivery, especially compared to the structures in place during the last Ward Review of NBBC in 1999, where the Council managed a larger workforce, but with clearer lines of management and direct control over the vast majority of services.

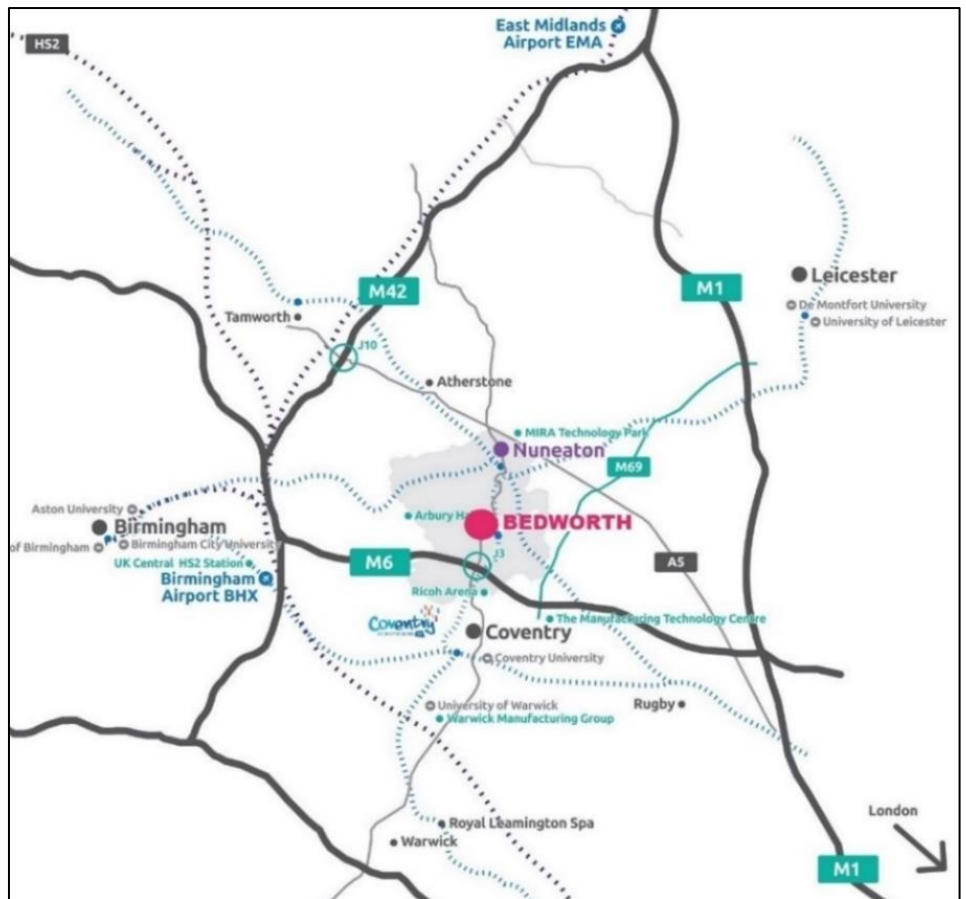
Our proposal to increase the number of Councillors by a total of four will mean that:

- the Council maintains the right number of Councillors to act as community champions as the population continues to grow in size;
- the Council is able to meet its ambitions in terms of the transformation of our Town Centres, manage the process and importantly scrutinise this unprecedented level of investment in the Borough; and
- the Council has sufficient political resource to carry out the statutory responsibilities associated with planning, licensing and other quasi-judicial functions.

## Local Authority Profile

Largely urban in character, [Nuneaton and Bedworth](#) is a local government district in northern Warwickshire, consisting of the market towns of Nuneaton, which borders the district of North Warwickshire, and Bedworth, bordering Coventry, along with the large village of Bulkington and the green belt land in between.

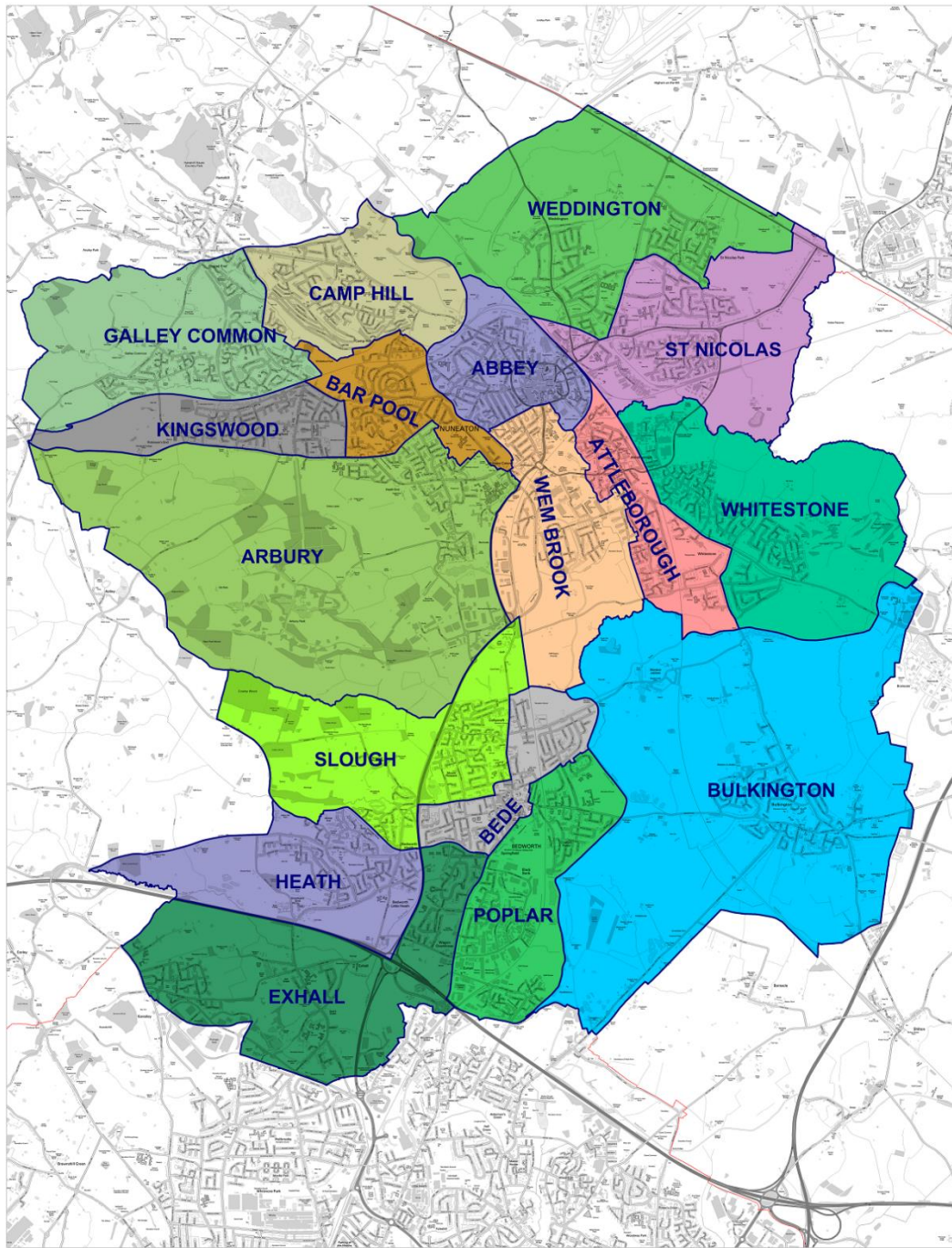
Brought together in 1974, as part of local government re-organisation, the borough is a non-metropolitan district council operating as part of a 2 tier administrative structure, whereby [Warwickshire County Council](#) is responsible for social services, education and highways.



**Nuneaton** is the largest town within Warwickshire with a current population of over 90,000 and is made up of 12 wards. Nuneaton expanded rapidly during the industrial revolution developing significant industries in coal and textile manufacturing. The decline of these industries in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to significant unemployment. It has faced many challenges since the decline of its traditional industries, most recently the impact upon the over reliance of A1 retail within its town centre. Nevertheless, an entrepreneurial spirit has led to the adoption of new manufacturing sectors, building upon the opportunities presented by the town's excellent position at the heart of the transport network.

**Bedworth** originally developed during the industrial revolution based on traditional industries in ribbon making and coal. Today, it is mainly a commuter town for Nuneaton and Coventry, composed mainly of large housing estates with a town centre and central park. Bedworth has a population of circa 38,000 and is made up of five wards.

Nearby, **Bulkington** is a village populated by around 6,000 people. The village is located to the south west of Nuneaton, six miles north east of Coventry. Historically the main industry in Bulkington was agriculture and ribbon weaving but today it is largely a commuter village for nearby urban centres.



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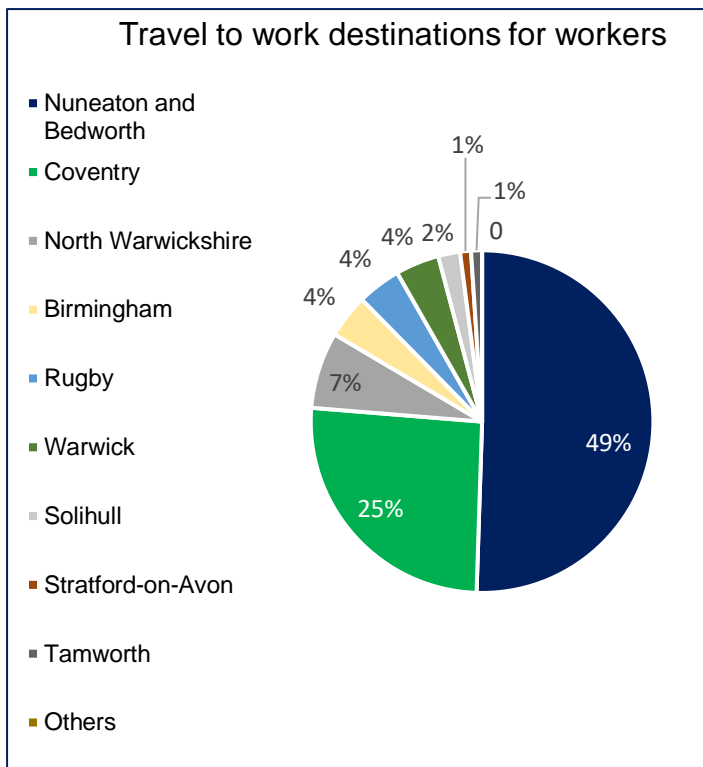
Scale 1:12500



Turnout at borough elections 2016-2021:

	<u>Total No. of electors</u>	<u>Turnout</u>
5 <sup>th</sup> May 2016	<b>94,044</b>	<b>32.47%</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2018	<b>97,732</b>	<b>32.49%</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	<b>99,328</b>	<b>33.76%</b>





The borough is superbly well-positioned for commuters within the national transport network, with fast rail links to London and Birmingham and easy access to the M1, M6 and M42. The A5 runs along the northern boundary and the A444, A4254 and the B4114 are the major routes within the borough.

Nuneaton and Bedworth residents commute to all the local authorities in the West Midlands, however, the largest group of commuters work in the Borough (nearly half). A quarter commute to Coventry and less than 10% commute elsewhere with North Warwickshire being the most significant.

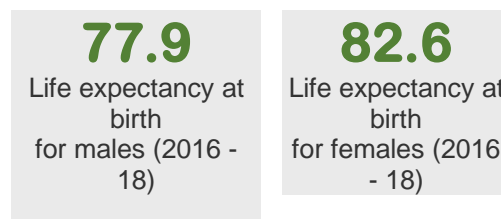
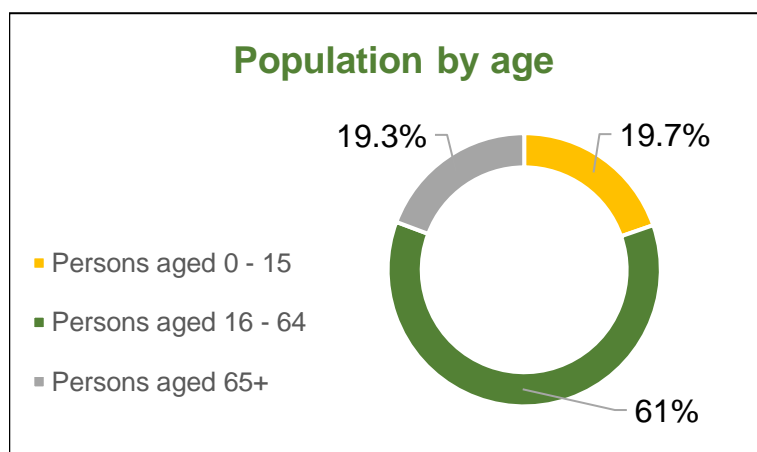
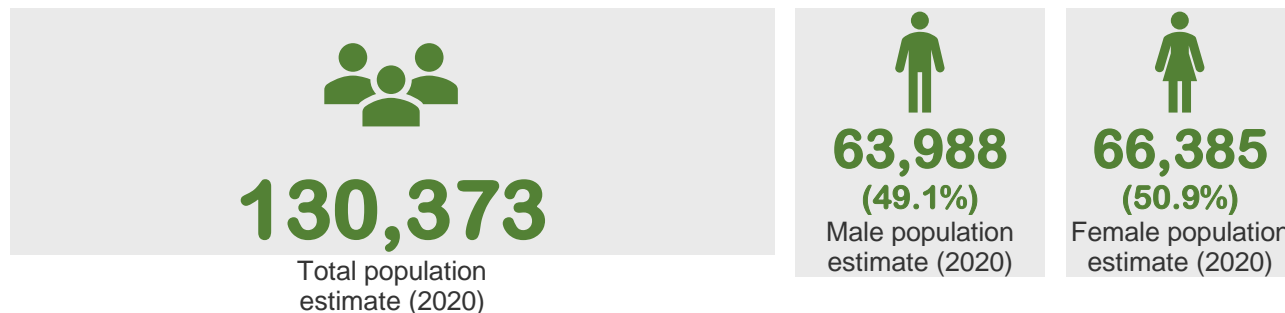
As reported in the Council's recent [2021 Local Government Association Peer Review report](#), we are an ambitious Council and it's an exciting time to work and live in Nuneaton and Bedworth. Having established the [Transforming Nuneaton](#) Programme, we are working in partnership with Warwickshire County Council to deliver the regeneration of Nuneaton town centre. More than **£160 million** of investment has been secured from partners and through our own financing. In addition, the Council has successfully bid for funding from the [Towns Fund](#), the [Future High Street Fund](#), and the [Levelling Up Fund](#), achieving additional public sector investment of **£51 million** over the next 5 years to deliver regeneration projects for both towns.

Developments that will be the catalyst to achieving a step change for the borough include a hotel, mixed leisure provision, a new public square and food hall in Nuneaton town centre and a green corridor in Bedworth; the development of the Bridge to Living Scheme which will replace poor 1970's retail provision with new Live to Work units, housing and will provide a green link from our destination Riversley Park, into Nuneaton town centre. Schemes also include the delivery of transport infrastructure and sustainable transport improvements; the remediation of land and removal of planning constraints, together with increased and improved training facilities and training offers; the provision of Full Fibre supported new incubation and grow on commercial spaces, combined with an improved leisure and heritage offer.

In their [2021 Vitality Index](#), Lambert Smith Hampton identified Nuneaton as topping the Opportunity Index as the location with the greatest opportunity to overcome current challenges and grow. We are the birthplace of the author George Eliot and we have three destination parks. We are in close proximity to [the MIRA Technology Park Enterprise Zone](#),

have a strong Third Sector and excellent, established partnerships. In terms of the business base of the borough's local economy, this is made up of a mixture of small and medium-sized firms along with a number of global and national company headquarters.

Whilst the borough is smallest in size at 7,895 ha, it has the second largest population in the county and is the most densely populated area with 1,592 persons per sq km, compared to the Warwickshire average of 277. The population has increased from 125,252 people (2011 Census) to over 130,000 in the last eight years, with the projection of further growth to 137,907 by 2030.



Life expectancy is the lowest in Warwickshire and lower than the national average.

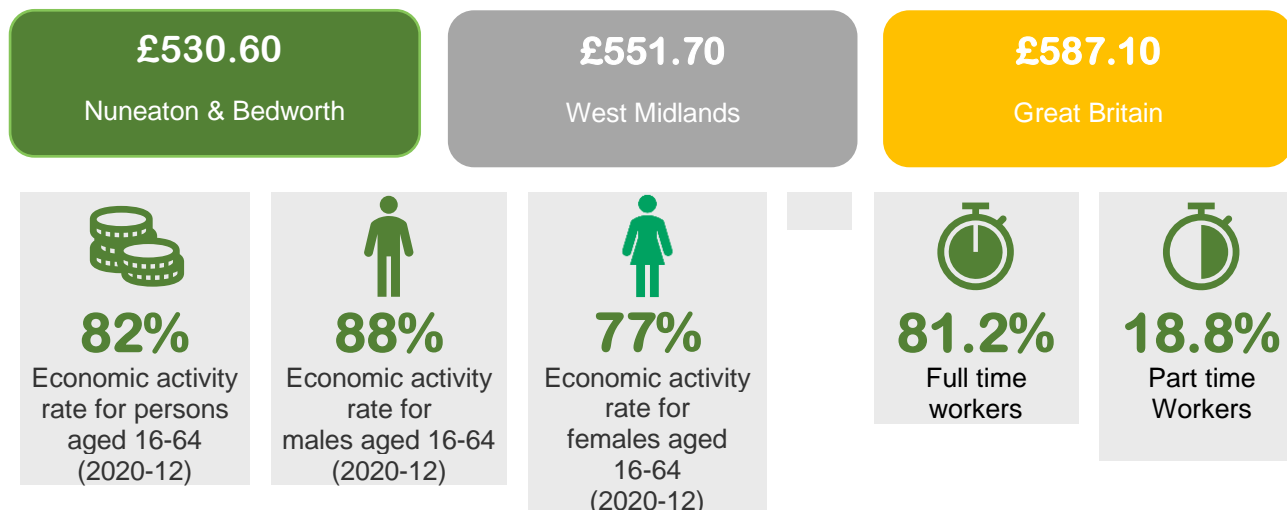
Ethnicity	%		%
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	88.9	Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0.4
White: Irish	0.6	Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1	Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0.2
White: Other White	1.8	Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	1
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	0.5	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	0.4
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	0.1	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0.3
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	0.3	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	0.1
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed	0.2	Other ethnic group	0.4



There are many challenges facing the borough. Our socio-economic profile is less prosperous than the rest of Warwickshire. Our residents experience higher than average levels of poor health, lower than average educational attainment, lower than average household income, a low wage economy, higher than average unemployment and areas with disproportionately higher levels of crime than the rest of the county.

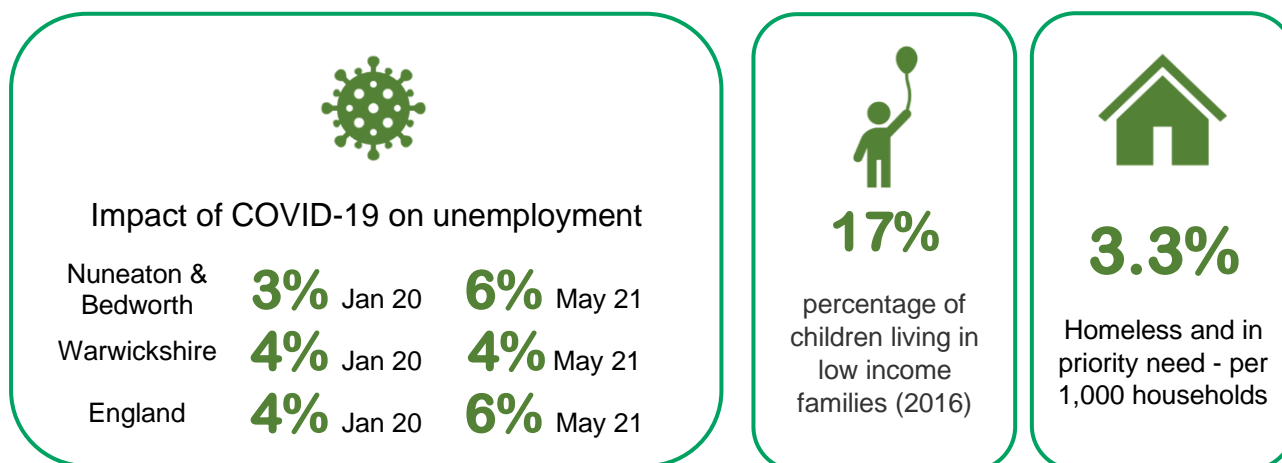
Residents of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough have the lowest average weekly income of all the districts in Warwickshire. Their income is also well below the average for England.

### Average gross weekly pay



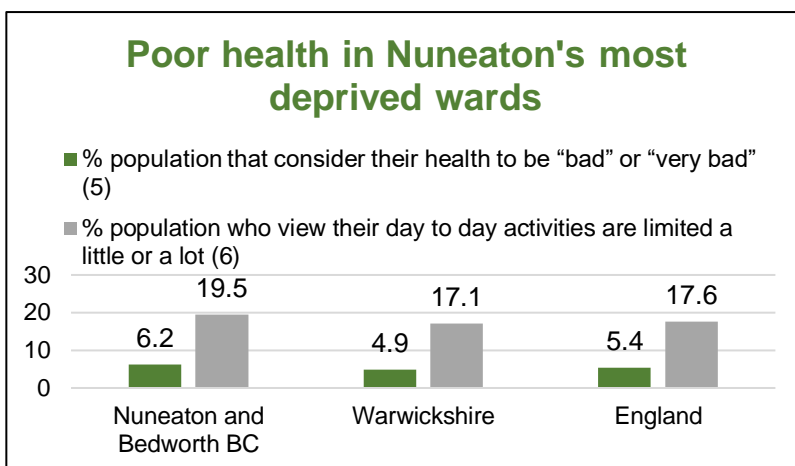
Nuneaton and Bedworth have some of the most deprived areas, both in the county and nationally, by a range of measures, some parts of the borough are below average in terms of socio-economic and health factors.

As a borough with areas of deprivation, the COVID-19 demand on services has increased since March 2020. There is increasing pressure on housing and homelessness, Council Tax support and support for small businesses. Residents increasingly look to the Borough Council as a provider of last resort and a lightning rod for concerns relating to NHS, County Council and other providers.



Some residents have a poor skills base. Educational attainment is the lowest in the county at both key stage 2 and 4 levels and 28 % of those of working age have no qualifications at all.

There is a need to tackle low aspirations in parts of the borough as this can limit educational achievement and contribute to low wages, deprivation and a dependency on benefits.



[The Borough Plan 2011-2031](#), was adopted by the Council on 11th June 2019. The plan identified that:


- the current housing stock is predominately semi-detached and terraced;
- the mix of housing tenure, types and sizes for different parts of the borough is uneven;
- population and housing projections suggest an on-going need for family accommodation;
- there is a need to cater for an increasing number of young people and older people living on their own;
- there is a particular need for housing options to enable older people to live independently.

A review of the Plan commenced in 2021 and a [Borough Plan Committee](#) has been established to oversee the review.

The Borough Plan, as a key strategic document, must reflect and support the overall social and economic aspirations and priorities for the borough. These include housing of the right type in the right places, employment land allocation to support our local economy and ecology and climate change matters.

Significant levels of consultation with all stakeholders is being undertaken to ensure their needs and opinions are thoroughly taken into account when preparing the final policy compliant Plan for inspection. The consultation is taking many forms, including face to face meetings and information video aimed at increasing the level of engagement of all stakeholders.

The Council retains its own Housing supply, acts as landlord for over 10,200 tenanted properties and manages its Housing Revenue Account. Management, political leadership and scrutiny of this area remains a high priority for the authority. Along with other local authorities, the Council has new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to act in all cases of homelessness, rather than just those in "priority need" – meaning that all eligible households are offered support, greatly increasing demand on our housing and homelessness services.



Average House prices

Bedworth  
**£209,537**

Nuneaton  
**£235,034**

Warwickshire  
**£326,626**

In all but a two-year period since 1974 a Labour administration has been in control and the Council has experienced very little political change until May 2021 when a Conservative administration took overall control. For the previous three years there was no overall control, with labour as the largest political group and having half the total number of councillors, forming holding power.

Following the local elections in May 2021 and a recent ward by-election, the Conservatives now hold 25 of the 34 seats available in the borough. This overall control has led to a number of areas being reviewed and refreshed with a new manifesto, fresh ideas and ways of working, including a review of the Council's Corporate Plan. The following new plan is currently undergoing consultation.

To support the new approach, once the plan is finalised and adopted, we will undertake a fundamental review of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to ensure they reflect the renewed focus and priorities, continuing to include both strategic and financial measures.

We acknowledge that there is a balance to be struck between our ambitions and the constraints within which we work, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic and experience emerging issues following the exit from the European Union.

Public finances and local government capacity are increasingly stretched, whilst demand for services is high.

# BUILDING a better BOROUGH

**LIVE** **WORK** **VISIT**

Nuneaton & Bedworth

UNITED TO ACHIEVE

Working in partnership, restoring pride in our borough

**LIVE**

- Promote residents' health & wellbeing
- Enable appropriate housing development
- Sponsor a sustainable green approach
- Prioritise Community Safety & Empowerment

**WORK**

- Grow a strong & inclusive economy
- Champion education & skills
- Embrace new & emerging technology
- Support local businesses

**VISIT**

- Create vibrant and diverse Town Centres
- Stimulate regeneration
- Celebrate and promote our heritage
- Improve the physical environment

Imaginative, Enterprising & Transparent

## Strategic Leadership

### **Governance Model:**

Since the last Ward Boundary Review in 1999, the model of political leadership in local authorities has changed significantly, away from Committee Chairs to visible, accountable Cabinet Members who lead the services in their portfolio and closely monitor the work of officers in their area. NBBC operates a strong Leader Cabinet model; the Council's 'Executive' for the purpose of the Local Government Act 2000. These arrangements are reflected in the Council's Constitution.

Following the election in May 2021, and subsequent by-election in November, the Conservatives gained power and now hold 25 of the 34 seats available in the Borough. The change in administration has seen a high proportion of relatively inexperienced Councillors take up their seats. It should also be noted that the majority of members are now considerably younger than the previous administration, many balancing their Council responsibilities with families and employment, with some being also elected as County Council Councillors.

The Full Council is responsible for setting the budget, considering recommendations from Cabinet and other regulatory committees, and making some decisions such as changes to the Constitution, determining electoral issues and dealing with matters which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet.

The Council elects a Leader for a four year term who then appoints Members to form a Cabinet. The current leader has appointed six members to serve on the Cabinet. This is an increase of one Cabinet member from the previous year and administration, allowing for portfolios to be realigned to address the increasing workload, especially in the area of economic development and regeneration, housing services, contract monitoring and the Council's response to COVID-19. It should be noted that the majority of Cabinet Members have not previously held an executive role and due to the continuing financial constraints, the Cabinet reduced their allowances to compensate for that extra Cabinet member.

Cabinet Members have individual executive decision-making powers within their portfolios and act as the Council's main representative and spokesperson for their nominated areas of responsibility. The Cabinet carries out all the local authority's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the authority. Some of these decisions / plans / policies / strategies require the approval of Full Council e.g. Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Local Plan.

There are approximately 12 formal meetings of the Cabinet per year and the new administration has instigated a new Leadership Board which meets monthly and comprises of the Cabinet and Senior Management Team. Each Portfolio Holder also undertakes regular monthly and ad-hoc meetings with the relevant service Director(s) to facilitate more in-depth discussion in relation to both operational and strategic matters, ensuring that Cabinet Members are fully briefed and knowledgeable in relation to issues directly under their control.

Due to the continued financial pressures upon Local Authorities, there has been a 50% reduction in the Council's capacity of dedicated administrative support to Members. The Committee Services team has been reduced from a team of three Committee Services

Officers with a dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Officer, to just one full-time and one part-time Committee Services Officer.

In October 2021 Cabinet approved the appointment of Cabinet Support Members. The increase in the number of Councillors in the Cabinet, increase in frequency in meetings, appointment of Cabinet Support Members and instigating regular meetings between senior officers and Cabinet Members, demonstrates the increased level of oversight and strategic leadership that the current administration has put in place.

### **Work of Portfolio Holders:**

Following the election in May 2021, due to the increased volume in workload required to drive forward economic development and regeneration and the Council's response to COVID-19, the Council approved new Executive arrangements increasing the number of Cabinet portfolios from five to six and reallocating responsibilities between those portfolios:

- 1) Leader: Business and Regeneration
- 2) Deputy Leader: Housing and Communities
- 3) Cabinet Member: Finance and Corporate
- 4) Cabinet Member: Public Services
- 5) Cabinet Member: Planning and Regulation
- 6) Cabinet Member: Health and Environment

Cabinet portfolio holders are responsible for making the day-to-day executive decisions concerning the strategy of the Council (within the overall policy and budgetary framework agreed by Council) as set out in our Constitution.

Over the last two years, COVID-19 has unexpectedly added to the Cabinet's workload. The Council has responded by providing local testing and vaccination sites, administered the various business recovery grant schemes and also sought to provide support to the borough's vulnerable and at risk residents.

With specific reference to the Housing portfolio and the Housing Revenue Account, in 2003, the Council gave all tenants the opportunity to vote on whether it should transfer the ownership and management of its 6,300 properties to a newly established registered social landlord. On a 70% turnout of tenants, a decisive majority (60%) voted against the proposed transfer.

Self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account was introduced in 2012. Members, and the Portfolio Holder in particular, need to be aware of amended operating and accounting requirements in relation to this, along with the strategic and overall oversight for a significantly increased capital programme, which now includes new build homes.

The Housing White Paper introduces a number of requirements upon Registered Social Landlords, particularly around safety in the homes, landlord performance, complaint handling, treat tenants with respect, empowerment of tenants, provision of good quality homes and neighbourhoods. The accountability to the tenant will significantly increase with Members required to respond and be accountable across a range of service provision.

The numbers of households needing to be placed into temporary accommodation has increased year on year in the borough since 2017, rising from 117 cases to 359 cases in 2021. Increased levels of strategic input are required from the Housing Portfolio Holder in relation to considering prevention and other management of homelessness options to be taken through the policy route and adopted by the Council.

In 2013 the Council established a Local Authority Trading Company, [Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Enterprise Ltd](#), to provide a range of property-related services across Nuneaton, Bedworth and the West Midlands. The Enterprise continues to expand its range of services.

### **Delegated Responsibilities and Member/Officer relations**

There is a scheme of delegation for senior officers (see Part 3 of the Constitution). Matters which are the responsibility of the Executive are delegated to officers by the Leader and non-executive functions are delegated either by the Full Council or a Council Committee.

### **Accountability**

#### **Internal Scrutiny**

Since the last review in 1999 the Scrutiny function has been established and the work of members in carrying out scrutiny reviews, select committees and pre-decision scrutiny has grown.

NBBC has reviewed its Overview and Scrutiny arrangements on four occasions since 2015. The previous administration merged and simplified the scrutiny structure from four OS Panels and an Overview Joint Scrutiny Commission supported by a dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Officer, to only two OS Panels with no dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Officer support. This resulted in the Chairs of the OSPs taking the lead on developing and managing the Panel's work programme, and agenda setting.

In May 2021, following the change in administration, the Council approved that OS Panels be increased from two to three, aligned to the new Portfolios, with the aim of improving capacity, focus, governance and engagement, to facilitate the increasing economic development and regeneration workload and to improve the effectiveness of the scrutiny function.

All non-executive Councillors have an opportunity to take part in Scrutiny, supported by officers in the Council. However, the provision of an additional portfolio and Cabinet Member, and the introduction of Cabinet Support Members, has reduced the number of Councillors now available to engage in the increased overview and scrutiny work.

The current three OSP panels, comprising of nine members on each, are:

- Business, Regeneration and Planning OSP
- Housing, Environment and Health OSP
- Finance and Public Service OSP



The role of an OS Panel is to:

- hold the Cabinet to account by monitoring decisions that they make, checking whether they are successfully implemented, and exercising the right to 'call in' a decision which they consider needs to be reviewed;
- undertake scrutiny reviews and making recommendations for improvement;
- undertake performance management by monitoring council achievement of priorities as set out in the key strategic and business plans.

Each OS Panel meets a minimum of five times a year, agreeing a planned workload at the beginning of the municipal cycle and a rolling work programme which is reviewed at each meeting. Working groups (task and finish groups) are then established, at the request of each Panel as and when required, to carry out more detailed reviews on specific topics and issues.

Panels also receive quarterly performance reports and are invited to question and challenge the Council's progress in achieving its Corporate Plan commitments, as well as inviting representatives from external organisations to question services and hold them to account e.g. environment agency, leisure centre service providers, health service providers etc. Whilst as a district Council health, social and education services are provided by the county, given the recognised deprivation in borough and the resulting issues in regards to health, welfare, education, employment, low aspiration and crime, focussed effective scrutiny is important.

The new administration introduced a new standing item onto the OSP agenda - Questions to Cabinet - where the relevant portfolio holders for each OSP attend and take questions from the panel as part of holding the executive to account.

The Council has had three call ins in 10 years.

As a result of the increase in the work of the Cabinet mentioned above, the level of scrutiny required of the executive has and will increase in future years. The large scale regeneration projects to be undertaken in Nuneaton and Bedworth will mean that the amount of scrutiny that will need to take place will also increase. In order for this work to be undertaken, there will be an increasing demand on a small pool of Scrutiny members. The Council therefore feels there is now a need to increase and strengthen the capacity of back bench members to ensure the effectiveness of future scrutiny work, task and finish reviews and performance monitoring.

### **Statutory Function**

In order to deliver the Council's core functions well going forward, the Executive feel additional representation is needed, as the increased workload is converted in terms of the number of functioning Committees. Strong and increased membership capacity, beyond the Executive, will be required as more responsibilities are delegated by the Executive to back bench members in order to share the workload.

## **Planning Committee:**

The Planning Committee comprises of 11 Members and operates as a single council-wide committee. Three Executive Members sit on the committee but do not hold chair or vice chair positions.

The committee meets approximately every three weeks and is quite a large time commitment from members with background papers and officer reports to read as well as site visits as required, usually taking place prior to the committee meeting. They are also required to have up-to-date training every two years.

As shown below approximately 6% of planning applications are determined by Planning Committee with the rest being delegated to officers. There has been an increase in cross boundary planning.

There has been a significant increase in our forecast housing with larger number of complicated planning applications coming through for determination as a result of the adoption of the Local Plan.

## **Licensing:**

The Licensing Committee is scheduled to meet seven to eight times a municipal year (these are pre-arranged at the start of the year) but likely to only meet approximately two or three times a year due to lack of business.

The Licensing Committee consists of 11 members who are the core members and regular attendees. From this there are Licensing Sub-Committees that are organised as and when required and the membership is made up of the wider committee.

## **Other Regulatory Bodies/Committees**

There are other committees appointed by the Council which deal with the functions of the Council that cannot be dealt with by the Cabinet.

These are:

- **Audit and Standards Committee** – 11 members plus an independent member.  
This committee oversees internal and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place. In addition to ensuring high standards of conduct and probity, the committee has a key part to play in strengthening and maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct which the public is entitled to expect from both Members and Officers of the Council.
- **Appeals Committee** – 10 members  
Hears appeals on any employment issues, i.e. grievances, disciplinary action and on decisions made by the authority.
- **Borough Plan Committee** – nine members.  
Responsibility for completing a review of the adopted Borough Plan and make recommendations to Cabinet.
- **Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Enterprise Limited (NABCEL) Shareholder Panel** – six members.

NABCEL is a Local Authority Trading Company, wholly owned by Nuneaton and Bedworth Council, which delivers a variety of services to other organisations, private businesses and individuals such as property maintenance and gas services. The panel oversee the work of NABCEL.

Since May 2021 the new administration has established the following new committees in order to help manage workloads:

- **Employment Committee** – five members.  
Responsibility for the policies that affect staff employment, conditions of service in addition to reviewing pay for locally determined pay scales such as the Chief Executive and Directors.
- **Civic Honours Sub-Committee** – five members.  
Responsible for nominations of national awards in addition to community awards, Freedom of the Borough and Honorary Aldermen.
- **Platinum Jubilee Working Group** – five members.  
Working on the preparation for the celebration of the upcoming Platinum Jubilee.

### **External Partnerships**

The Council recognise that they cannot tackle the borough's challenges without their partners and stakeholders across all sectors. Partnership working is a fundamental element of the new administration's current and developing Corporate Plan. As a relatively small second tier authority the Council recognise that building effective collaborations, through a variety of mechanisms, is integral to supporting the delivery of its priorities for the borough and its residents. The range of partners is expansive and continues to grow, covering strategic, operational, economic and community themes (see figure below).

Council members are involved in key external partnerships including:

**Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership** set up in 2011 as an alliance of private and public sector organisations working towards a common shared purpose: to grow the local economy, attract new jobs and investment and increase prosperity. Our membership allows us to help determine local economic priorities, via the Strategic Economic Plan, and supports our connections with local businesses to improve communications and understanding of issues and priorities in our area. We have successfully attracted more than **£8 million** of funding from CWLEP to support the regeneration of Nuneaton. We continue to recognise CWLEP as a major partner in relation to our place-shaping aspirations.

**Town Deal Board** - Nuneaton's Town Deal Board was established in January 2020 in response to, and as a requirement of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Town Fund. The objective of the fund is to drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth through urban regeneration, planning and land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure and connectivity. The Nuneaton Town Deal Board is the vehicle through which the vision and strategy for the town is defined, by identifying opportunities to align or rationalise public investment around key local priorities, as part of agreeing a Town Deal.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council are the Lead Authority for Nuneaton's Town Deal and the Town Deal Board is made up of representatives from across the public, private and third sectors. The Government has awarded **£23m** to Nuneaton for the delivery of 11 regeneration projects to be delivered over the next five years.

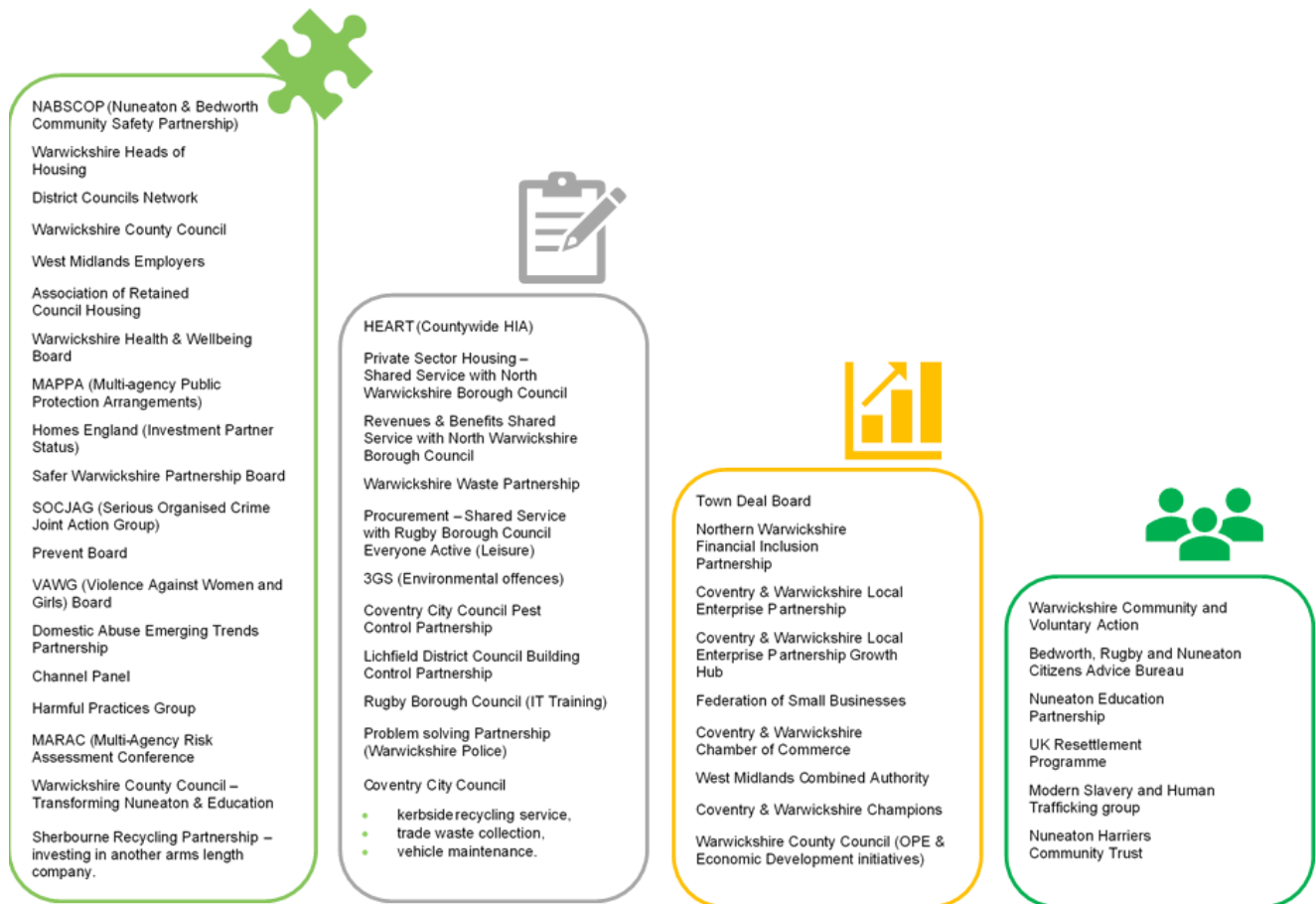
**Sherbourne Recycling Ltd Shareholder Panel** - The Council was one of the five founding 'Partner Councils' in a ground breaking project to jointly fund, build, own and operate a Sub-Regional Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) located across our border in Coventry. That project has progressed to a point where there are now eight partner councils (Coventry City Council, Solihull MBC, Walsall MBC, Rugby Borough Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Stratford on Avon District Council, Warwick District Council and ourselves) and construction has commenced on site following a major procurement exercise for building and equipment suppliers. The facility will cost some **£58 million** to build and fit out and will be able to handle 175,000 tonnes of dry recycle per annum. We have committed **£4.5 million** to the project, mostly by way of a loan on commercial terms and we hold a 7.7% share in the arms length company Sherbourne Recycling Ltd – that has been established to operate the MRF on behalf of the Partner Councils. The MRF is on track to be constructed by mid-2023 and operational in autumn 2023.

**West Midlands Combined Authority** - We are one of only ten Non-Constituent (Non-Cons) members of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Whilst our status does not allow voting rights, we do have access to various funding streams and networks that have proved beneficial for us. Given the strength of our approach in terms of regeneration, we have successfully attracted land remediation funding of more the **£1 million** to support the regeneration of the Abbey Street site. Our ability to attract co-funding was a significant factor for our successful Future High Streets Fund bid.

Our alliance with the WMCA has proved beneficial in other strategic areas, such as homelessness. Having launched the Homelessness Taskforce, initially aimed at the Constituent authorities, we made contact with the Head of the Taskforce and agreed to represent the other Non-Cons.

Our involvement has allowed us to both receive and share our own best practice, a mutually beneficial approach to tackle an area that possesses some of our most difficult challenges. For example, during lockdown, we were able to share our 'direct matching' approach which allowed us to move families out of costly and inappropriate shared temporary accommodation, directly into single family homes as they became available. We have benefited from access to the Tenancy Recovery pilot. Aimed at sustaining tenancies, the pilot provides wrap around support and funding via the Department of Work and Pensions.

Outside Bodies – Memberships of other committees outside of this local authority, or different charities with local connections and neighbourhood watch groups are assigned to Members. Time commitment varies as some of these will meet quite frequently whilst others will be once a year. There are a certain number that are delegated to a cabinet role, eg Warwickshire Waste Partnership delegated to the Cabinet Member for Public Services.



## Community Leadership

### Community Leadership

Members carry out a wide range of duties ranging from helping to develop the Council’s long term strategic vision to dealing with issues raised by their constituents. They represent their communities in debates around specific local issues and engage with those that affect entire wards or the whole of Nuneaton and Bedworth. Resident awareness of the work of Local Authorities has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ward work is a key aspect of the representational role of an elected member and includes dealing with resident’s concerns and interests of individual constituents and the ward more generally. Pre-covid some members held monthly surgeries but increasingly, even before COVID-19, many members were moving away from surgeries and offering appointments to meet constituents at mutually convenient times and locations. Members are also active on social media channels which allows them to reach further and also gives the public closer and more instant access to their councillor.

Increasingly, members act as community leaders, and have influence by bringing people together around issues and helping to resolve them. Members are often involved in community litter picking, attending residents’ association meetings, become a school governor in their relevant wards and meetings with local authority housing officers.

Unlike the other District/Borough Council areas in Warwickshire, currently in Nuneaton and Bedworth there are no parish councils. This means that NBBC members are the closest representative to the electorate.

## **Casework**

The Council does not have a case management system, however there is one Member and Committee Services Officer who provides help to members in terms of signposting or retrieving information as requested. The majority of members take responsibility for monitoring cases and resolving any issues.

Councillors consistently report that the volume of contacts they receive has greatly increased in recent years, with residents being able to contact them 24/7 in ever-increasing ways via email, telephone and social media. There is evidence of increasing complexity in the cases that are brought to members, with residents caught between different public sector, private sector and charity providers of services, meaning more time is needed per piece of casework.

It is difficult to calculate the average number of hours per week that members spend on case work and this will vary according to the type of ward the Councillor represents in terms of the issues raised by constituents and the numbers of hours the Councillor can make available due to other commitments. The most up-to-date source of what time is required to be an effective Member is from the Local Government Association (LGA) Census of Councillors 2018 which shows that on average an elected Member of a district council who does not hold any positions of significant responsibility puts in 14.3 hours per week on 'Council business'.<sup>1</sup> This is equivalent of 743.6 hours per year.

As mentioned previously technology has influenced the way the electorate and members interact, the use of email and social media has increased. Social media is regularly used not just by members but by the Council as way of providing more engagement with the customer and is effective in resolving issues in a timely manner. Most council information now is available online through the council's website and any urgent information can be spread via social media channels which have a much further reach than paper notices and is twice the speed. The Leader and Cabinet members are engaged in the preparation of frequent press releases and the Council has recently introduced video shorts to their social media channels, with members presenting news stories, latest developments or highlighting issues of concern.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include on average an additional 3.7 hours per week on group/party business. Breakdown of means hours by type of council and by positions held supplied to Chair of IRP in email from S. Richards, LGA 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019



## Summary

Nuneaton and Bedworth is an ambitious Council and it's an exciting time to work and live in Nuneaton and Bedworth. Our elected members are engaged in everything the Council does, from Transforming Nuneaton and securing millions of pounds of investment money from Central Government or our local partnerships, down to helping residents fix local problems.

Externally, our Councillors represent the borough so we can punch above our weight and secure the funding needed to transform our town centres and Build a Better Borough.

Internally Councillors play a pivotal role in ensuring the organisation has good political leadership, with Councillors working hard via Scrutiny and other committees to ensure officers and the executive are held to account.

However, we are a growing borough – with large development sites in the North of Nuneaton our wards are no longer equal and we recognise that for some Councillors, they are representing more residents than ever before. We support the implementation of a review of our ward boundaries and look forward to making our submissions in the next stage of the review as to what they should be.

Due to the challenges our borough faces; with some areas of deprivation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but more importantly the opportunities that our transformation agenda is bringing, we believe that Nuneaton and Bedworth should be represented by a further four Councillors, serving two additional Wards, bringing the total Wards to 19 and the total Councillors to 38.