

Blackpool Council

Council Size Submission

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How to Make a Submission

1. It is recommended that submissions on council size follow the format provided below. Submissions should 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.
2. 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.

About You

3. 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, or an individual.

This submission is from the Labour Group of Blackpool Council

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

4. 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.*

It has been 18 years (2003) since the last council review.

Local Authority Profile

5. Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description may cover all, or some 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?
 - Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Blackpool Council gained unitary status for the borough in 1998, having previously been part of the Lancashire County Council administrative area since 1974. Covering an area of only 13.46 square miles, but with an estimated 139,445 residents (ONS population estimates for mid-2019, published 2020), Blackpool is one of the most densely populated local authority areas in the UK outside of London and forms part of a continuous urban area which stretches into Fylde Borough in the South and Wyre Borough in the North. ONS population projections suggest that our population will fall to a low of 138,864 by 2027, but then increase back to around the same level as currently by 2033 before growing further. We have a slightly higher proportion of older residents than the national average, with around 20.4% of the population aged over 65 compared to 18.5% nationally (2018-based subnational estimates, ONS, 2020).

Renowned nationally and internationally as a tourism destination, the town was founded upon tourism and grew rapidly in the early 20th century leaving a legacy of high quality late Victorian architecture, including the iconic Blackpool Tower, piers and promenade. Blackpool continues to be England's most visited seaside resort, with an estimated 6.8 million adult visitors in 2019 (Kantar TNS Omnibus survey, 2018). This is likely to grow in the period up until 2030 with further initiatives including the £300m Blackpool Central leisure development which includes various attractions, Showtown – Blackpool's new museum, the expansion of the Winter Gardens conference centre and other enhancements via the Towns Deal Fund and associated funding. Tourism continues to be a major employer in the town, with around 18.6% of all people being employed in the sector, a disproportionate amount of which in part time jobs, and although the Health and Social Care Sector is a larger source of work (22.4%) both are higher proportions than the national averages (BRES, ONS, 2020 – data from 2019). With both of these being low wage industries, it is perhaps unsurprising that Blackpool's median gross weekly pay is nearly 25% lower than the average nationally at £458.70 (NOMIS, 2021).

Blackpool is relatively self-contained in terms of housing and the economy, with 62.1% of people who live in Blackpool working here (Census, 2011). The M55 links Blackpool to the M6, with a direct route to the centre of town via Yeadon Way, a former railway line. The M55 also provides access to Blackpool Airport via the A5230. The town's main railway station is Blackpool North with just under 2 million passenger movements in a typical year, connecting to the West Coast mainline at Preston and offering direct services to key destinations in the North. Work is currently being undertaken to connect the station to Blackpool Tramway, which carries over 4 million passengers in a typical year and runs along the seafront between Starr Gate at the south of the borough and Fleetwood in Wyre. Layton station sits on the same line, whilst the South Fylde Line terminates at Blackpool South station having passed through other stops at Squire's Gate and Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Both the Tram and most local bus services are operated by Blackpool Transport, one of the Council's wholly-owned companies.

Blackpool's population is predominantly White British, with the 2011 Census indicating that only around 6.4% were from other ethnicities, compared to around 19.5% nationally. This apparent homogeneity masks significant movement in and around the town, driven by the availability of former guesthouses which have been converted into flats. Socio-demographic analysis via Experian's "Mosaic" profiler tool suggests that around 22% of Blackpool's households can be classed as "transient renters", predominantly in wards around the town centre and seafront. The low median house price (£118,000 as at September 2020 compared to £242,000 nationally – ONS, HPSSAs, 2021) makes investment by buy-to-let landlords attractive, particularly given the disproportionate

returns offered to them via the housing benefits system, for which rents are set based on the Fylde Coast as a whole. This has resulted in private rented properties making up a much larger proportion of our housing stock than the national average (28.2% compared to 19.3% - MHCLG, 2020).

Blackpool also has a slightly higher proportion of older residents than the national average, with around 20.4% of the population aged over 65 compared to 18.5% nationally (2018-based subnational estimates, ONS, 2020). This is despite experiencing some of the lowest life expectancies for both men (74.4 years) and women (79.5 years – ONS, Life Expectancy at Birth) in the country, an issue which is exacerbated by the disparity of healthy life expectancy with the national average being even larger (53.7 years compared to 63.2 for men; 55.3 years and 63.5 for women, *ibid*).

This is also reflected in data on employment and worklessness. Blackpool has a slightly lower employment rate at 72.1% compared to a national rate of 75.4%, and a high level of economic inactivity, with 19,800 people (24.2% of the working age population) economically inactive, compared with 22.4% in the North West and 20.5% nationally (NOMIS, January 2021, 2020 figures). This plays into the town experiencing a high proportion of benefit claimants for out-of-work benefits, including incapacity benefits and Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). The proportion of the working age population in receipt of out-of-work benefits (as defined by DWP) is almost double the national level - currently 12% in Blackpool, compared to 7.3% nationally.

Skills levels are also below average. In 2020, 19,100 residents in Blackpool were reported to have an NVQ4 level or above qualification (23.6%), significantly lower than the national figure (42.8%). 6,000 (7.4%) people are estimated to have no qualifications compared to 6.2% nationally. With levels of child poverty above the national average (19.8% compared to 15.5% - DWP estimates for 2019-20), the highest rate of Looked After Children in England at 223 per 10,000 (compared to an average of 67), and below average performance at GCSE level, this situation is likely to persist despite a suite of interventions and initiatives.

Taking all of this data together, the towns' issues are reflected in the overall level of deprivation as measured by the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (MHCLG). Blackpool is the most deprived Local Authority area in terms of employment and health, deprivation and disability based on rank of average score. The most deprived wards in Blackpool tend to be based in inner Blackpool, although there is significant deprivation on the estates at the edge of the borough.

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 years. 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 impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

The Council has run a Leader and Cabinet form of governance since it was introduced in 2001 under the Local Government Act 2000. There have been changes since the last boundary review in 2003 with the make-up of the Executive being broadly constant with some slight variations in the course of that time. Overview and Scrutiny has changed since 2003 with at that time a very much 'scrutiny' by committee based system to what is now a more balanced approach, with scrutiny committees, a Scrutiny Leadership Board and task and finish groups. This has largely been informed by a review of scrutiny arrangements undertaken in 2018/2019 by North West Employers.

In terms of regulatory and governance committees, changes were made in 2005 with the introduction of the Audit Committee as well as the Licensing Committee and Licensing Panels being constituted as a result of the Licensing Act 2003. There has also been a Local Government Association/ Planning Advisory Service peer review into the planning function, including the role of elected members and the Planning Committee, this was in 2018.

Both these reviews have helped form the responses in the relevant areas of the submission below.

Council Size

6. The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation 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

7. 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.

Topic		
Governance Model	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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>
	Analysis	<p>Blackpool Council operates under the 'Strong Leader with Cabinet' model in line with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members, a total of nine positions form the Executive. The Leader is elected for up to a four-year term of office at the first Annual Council meeting following an all-out election. Under these arrangements, the Leader of the Council determines the makeup of the Executive and also holds a portfolio. As a result of nine councillors being on the Executive, 33 councillors can serve on the overview and scrutiny committees. The overview and scrutiny committees still have to maintain proportionality in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.</p> <p>Cabinet Members who serve on the Executive have a busy workload including meetings with chief officers, other officers in their area of responsibility, the Scrutiny Lead Member and other members of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, other external stakeholders (e.g. partners, wholly owned companies), as well as attending the Executive and Full Council. There is also a six-weekly meeting with Council directors called the Leadership Board which is used to hold discussions around policy and strategy formulation and implementation.</p> <p>Members on the Executive are not necessarily engaged full time on Council work, for example the Leader of the Council and four other Cabinet Members have separate employment.</p>

Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Executive has overall responsibility for most Council services and for preparing the draft budget and the Council’s major policies and strategies for consideration and approval by Full Council. It is also responsible for implementing those policies and spending the budget in accordance with the policy framework and the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules.</p> <p>Each Cabinet Member has responsibility for specific services and has the power to take decisions about the services they are responsible for, provided they keep within established policy and the budget for that service. A formal record is published of any decisions taken by Cabinet Members, together with information or reports they have taken into account in reaching that decision.</p> <p>All Executive decisions, whether taken by the Executive collectively, by a Committee of the Executive, or by individual Executive Members, are subject to the Council’s ‘<i>call in</i>’ procedure.</p> <p>For 2021/2022 the Leader of the Council has appointed the following nine Cabinet Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture • Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance • Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation • Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health • Cabinet Member for Climate Change • Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care and Schools • Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport • Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Youth and Transience • Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Aspiration and Community Assets

		<p>In addition to the formal Cabinet meetings, Cabinet members are requested to attend scrutiny meetings to report on activity within their portfolio area and to answer questions and provide information for the scrutiny process, as well as reporting to Council and being held to account for their area of responsibility.</p> <p>The Cabinet Members, the Lead Scrutiny Member (referred to in the internal scrutiny section in more detail below) and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group have been classed by the Independent Remuneration Panel as key players within the governance structure and have the same level of allowance.</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council's Constitution has a section on the Responsibility for Functions which includes https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/The-Council/Council-constitution-and-plans/Part-3-Responsibility-for-functions.aspx</p> <p>Functions of the local authority are the responsibility of either the Council or the Executive of the authority.</p> <p>Some functions are, by law, Council functions and others Executive functions. Some 'local choice' functions may be the responsibility of the Council or the Executive (according to the wishes of the Council).</p> <p>There are Council functions which are delegated to committees and officers and also Executive functions which are either the responsibility of the Executive, Cabinet Members or are delegated to officers.</p> <p>The powers delegated to officers are exercised in line with the Council's Constitution and the Executive decision making criteria agreed by the Executive. Delegated decisions are also subject to: any legal requirements and/or guidance or codes of practice; the Council's Constitution which includes Contract and Financial Procedure Rules; any necessary financial provision having been made and approved and compliance with approved plans, schemes and/or strategies.</p>

8. 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.

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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	<p>The scrutiny structure at the Council has changed significantly in the years between 2003 and 2021.</p> <p>In the 2004/2005 municipal year, there was a Service Development Management Committee which sat above a further six service development committees. The number of councillors on each committee varied between eight and 11 Members and a number of councillors sat on more than one committee, with some appointed to three committees. The total number of positions on these committees was 63.</p> <p>In 2009/2010, the number of committees was reduced by one with 15 Members appointed to the new Policy Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and ten members to each of the five scrutiny committees.</p> <p>In the years between 2010 and 2019, the number of scrutiny committees changed on a number of occasions. Initially there was just one with a series of Lead Members appointed beneath to carry out reviews on a task and finish basis - this was subsequently increased to two committees and the Lead Members were removed. The number was again increased to three when it was considered that the remit of the Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee was too large.</p>

The Council commissioned a peer-style review by North West Employers in 2018/2019 following the succession of changes to the scrutiny structure and acknowledgement that scrutiny was not reaching its full potential. The review recommended a programme of scrutiny improvements based on best practice including the creation of a Scrutiny Leadership Board to co-ordinate the relationship between the scrutiny committees and the Audit Committee, improve work planning and to have regular meetings with members of the Executive. A separate Scrutiny Lead Member was also recommended to lead the scrutiny process and the Leadership Board. This recommendation was enacted and the Leadership Board comprises of the Scrutiny Lead Member (currently an independent councillor), the chairs and vice chairs of the three scrutiny committees and the chair of the Audit Committee. Each scrutiny committee comprises of nine members, with the additional statutory co-opted members serving on the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee. In addition to the chairs and vice chairs forming the Leadership Board there is further crossover with members often sitting on two scrutiny committees.

Another finding from the review by North West Employers was that the then overview and scrutiny system was largely focussed around two scrutiny roles: holding to account and providing challenge; and committee meeting-based policy review. In addition, the work of the function was being largely discharged in the meetings of the three committees. In essence, this was a committee-based scrutiny model.

The review also agreed to develop the role of scrutiny in policy development - to affirm the positive contribution that scrutiny can offer in policy development and strategies and review the policy framework to identify early key stages where scrutiny can provide an input and to review of financial scrutiny – each scrutiny committee to have a general role in financial oversight of their particular areas throughout the year (alongside other service information), to develop a more holistic approach to scrutiny.

These recommendations from the review were all supported and have been successfully implemented with in particular greater clarity on the role and better and stronger relationships between Audit, the Executive, Council and scrutiny. Recent feedback from a self-assessment exercise and anecdotal feedback has shown that scrutiny is viewed as positive, effective and is gaining a greater profile including press and stakeholder interest as well as targeted community involvement. Given this, there are unlikely to be significant changes to the scrutiny system in the near future.

It can be concluded that there has been a significant reduction in the number of seats on scrutiny committees from 63 in 2004/2005, down to 35 (including the Scrutiny Leadership Board) in 2020/2021. However this can be offset to a point

		with the North West Employers review also supporting the use of task and finish groups, with on average now six groups (comprising of approximately half the committee) in place during a calendar year undertaking work outside of the formal committee process, meeting on four or five occasions. There can also be up to six ‘scrutiny in a day’ task and finish groups in a municipal year.
	Statutory Function	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?
Planning	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has one Planning Committee and has had during the period since the last boundary review. As set out in the introduction to this submission, Blackpool is a unitary council which covers 13.46 square miles, is one of the most densely populated local authority areas in the UK outside of London and has therefore no area Planning Committees set up and there are no parish or town councils.</p> <p>The size (and name) of the Planning committee has changed a number of times since 2003, peaking at eleven members during this time although has remained at seven members for the last five years. It was initially called the Development Control Committee but changed its name to the Planning Committee in 2011, although the remit has stayed the same.</p> <p>Major category applications are considered at Planning Committee and while some applications are determined by officers, under the Constitution, an officer may not refuse planning permission related to a major category application.</p> <p>There is also a provision that where an application is proposed to be granted or rejected by the Head of Planning Quality and Control under delegated powers, the relevant ward councillor can request that the application is referred to the Planning Committee for further consideration.</p> <p>Approximately 5% of applications are considered by Planning Committee and this has remained roughly static since the last review.</p>

		<p>In 2017, the Local Government Association and the Planning Advisory Service undertook a peer review of the service. One of the recommendations from the review was to improve the communication between planners and both senior management and elected members, recommending a number of actions to improve those connections and improve information flow generally. Another recommendation was to update the training plan for committee members, to build in additional speakers and also add in some time for review and reflection of previous decisions. In May 2017, in response to a recommendation from the peer review the Labour group appointed one of its Cabinet Members to the Planning Committee (within its existing allocation of seats for that committee) to strengthen the link between that committee and the Executive.</p> <p>In 2003, planning site visits were conducted for every committee meeting but over recent years these have been arranged by exception rather than the norm with the use of technology and the committee receiving information about applications through photographs, maps, videos etc. This approach was also endorsed by the peer review in 2018.</p> <p>In terms of time commitment for Planning Committee members, the approximate time commitment is around 50 hours a year- four hours per month being made up of attending the meeting, compulsory training and pre-reading.</p> <p>There are no other changes anticipated.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Licensing Committee, is currently made up of 13 councillors and is scheduled to meet three times a year during the evening. It can also meet outside of this schedule for specific issues referred to it.</p> <p>The Committee is responsible for reviewing the policies of the Council relating to licensing functions and has overall responsibility for the licensing responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Licensing Act 2003. It can also receive reports from scrutiny committees when they are related to licensing functions.</p> <p>The Licensing Committee appoints Licensing Panels to consider premises licences and personal licences in the district related to the sale and/or supply of alcohol, the provision of regulated entertainment and late-night refreshment where</p>

		<p>representations have been made. A Licensing Panel of three members is drawn from the main committee and meetings are held to consider applications made under the Licensing Act 2003. A named reserve councillor is appointed to ensure that the quorum can be achieved even if the Panel is called at short notice.</p> <p>The dates of the meetings are determined by the timeframe for considering the applications. There are approximately one-two hearings a month making approximately 20 a year. Each hearing lasts approximately one-two hours, plus reading panel papers, thus making the average member commitment between 12-20 hours per year. The members who sit on the Panels are drawn from the committee on an (ad-hoc) rota basis with the Chair and Vice Chair doing more than other members and often chairing the Panel although a balanced representative approach is sought from other members.</p> <p>The Licensing Committee has also appointed a Public Protection Sub-Committee dealing with licensing matters relating to hackney carriages and private hire vehicles and sex establishment licences amongst other matters.</p> <p>The level of licensing activity in the town is high with a busy night-time economy. While many decisions are made by staff under delegated powers, the role of councillors on both the main Committee, the Public Protection Sub Committee and the Licensing Panels is a necessary and important function for elected representatives and is likely to continue to be going forward.</p>
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
<p>Other Regulatory Bodies</p>	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Council has several other regulatory/governance committees including the Standards Committee, the Appeals Committee and the Audit Committee. The Standards Committee has five members and is scheduled to meet twice per annum, with other meetings held as required. The main responsibility of the Standards Committee is to promote standards within the Council and to monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct. Where required, it may act in a hearing mode to hear and determine complaints of alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct by councillors referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The Audit Committee was constituted in 2005 (i.e. 2 years after the last council size review) and the main responsibilities of the Audit Committee (seven members) are to consider and sign off the annual accounts, deal with governance, risk management and internal control matters and receive reports from internal audit and external audit. The Audit</p>

		<p>Committee meets on a bi-monthly basis (approximately 2 hours per meeting) and members are expected to attend a complimentary training programme which takes place in between Audit Committees (approximately one hour) and pre reading/ briefings of 1.5 to 2.5 hours. The Committee since 2017 has had co-opted independent members on the committee and currently has two appointed to the committee.</p> <p>The Appeals Committee is scheduled to meet on an approximate bi-monthly basis but these meetings are determined by the number of appeals which are referred there, with a number of these meetings each year cancelled. This is a pattern which has remained constant over previous years.</p> <p>The number of regulatory/governance committees has remained the same since 2005 with a slight reduction in the number of elected members on committees which would have other 'attendees' presenting to the committees (i.e. Appeals, Public Protection, Planning and Standards). The total number of positions on these regulatory/ governance committees for councillors currently stands at 51. It was 37 in 2003.</p>
External Partnerships		<p>Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.</p>
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
	Analysis	<p>A number of councillors are appointed as the Council's representative on a range of different local and regional external organisations/ joint committees, some of the main ones being the Police and Crime Panel for Lancashire which meets five times per year (1 representative), there is also the Combined Fire Authority (with representatives from Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council) which meets five times a year (plus additional committee meetings if councillors are appointed to these) and has two Labour and one Conservative representative. The Health and Wellbeing Board also has two Cabinet Members and a Conservative member and meets on an ad hoc basis. Executive member representation is primarily on the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (approx. seven meetings per year) and the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board (four meetings per year).</p> <p>The Leader of the Council also attends the Local Government Association and related groups.</p>

	<p>Councillors also play a full role in their respective party groups, with many expected to take on extra responsibilities such as group officer roles and also representing the Group on outside bodies - this again increases time commitments for councillors.</p> <p>A full review was undertaken of council representation on outside bodies in 2013 with a reduction in the number of external bodies being represented upon. This also overlapped with the Council reviewing its representation on its wholly owned companies. Since 2003 there has been an additional five companies either created or purchased by the Council with one company being dissolved. However there has been a reduction in the number of councillors holding non-executive director (NED) positions on companies as more 'independent' non-executive directors have been recruited. (i.e. the average councillor NED representation in 2003 was five per company, whereas it is currently three per company).</p> <p>Over this time period there have been approximately 50 bodies which the council no longer has representation on for various reasons. There are now currently 29 outside bodies that the Council appoints to, some with more than one councillor appointed, totalling 44 appointment positions.</p> <p>In addition there are internal/partnership groups such as the Adoption Panel, Corporate Parent Panel and Member Training Panel amongst others. The total number of appointments to these is groups is 23 members.</p>
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Community Involvement

9. 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?

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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? ➤ 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? ➤ 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?
	Analysis	<p>The Council does not have any Area Committees nor any Parish or Town Councils predominantly due to its geographic footprint of 13.46 square miles, with a largely urbanised spread. From the date of the last review and up until 2015, community-based meetings called Area Forums were facilitated by the Council and attended by ward councillors. These were held quarterly and enabled members of the public to be updated on issues within their communities and councillors were able to respond to queries raised. Since the Areas Forums ceased in 2015, members use ward-based surgeries or make much more use of IT to communicate with residents and respond to issues. Some members also attend local community groups and neighbourhood meetings.</p> <p>Every ward councillor is also granted £7,500 per year, which can be spent on community projects within their wards. Councillors liaise with community groups within their wards and complete a ward funding application to apply for the funding. Administrative support for the scheme is provided by the Member Services team.</p>
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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? ➤ What support do members receive? ➤ How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate? ➤ In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?
Casework	Analysis	<p>In 2015 / 2016, an electronic member enquiry app was designed specifically for member enquiries, which enables councillors to log enquiries when out and about on council business. This is administered by the Member Services Team and enquiries are forwarded onto officer contacts within the Council. They investigate the issue and respond accordingly to the councillor and sometimes directly to the constituent. However, there are still many occasions where face-to-face meetings take place between councillors and constituents / officers to discuss neighbourhood issues.</p>

		<p>Approximately 1,000 enquiries are logged by members, via the electronic system, per year. There are also enquiries raised directly between members and officers that are not logged on the electronic system.</p> <p>The Member Services team also looks after the day-to-day support for members, including helping to monitor and progress constituent queries. A Member Services Officer, in post since 2005, oversees the work of the team and organises training and development for the councillors. As many members have 'day jobs', meetings and training sessions are held in the evenings to accommodate members' availability.</p> <p>Prior to 2011, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members were supported by two secretaries. Since 2011 an additional secretary has been added and also an Opposition Support Officer appointed who provides administrative support to the Opposition Elected Members.</p> <p>Councillors still meet face-to-face with constituents as required and speak via telephone. However, members' use of IT has increased dramatically over the last 10 years, with much more reliance on immediate contact with constituents via email.</p> <p>In 2015, paperless working for members was introduced and all members were provided with an iPad. This means that they are contactable by constituents at all times and they access council meetings and agendas via their iPads rather than by hard copy papers. All members receive IT training when they are first elected and throughout their terms of office.</p>
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Other Issues

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

N/A

Summary

11. 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 number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate any other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in

terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

The Council considers that the number of current elected members (42) is broadly correct to cover the overall workload of the Council. In coming to this conclusion the Council has looked at whether the number of elected members should reduce below 42, stay at 42 or increase to a higher figure.

The LGBCE guidance for 'council size' states that 'we will assess your number (or range of numbers) against your 15 'nearest neighbour' authorities as set out by CIPFA.' Appendix 4 of the guidance shows how Blackpool Council compares to these 'nearest neighbours'. This appendix shows Blackpool to be in the lower quintile of its 'nearest neighbours' with 42 councillors so this also adds to the argument for no fewer councillors than at present. One local example is Blackburn with Darwen Council which is a unitary council in Lancashire with a similar population which at its recent electoral review decreased its number of councillors from 64 to 51. As demonstrated in the above sections, the work of a councillor on Blackpool Council has also definitely not lessened since 2003 (with additional responsibilities such as licensing act work and audit committee being added in the intervening period) and therefore having fewer councillors is not warranted.

The Council has looked at whether there is a strong case for increasing the size of the council but concludes that, on balance it is considered that the number of members should be retained at 42 based on the workload required. This figure was arrived at reflecting back over the changes in the governance model since 2003 and whether this warranted extra work and a need for additional councillors.

In essence the Executive business has retained a similar level over the last 18 years, scrutiny has reduced the number of members involved with fewer committees now in place but this has been counter balanced by an increase in the regulatory and governance work of councillors with the introduction in 2005 of the Audit Committee and the Licensing Committee/ Licensing Panels (as part of the Authority taking on the Licensing Act 2003 duties).

Since the last review the councillors' role with Area Forums has ceased and there has also been additional officer support put in place to support members and the use of technology is also actively used by members to undertake their council and constituency work. External representation on other bodies has been broadly constant.

In conclusion it is viewed that although the 'mix' of work councillors undertake has changed over the last 18 years, the officer support that is in place and benefits from the greater use of technology have helped councillors become more efficient and effective but there is no significant evidence of a need for additional councillors, nor a reduction in councillors, as the range of responsibilities has increased and therefore the current number of 42 councillors is recommended to be retained.