

Submission on behalf of Walsall Council

# Council Size Submission:

Walsall Council

## Contents

Walsall Council has retained the template as set out by the Commission and has populated text boxes provided when responding. Therefore, the structure has been kept as detailed in the table below.

How to Make a Submission .....	2
About You .....	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only) .....	2
Local Authority Profile .....	3
Council Size .....	5
Other Issues .....	12

## How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

## About You

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

This submission has been drafted on behalf of Walsall Council by a group of officers from various services. As part of the submission there has been engagement with political group leaders, briefings to political groups and those elected members that are not part of a political group. In addition, a survey of all 60 elected members has been delivered that has sought the views of councillors on council size and the electoral cycle. On that basis this submission has considered all views across the various council stakeholders.

## Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

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

The last electoral review by the commission was in 2010, this review has been identified as part of published criteria.

## 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?

Walsall Council has adopted a model constitution which sets out its governance, decision making processes, structure and rules and protocols. The decision making function of the council is governed by the Local Government Act 1972, Local Government Act 2000, and the Localism Act 2011. As permitted by legislation the council can make decisions as one corporate body of membership or it may delegate its functions, powers and duties to:

- A committee
- A sub-committee
- An officer
- Another local authority
- The Leader of the council individually as part of the executive function

As the council operates a 'by thirds' electoral cycle there is scope for the membership of full council and any corporate body membership to alter at each election. The Conservative administration has held control since 2018 and operates executive (Cabinet) arrangements with a leader and cabinet model in place.

Elected members were recently surveyed and were asked if they felt 'the current council size (60 members / 3 member wards) was an appropriate size to effectively facilitate the representation of residents and the management of the Borough'. There was a 55% response rate (33 respondents). 88% of the respondents answered 'yes'. They were also asked if they felt 'the current council size (60 members) will effectively represent residents and manage the borough 10 years from now' and 70% of respondents said 'yes'.

## 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?

Walsall is situated within the West Midlands and is one of four local authorities comprising the Black Country. Walsall is comprised of six districts: Walsall itself lies at the heart of the borough, surrounded by Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. Many residents have a strong identity with these districts and some residents of outlying areas such as Willenhall, Brownhills or parts of Aldridge (notably Streetly, which is physically close to Sutton Coldfield in Birmingham) do not consider themselves to be part of Walsall. The borough covers 40sq miles and is bisected by the M6 motorway. Socio-economically, there is a stark geographic divide between the more deprived west and centre, and the less deprived east. This is mirrored in the housing density across the borough with the west more densely populated than the east. There is a substantial amount of green belt land in the east of the borough.

Profiles for the current 20 Wards were produced in 2019. These profiles provide a detailed perspective of the ward and the borough in terms of geography, population, housing, social segmentation and have used the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 report. These 20 profiles are held on the Walsall Insight website and can be viewed via this link: <https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/profiles/ward-profiles/>.

Walsall has an estimated population of **286,700** (ONS 2020 Mid-Year Estimates), composed of approximately **21.7% children** 0-15 (62,300), **60.8% working-aged** 16-64 (174,300), and **17.5% 65 years & over** (50,100), giving a dependency ratio of 0.64 dependents to every 1 working age adult. In terms of density, this equates to around 2,757 people per square kilometre. The population has seen a **7.45% increase** over the past decade, from 266,800 in 2010; most of this increase has been under 16s, increasing by 12.2%, and over 65s, growing by 10.2%, contrasted with a working age (16-64 years) increase of only around 5.1% (2020 & 2010 ONS Mid-Year Estimates).

The mid-year 2020 estimates include the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw population growth relatively decelerate due to COVID-19 mortality and reduced population movement via internal and external migration. As a consequence, it is estimated Walsall's population grew by 1200 (0.43%) from 2019-2020, contrasted to the previous year (2018-19) growth of 2,100 (0.74%). Against a five-year average (0.83% per year), 2020 saw the rate of population growth roughly halve.

The borough experienced population decline over a number of decades as better-off residents moved out of the area to the surrounding shire counties. This decline has reversed since the turn of the century with regeneration resulting in housing growth largely on former industrial land, as well as several former council estates being redeveloped. We have produced an analysis comparing the change in the number of electors in each ward

since 2015 against the development of new homes. In most wards, the growth in electors is closely linked to the number of new homes provided. The exception to this is in the half dozen most prosperous wards that have an older, more settled population, where the number of electors has declined or stayed unchanged despite new housing development. This is likely to reflect a larger number of ‘empty nesters’ in those wards where children have been able to afford to move out of the parental homes and where the older population means there are more elderly residents living alone.

We comment below on expected future housing development proposed in the local plan.

To forecast electorate figures we have used ONS data and annual register electorate data. The table below compares historic electorates to corresponding ONS population figures:

Year	ONS Population figure (aged 18 plus)	Electorate (as per register published on 1 December each year)	Electorate as a percentage of ONS population (4 decimal places)
2016	212,656	189,965	89.3297
2017	214,082	196,362	91.7228
2018	215,221	197,506	91.7689
2019	216,508	198,730	91.7888
2020	225,724	200,024	92.0323
2021	224,612	204,811	94.8059
2022	220,337	200,321	90.9157

Average electorate as % of total population aged 18+ = 91.7663

Population aged 18+ to electorate ratio = 1:0.917663

When forecasting elector data we have deployed the same methodology but where required this has been calculated on a polling district basis.

### Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

### Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
<b>Governance Model</b>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <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> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet model. The Leader has appointed 9 Portfolio Holders. The Leader has also appointed two Cabinet Support Assistants to support three large portfolios, namely: Resilient Communities, Adult Social Care and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.</p> <p>The Cabinet includes two Deputy Leaders.</p> <p>Portfolios are reviewed annually. Each portfolio is responsible for an outcome for the Council strategic plan which is monitored quarterly.</p> <p>Executive members are involved significantly in the drafting and preparing of strategy and budgets in order to ensure the Council resources its priorities. Executive Members are engaged at informal meetings and briefings before reviewing draft Cabinet reports. Scrutiny Members call Cabinet Members to meetings where they present reports and answer questions.</p> <p>Extensive pre-decision scrutiny of the budget takes place annually. Cabinet Members are invited to present their budget proposals to scrutiny and answer questions.</p>
<p><b>Portfolios</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><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 style="text-align: center;"><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>The Leader appoints 9 Cabinet Members, namely:</p> <p><b>Regeneration</b></p>

		<p>Resilient Communities Children Education and Skills Internal Services Adult Social Care Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture Customer Street Pride</p> <p>Due to capacity issues the Leader has appointed two Cabinet Support Assistants to work with the portfolio Holders for Resilient Communities, Adult Social Care, Street Pride and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.</p> <p>Portfolio Holders at Walsall usually have jobs and undertake their Cabinet briefings, pre-meets and meetings in evenings.</p> <p>There are no individual decision making powers at Walsall. All key decisions are taken collectively at Cabinet meetings. The majority of non-key decisions are delegated to officers.</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>
	Analysis	<p>The Council operates an extensive <u>scheme of delegation</u> for non-key and operational decisions.</p> <p>All 60 elected Members are involved in making major decisions such as approving the Council budget and strategic plans.</p>

### Accountability

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

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



<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></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><b>Analysis</b></p>		<p>The Council operates five Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs). OSC remits are focused on Strategic Plan outcomes and Council directorate structures.</p> <p>There are 11 Members on each OSC. This number was required to assist in accommodating political balance for minority groups.</p> <p>Each OSC meets 6 times a year. Meetings start at 6pm and typically last 2-3 hours. Cabinet Members are expected to attend to present reports and answer questions.</p> <p>The number of OSCs increased to four from five in recent years. The increase was a split of Children’s and Education OSC from one to two committees. This was recommended by the LGA to increase scrutiny of education matters. Members recognised that Walsall has had historically low attainment rates so took this suggestion forward.</p> <p>Task and finish groups are set up and resourced as required. Members are enthusiastic for the number of working groups to be increased.</p>
<p><b>Statutory Function</b></p>		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul>

	Analysis	<p>There is a single Council wide Planning Committee comprised of one member from each of the 20 wards. Executive Members are permitted to sit on the Committee.</p> <p>Planning Committee meets once a month and meetings typically last 3-4 hours, this is in addition to the preparation time members spend reading papers, seeking advice from officers etc.</p> <p>Between 4-6%, based on proportion of applications over the last 5 years, are determined by elected members. This has reduced slightly over the last 2 years because of greater delegation given to officers as part of constitutional changes.</p>
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<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>In an average year the following meetings are held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Licensing and Safety Committee meet six times per year.</li> <li>- Taxi A sub committee ten times per year.</li> <li>- Taxi B sub committee seven times per year.</li> <li>- Taxi Liaison Group three times per year</li> <li>- Licensing and Safety Sub Committee ad hoc depending on need, potentially ten times per year.</li> </ul> <p>Meeting length can vary, anywhere between 1-3 hours depending on the agenda. All but the Licensing and Safety Sub Committee are standard committees. The Licensing and Safety Sub Committee which only meets when a responsible authority calls a review of a licence or makes a representation against a licence.</p> <p>There is generally a nominated chair and deputy chair for each committee and each committee or subcommittee needs to be quorate to take place however as long as these requirements are met then generally any combination of members could sit on the committees. The committee members have to undertake training so that they have an understanding of the legislation and regulated area of activity and how they should arrive at open, fair and transparent decisions. Obviously, members have to declare an interest in any committee hearing they attend.</p> <p>Much of the work the Regulatory Services and particularly the licensing service undertake is required by statute and a significant amount of responsibility is delegated to officers through the constitution. It is however fundamental to all of the licensing regimes that challenges to licences through reviews</p>

		<p>or representations are heard by a committee of elected members in an open, fair and transparent way. In terms of licensing many licence holders are licensed to trade in the Borough but live or have a head office outside of the Borough therefore the size of the Borough is not necessarily determining factor in how many licences it issues. The economy of the Borough is a great draw for licence holders so a small Borough with a thriving economy will attract licence holders in significant numbers compared to a large Borough with no thriving economy.</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>In addition to the Planning Committee and the Licensing and Safety Committee the Council has the following regulatory bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audit Committee (7 elected members, 3 independent members)</li> <li>- Corporate Parenting Board (7 elected members including the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services and Chair of Children Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee)</li> <li>- Health and Wellbeing Board (not subject to requirements of political balance, 4 elected members and representation from other organisations)</li> <li>- Personnel Committee (9 elected members)</li> <li>- Standards Committee (10 elected members including 1 from the executive)</li> </ul>
<b>External Partnerships</b>		<p>Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.</p>
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Leader is a Board Member of the West Midlands Combined Authority. He is also the WMCA Transport portfolio holder. This is a time commitment of at least one day a week.</p> <p>The Leader is also appointed to the Black Country Joint Committee which makes decisions on allocating money for regeneration projects in the Black Country.</p>

	<p>Amongst others the Council also appoints to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WMCA OSC</li> <li>- WMCA Audit Committee</li> <li>- Transport Delivery Committee</li> <li>- Police and Crime Panel</li> </ul> <p>There are numerous other outside bodies which the Council is invited to appoint members to. At Annual Council in May 2023 there were 31 external bodies.</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>Councillors make their own arrangements for engaging with their ward. This can be through surgeries, engagement at community meetings, newsletters and use of social media platforms.</p>

		<p>The engagement of elected members with local community groups including engagement with young people is something each member will manage individually.</p> <p>Formal public consultation is undertaken annually when the council sets its budget.</p> <p>There are no area committees or parish councils in the area.</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>
	<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Members will take their case work forward individually. They will engage with council officers for support with their queries as required. There is no dedicated Member Services team to assist councillors with casework.</p> <p>The council has an extensive complaints management system which it would seek to identify and solve complaints from members of the public before they are referred to councillors.</p> <p>As part of the recent elected member survey all members were asked how much time they spent on case work and their community leadership role. The mean average amount of time spent on casework for the 33 respondents was 13.97 hours each week. The range of hours spent on all councillor activity, based on responses received councillors said they spend anywhere between 6 and 88 hours per week across all council duties.</p>

### Other Issues

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

As part of the Parliamentary Review five existing wards (those west of the M6) are due to become part of Wolverhampton constituencies. The selection and inclusion of these wards is based on the current ward boundaries. To reduce any confusion for residents and complications regarding delivery of combined elections we wanted to ensure the commission was aware of these overlaying boundaries and are able to take them into consideration when conducting the electoral review.

Willenhall North and Short Heath wards will become part of the Wolverhampton North East Constituency and wards Willenhall South, Bentley and Darlaston North and Darlaston South will become part of the Wolverhampton South East Constituency.

Additional information regarding these constituency changes can be found at <https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/> and a map of the boundaries laid over existing ward boundaries is included in the supporting information. You will see from the map that the new parliamentary boundaries cut through the current Paddock ward.

The analysis of housing growth by ward since 2015 also includes details of the number of homes with planning permission or allocated in the existing local plan (the Black Country Core Strategy and Walsall Site Allocation Document) that are expected to be built in each ward in the next few years. The BCCS and SAD are to be replaced by a new local plan that will amongst other matters address future housing needs. This was to have been the Black Country Plan, but the four local authorities resolved in 2022 that each authority would instead produce their own plan.

The standard method used by the Government indicates that Walsall needs to provide 909 additional homes per year. The supply of brownfield land that has been used to develop most of our new housing in recent years is running out. The Black Country Plan therefore proposed that a large amount of land in Walsall which is currently in the Green Belt in the east of the borough would be allocated for housing, to provide approximately 5,400 homes by 2039. No decision has yet been taken about whether these proposals will be carried forward into the Walsall Local Plan. The government has recently consulted on possible changes to national planning policy that could result in the requirement to allocate land for housing in the Green Belt being removed. Even if these changes are not implemented however, it is unlikely that significant new Green Belt housing development would take place before 2029, the end date of the current boundary review. It is also expected that some of the housing need would be 'exported' to neighbouring authorities through their local plans providing for more than their local need.

## 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.

For council size there are three options available. These are to reduce the number of elected members, to increase the number of elected members or to sustain the current number of councillors.

To reduce the number of elected members poses a risk to appropriate representation of local residents as the ratio of electors to members would change significantly. It would also impact on the capacity of councillors to fulfil their responsibilities in terms of strategic leadership and accountability and to deliver the council's governance structures. In addition to Cabinet there are over 120 positions on council committees, excluding external bodies.

Given the range of time survey respondents spend each week on councillor activity it would be unsustainable to reduce the overall number of elected members.

The population and electorate forecasts suggest the overall population is not going to significantly alter. Even the housing growth being considered in the local plan would result in an increase of less than 1% per year. Increasing the number of elected members therefore would cause a likelihood of some or all wards being substantially over represented, i.e. >10%.

As discussed in preliminary meetings with the commission it is the view of the political and officer leadership that the current membership size is required to deliver the governance arrangements for the Council.

As identified by the LGBCE the current council size and representation of residents with 3 elected members per ward is in keeping with arrangements in statistical neighbouring authorities.

As detailed above a recent survey of elected members confirmed that the majority of Elected Members feel the current council size (60 members / 3 member wards) is an appropriate size to effectively facilitate the representation of residents and the management of the Borough. There was a 55% response rate (33 respondents). 88% of the respondents answered 'yes'. Sustaining current council size is where there is consensus amongst the majority of elected members and also officers.

## Supporting Evidence

Walsall Council has utilised the 'Item Checklist' provided by the commission to collect supporting evidence being provided alongside this submission. This is detailed in the table below:

Information		Description	Provided by Council
<b>Electorate</b>			
1	Geocoded Electoral Register	Provide as a .csv file or MS Excel spreadsheet, including the data as described the Electoral Register Headers.	File: LGBCE Geocode Register.xlsx  Please note our system does not contain eastings and northings but UPRN's are included. Elector count has been included but this means elector markers could not be included so we have added marker count columns.
2	Current & Forecast Electorate	Data should be supplied on the MS Excel Proforma. There are 2 parts to this document; the READ ME section which explains how to use the proforma, and provides space for contact details. The second is for capturing the electoral data. Contact and Proforma of this document.	File: C - Electoral Forecasting Proforma.xlsx LGBCE proforma has been completed.



3	Forecasting Methodology	Details as to how the forecast figures were put together.	File: Population Estimates.xlsx This file contains population and electorate forecasting (including methodology), historic data and also methodology and data for polling district data.
<b>Developments</b>			
4	Housing Development Data	Provide as mapping data, preferably a shape file. Developments of certain sizes need only be included. This will be defined by the overall size of your electorate. Refer to the description in the guidance to establish the appropriate threshold for your authority.	Files: Major Housing Proposals_region.dbf, Major Housing Proposals_region.prj, Major Housing Proposals_region.shp, Major Housing Proposals_region.shx, Minor Housing Proposals_region.prj, Minor Housing Proposals_region.shp, Minor Housing Proposals_region.shx Also: Housing Proposals Map A2.BMP, Housingnyward.xlsx and Electors and Housing Development by PD.xlsx  In addition to the shapefile there is a visual map to illustrate the planned build areas and 2 data files that provide the data. The second data file shows historic register as housing data as a way of considering / forecasting future changes.
<b>Polling Districts</b>			
5	Polling District Maps	Provide as mapping data, preferably a shape file.	Files: wards.dbf, wards.prj, wards.shp, wards.shx  Ward maps as shapefile

6	Polling District Review Report	Provide a copy of the report taken to Full Council that gives details of the last polling district review and any subsequent amendments.	Files: 12 - Review of polling districts and places NOV 2018.pdf and 12 - Review of polling district and polling places 2013_14.pdf.
<b>Parishes</b>			
7	Parish Electoral Arrangements	If any part of your area is parished complete the Parish Electoral Arrangements Proform. Remember to include details of Grouped Parishes where appropriate.	Not Applicable
8	Parish Ward Maps	Provide as mapping data, preferably a shape file.	Not Applicable
<b>Legal Changes &amp; Notices</b>			
9	Local Orders	Provide copies of all Orders made since the last Electoral Review was implemented.	None
10	Governance Changes	Provide copies of any resolutions that have been passed regarding changes to electoral cycles or governance arrangements.	None
<b>Communications Pack</b>			
11	Communications Planning	A guide to planning the communications for the review. Outlines key dates and expectations.	File: Comms plan – Boundary Commission.docx
12	Stakeholder Database	Information should be supplied on the MS Excel proforma provided. There are 8 parts.	File: Walsall Council Stakeholder Database 04.07.23 FINAL.xlsx  We have provided as much detail as possible. Due to GDPR some organisations will need to cascade the information to their own networks and lists and

			we will send it directly to some organisations ourselves (e.g. Police for them to send out).
13	Communications Contact	Provide contact details for the designated Communications contact who will act as a liaison during consultation.	Rebecca Morris is our communications lead. Please send any media items to <a href="mailto:communications@walsall.gov.uk">communications@walsall.gov.uk</a> for her attention. <a href="mailto:Helen.dudson@walsall.gov.uk">Helen.dudson@walsall.gov.uk</a> can be used as a back up if there are issues
<b>Additional consideration</b>			
14	Parliamentary Boundary Review	The recent Parliamentary Boundary Review has impacted on the borough with some existing wards becoming part of Wolverhampton constituencies and one current ward being split between new constituencies. Walsall Council believes the commission needs to be aware of the impact and is providing information to support your consideration of this.	Files: New Parliamentary Boundaries and Wards.pdf, 2022_11_8_Revised_proposals_West_Midlands.cpg, 2022_11_8_Revised_proposals_West_Midlands.dbf, 2022_11_8_Revised_proposals_West_Midlands.prj, 2022_11_8_Revised_proposals_West_Midlands.shp, 2022_11_8_Revised_proposals_West_Midlands.shx