

Green Party Group submission

Council Size Submission: Kirklees

Kirklees Council

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How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

About You

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

We are Kirklees Councils Green Party Group and are 3 Councillors representing the Newsome Ward. We play a full role in the Council, on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and a range of outside bodies.

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.*

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

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

The Council last implemented a change of size of Council in 2004 when the Council lost 1 ward and went down from 72 Councillors to 69 Councillors.

The Council now has as stronger focus on placed based working and proudly claims that Councillors are at the heart of what we do. In practice this means we have control of a useful ward budget of £20k/year, have a dedicated service helping us with the dealing with casework and service make more effort to engage with local Councillors regarding activity they are conducting in our wards. This then puts more emphasis on Councillors role in engaging with communities we represent and informing them of activities in communities.

We are finding more people struggling with the cost of living crisis and also having difficulty engaging with a Council due to constraints on staff and high workloads. This means that people come to Councillors more frequently to help them resolve issues and problems. We cannot ignore the context of diminishing Council resources and the nor of inflation on services.

With the above background then reducing the size of the Council would not be a scenario we could support. There is probably a case for expanding the Council but that is difficult to justify in the current political and economic climate.

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?

Though significant development is expected over the life of the Kirklees Local Plan it is not expected to reach the number of units allocated in this or any other local Planning Authority. The predicted changes in the population are not significant nor warrant any radical change in ward boundaries or Councillor numbers.

Councillor Casework does vary from rich rural wards to poorer wards but where one area might have Councillors dealing with social issues, another richer ward might have more Planning concerns. So the workload on Councillors will be similar across the areas.

Council Size

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

Strategic Leadership

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

Topic	
Governance Model	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <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>
	<p>Analysis</p> <p>The Council operates a Cabinet System with the strong leader model and a Cabinet of 10 members. There is also a Scrutiny function with an Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee with 4 Standing Panels covering the Councils functions as well Health and Housing related Ad Hoc Panels. The Council is also a Planning Authority. There are also roles on the</p>

		<p>West Yorkshire Combined Authority and its Scrutiny and Transport Panels. In addition there are Licensing Panels, a Personnel Committee and a Standards Committee and of course Full Council. In addition to the formal meetings of the Council there are Business Managers Meetings, Leading Members meetings etc. It is a busy Council.</p> <p>In our groups opinion we would prefer a Committee System as a way of engaging more Councillors in the budget setting and policy making process of the Council but this view is not supported by the Labour or Conservative Groups</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	All portfolio roles are full time positions and there is no Executive Mayor
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	All Councillors will be involved in major decisions such as the Councils Budget and the Local Plan but otherwise major decisions are made by the Cabinet. Ward Councillors have responsibility for their ward budgets.

Accountability

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

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

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority. ➤ Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.
	Analysis	Cabinet members engage well with the Scrutiny Panels explaining their objectives and the panels use these to help inform their work programmes. We do not have a committee system but have a full range of scrutiny panels, licensing and planning committees
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"> ➤ What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members? ➤ Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated? ➤ Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee? ➤ Will executive members serve on the planning committees? ➤ What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?
	Analysis	Major or controversial applications will be taken by Planning Committee or applications referred by ward Councillors.
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year? ➤ And what will be the time commitment for members? ➤ Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc? ➤ Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require? ➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
External Partnerships		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.
Key lines of explanation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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? ➤ 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>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

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"> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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> ➤ <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>
	Analysis	Engagement with the community varies from ward to ward. In our ward we deliver at least 6 pieces of literature every year including an annual report in December. We engage regularly with the Community Ward Forum and we attend most community events an meetings.
Casework	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <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> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i>

		<p>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Councillors deal with casework both through a Councillor Enquiries mailbox for casework and by direct contact with individual officers. There is a Councillor Support team who help with casework.</p> <p>Most Councillors are available vis email or mobile and the occasional letter. Social media gives a whole new dimension to our contact with the public with messages from our Ward Facebook Group and on Twitter and now Instagram. We have never been so accessible.</p> <p>In the ward we represent we deliver regular leaflets which also generate casework as well as our attendance at a range of community events and meetings.</p>

Other Issues

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

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

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

There is no significant population increase in any particular areas of Kirklees. Demands on Councillors have increased due to stretched Council services and increased accessibility of Councillors from a range of platforms and social media groups. We recommend no change to the existing arrangements with regards to Council size as a Larger Council will be difficult to justify in the current financial climate.