

CABINET – 2 JULY 2014

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7 JULY 2014

ELECTORAL AND GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION ON  
THE FUTURE SIZE OF THE COUNCIL

REPORT OF CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Contact Officer: Stephen Whetnall/Chris Ashcroft      Tel No: 01962 848220  
swhetnall@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

OS83 – Review of Statutory Services ISG Recommendations – 23 September 2013

CAB2520 – Statutory Services ISG Recommendations – 23 October 2013

CAB2542 – Options for the Council's Electoral Cycle – 4 December 2014

CAB2567 – Governance Review – Options for the Council's Electoral Cycle – 19  
March 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting held on 2 April 2014, the Council decided to retain the existing electoral cycle of election by thirds.

The consequence is that the electoral scheme following the Commission's Review will be largely based upon 3 Member wards and any submission on future Council size will need to be based on a number divisible by 3.

In Stage 1 of the Review, the Council should make a submission on its views about the future size of the Council and the Commission then determines the new Council size. In Stage 2, the Council, and others, can make proposals for the new warding arrangements. This is followed by the Commission undertaking public consultation

on its draft warding proposals towards the end of 2014. Implementation of the agreed proposals will take place at the Council elections in 2016.

The draft Submission document at Appendix A was produced following consultation with the Electoral Review/Governance Informal Policy Group. The Group reviewed the wording of the draft Submission and other documentation in some detail. However, the Group did not wish to make a collective recommendation to full Council on the conclusion to be drawn as to future Council size.

In these circumstances, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development is making a formal proposal that the Council should consider a future Council size of 45 Members, and the conclusion in the draft document has been prepared on that basis for the consideration of Council.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS to Cabinet and Council:

- 1 That a Submission be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission recommending that the future Council size be 45 Members.
- 2 That the Submission be based upon the document annexed to this report as Appendix A, and the Chief Operating Officer be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development, to make any consequential amendments to take account of the Council decision on Council Size , and any other minor editing adjustments.
- 3 That a further report be brought to full Council on draft proposals for Stage 2 (Warding Arrangements) once the Commission has determined the future size of the Council.
- 4 That Cabinet and The Overview & Scrutiny Committee take account of the proposals for future changes in the Council's governance arrangements, outlined in Appendix A, as future opportunities for implementation occur.

To The Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

That the Committee considers the Council Size Submission and suggests any additions or amendments for consideration by Council.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet established the Electoral Review/Governance Informal Policy Group to act as a sounding board in taking forward the Council's response to the Commission's Electoral Review and the Council's own Governance Review. It has the following membership:

Councillor Godfrey (Chairman) and Councillors J Berry, Clear, Learney, McLean, Weir and Wright.

- 1.2 The Group is supported by the Chief Operating Officer and the Electoral Review Manager.
- 1.3 Members received an initial briefing on the Review process on 7 November 2013 and then a further briefing from the Boundary Commission's Lead Commissioner for this Review (Professor Paul Wiles) on 31 March 2014.
- 1.4 The next decision that the Council needs to make (at its meeting on 16 July 2014) will be any recommendations to the Commission about Council size. The Commission will not allow any slippage in the agreed timetable and will meet on 19 August 2014 to make the final decision on Council size, taking into account any representations the Council has made.
- 1.5 The Submission should have regard to any proposals the Council has to further modernise its Governance arrangements and not merely reflect the current position. The Council needs to consider the implications that it has for the number of Members required to undertake those roles.
- 1.6 The Council should make a Submission if it wishes to influence the Commission on future Council size. It is not obliged to do so, but there are clear benefits, as the Commission takes account of local circumstances where the supporting evidence justifies the case that is made. In its guidance document 'Council Size', it states:-

‘the Commission....has no preconceptions about the right number of councillors to represent an authority. We do not compare authorities directly with each other, we have no targets or thresholds for council size, and we recognise that every local authority will represent local people and deliver services in different ways..... The ‘correct’ Council size for each authority is judged on its own merits.’

- 1.7 Political groups and others can make submissions if they so wish. When the Council was originally notified of the Review process, we were told by the Commission that they would conduct a formal public consultation process, before arriving at their decision on Council size. However, they have since changed this element and do not undertake a separate public consultation exercise on this part of the process.
- 1.8 The Informal Group was consulted on the contents of the proposed Council Size Submission at Appendix A. This work was undertaken over several meetings which examined the evidence base contained in the Appendices to the proposed Submission. The evidence base documents have also been updated to take account of the outcome of the recent elections and appointments to bodies made for the 2014/15 municipal year, which have made minimal structural changes to the governance arrangements from 2013/14.
- 1.9 The Informal Group was broadly supportive of the direction of travel proposed in the draft Submission for the Council’s future Governance arrangements, and of the evidence base used in the Appendices to that document. The Group reviewed the wording of the draft Submission and other documentation in some detail. However, it did not wish to make a collective recommendation to full Council on the conclusion to be drawn as to future Council size.
- 1.10 In these circumstances, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development is making a formal proposal that the Council should consider a future Council size of 45 Members, and the conclusion in the draft document has been prepared on that basis for the consideration of Council.
- 1.11 The second stage of the Commission’s Review – on draft proposals for the future warding of the District – will be based upon the Council size determined at Stage 1. The Commission’s decision on Council size will then be used to determine the councillor: electorate ratio which heavily influences how ward boundaries will be determined in due course. The electorate projections have to be considered for both 2014 and 2020. This will be considered in detail from July 2014 onwards.
- 1.12 There will be an all-out election in 2016 to give effect to the warding changes by the Commission. In 2017, it is the County Council election year. Thereafter, elections by thirds for the City Council will continue in 2018 onwards, with the councillors who were elected with the lowest votes in each ward in 2016 coming up for election first.

- 1.13 For information, set out below are the Commission's key dates for the Review following the decision on Council size:-

Stage 2 (ward boundary) consultation period	26 August 2014 – 3 November 2014
Commission deliberation and analysis period	December 2014 – January 2015
Draft recommendations consultation	3 February 2015 – 30 March 2015
Commission deliberation and analysis period	March 2015 – June 2015
Final recommendations	June 2015

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 3 Reviewing the arrangements for the political leadership and electoral accountability of the City Council are a key aspect of ensuring the Council is efficient and effective in the arrangements it makes for the conduct of business.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 If the outcome of this review results in a reduction of 12 Members, there would be a saving in the Members Allowances budget of £66,960 pa (i.e. £5,580 Basic Allowance x 12). In addition, the average travel expenses per Member is about £200pa, so a saving of £2,400 would also be achieved.
- 4.2 There would also be a consequent reduction in the number of Members receiving a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA), if the Council continues to follow the statutory advice that not more than half of the Council should be in receipt of an SRA (there are currently 25). It is harder to identify the level of savings that would result from this, as the Independent Remuneration Panel (which must meet during Autumn 2014) will need to assess the overall position at the time. But it would not be unreasonable to anticipate at least some further reduction in costs (say £5,000).
- 4.3 Equally difficult to quantify is the administrative saving that will result from officers having to support a smaller number of Members. As can be seen from the Members Charter, the Council is (and always has been) very economical with this particular budget and consequently any savings will not be dramatic. But again, it is reasonable to assume some reduction in costs and £300pa per Member is estimated, giving an annual saving of £3,600.

- 4.4 There have been no financial assumptions made about a further reduction in the number of meetings, because having less members does not always mean that this will automatically follow. Having said that, the trend in the annual number of meetings has been downwards, based on the figures given earlier in the brief.
- 4.5 Therefore, as a general summary, reducing the Council by 12 Members could produce annual savings of approx. £74,360 of immediately cashable savings plus a further estimated £3,600 of non-cashable savings.

## 5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 5.1 If the Council does not take a proactive approach to the Commission Review the new arrangements (numbers/wards) will determined by the Commission in any event.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[Local Government Boundary Commission – Electoral Reviews - Technical Guidance](#)

Appendices referred to below.

### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Draft Submission on Council Size to the Local Government Boundary Commission

This document contains a number of more detailed Appendices which are listed on the attached sheet and available via the Website:

<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/meetings/details/1267>



## **DRAFT SUBMISSION REGARDING THE FUTURE SIZE OF THE COUNCIL**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 25 July 2013, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England advised the City Council that it would be undertaking a Further Electoral Review.
- 1.2 The decision to undertake a review was based upon the electoral imbalance in Boarhunt & Southwick Ward, where housing development at West of Waterlooville had not proceeded at the rate envisaged. Since 2004, the City Council had responded annually on this matter to the Commission, anticipating that an increase in dwelling completions (and thereby the electorate) was imminent. Unfortunately, that proved not to be the case, because the economic recession continued to cause a far slower rate of construction than could have been reasonably predicted.
- 1.3 In June 2013, the Ward continued to show over 30% electors fewer per councillor than the Authority's ward average, plus there was not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it would be rectified in a reasonable period (which were two of the Commission's criteria for assessing the need for a review). There were also six other Wards where the variation exceeded 10% either way. Therefore, the decision was taken by the Commission to begin this process.
- 1.4 On 4 December 2013, Cabinet established the cross-party Electoral Review/Governance Informal Policy Group (ERGIPG); the membership and terms of reference are set out at **Appendix A**. To date, the Group has met on six occasions and considered a range of electoral and governance information, which has resulted in the production of this submission for consideration by Cabinet and Council. The Group also steered the work on the public consultation exercise regarding the choice between all-out or one third elections for the Authority (see section 2 below for results).
- 1.5 As can be seen from its Terms of Reference, the ERGIPG has also been instructed to look at existing Governance arrangements and thereby contribute to the wider Governance review currently being undertaken.

1.6 In carrying out its work, the Group has taken due account of :-

- a) changes in recent years
- b) whether those changes were in the right direction

The Group concluded that the current Governance arrangements were broadly appropriate and that the various changes sought to steadily modify and improve future processes, rather than opt for radical change. The 2013 Peer Review supported the changes being made in streamlining the decision making framework.

1.7 In its guidance document 'Council Size', the Commission states at the outset that it '....has no preconceptions about the right number of councillors to represent an authority. We do not compare authorities directly with each other, we have no targets or thresholds for council size, and we recognise that every local authority will represent local people and deliver services in different ways.'

1.8 Later in the document, the Commission lists the three key components it will look at, as follows:-

- the **governance arrangements** of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities
- the council's **scrutiny functions** relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies
- the **representational role of councillors in the local community** and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

1.9 This submission addresses those key components and provides a range of relevant information to assist the Commission in reaching its decision.

## 2 **Election by Thirds or Whole Council (all out) Elections?**

2.1 Before considering the City Council's proposal on future Council size, the Commission should note that the Council decided, on 2 April 2014, to retain its system of election by thirds. This decision is important because it has a direct effect on both the potential number of future councillors and the warding pattern.

2.2 As mentioned above, the Council undertook a public consultation exercise regarding this choice via its website and the results were as follows:-

For retaining one third elections	-	83
For whole Council (all out) elections	-	78



- 2.3 All 43 Parish Councils and leading community groups and organisations were also consulted. Of the 16 Parish Councils who responded, 13 were in favour of retaining election by thirds and 3 in favour of all out elections.
- 2.4 With regard to organisations, of the 4 responses, 3 favoured retention of election by thirds and one opted for all out elections. Further information about all the above responses are contained in Report CL94 (attached as **Appendix B**).

### 3 **Proposal on Council Size - Summary**

- 3.1 At its meeting held on 16 July 2014, the Council considered Cabinet's recommendation to reduce from 57 to 45 Members (*insert details of final Council decision*).
- 3.2 In reaching this conclusion, the Council has taken into account the following factors:-
- the existing Governance arrangements, including the number and sizes of committees, groups etc
  - the way in which the Council fulfils its scrutiny responsibilities
  - changes in legislation, most recently the Localism Act 2011
  - the future direction of travel in relation to Governance arrangements
  - the workload of councillors
  - the electoral cycle
  - changes to the way in which residents access information and services
  - changes to service levels provided by the City Council to its residents
  - the financial position of the Council (and the ongoing pressures on local government nationally)
- 3.3 In examining each of these factors, the different approaches taken by Councillors in undertaking their roles has been recognised, acknowledging that some seek positions of responsibility within the Authority, whilst others prefer to concentrate on engaging with their local community, often taking a more 'back-bench' role on committees.
- 3.4 The Council has sought to use an evidence based approach and remain as objective as possible when reaching the above conclusion on Council size. Set out below is the information on which that decision is based.

### 4 **The City Council – Basic Information**

- 4.1 Winchester City Council is a district council within the County of Hampshire. At its heart lies the ancient cathedral town of Winchester, the former capital of England and burial place of early English Kings. It covers a large area of 660 square kilometres (250 square miles) and has a population of around 118,000 people. Of these, about 32% live in Winchester town itself and the remainder

live either in the five larger settlements of Alresford, Bishops Waltham, Denmead, Whiteley and Wickham, or the smaller villages and hamlets.

- 4.2 Winchester's rich heritage and natural landscape make conservation, planning, tourism and archaeology important features of the Council's work. The City is also a centre for education and learning with many higher and further educational institutions, as well as being the home of Winchester College, the oldest school in England. The City is also home to Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Police. Winchester Prison, the Law Courts and other significant and varied major employers make it a key administrative and business centre and one which generates a large amount of in-commuting.
- 4.3 The armed services also play an important part in the life of the District, with major army establishments at Worthy Down and Sir John Moore Barracks, plus the Military Police at Southwick Park.
- 4.4 The District is within easy commuting distance of London and some of the major south coast conurbations, resulting in very low unemployment levels, currently at about 1.5%. There are over 45,000 households in the District and the Council faces a particular challenge in trying to provide sufficient affordable housing for local people. There are significant residential development areas in the District at various stages of approval or construction, including West of Waterlooville, North of Whiteley (which will extend Whiteley) and Barton Farm (situated on the northern edge of Winchester town).
- 4.5 To the south of the District, Whiteley offers a modern commercial and industrial base for many of the area's high-tech employers and has recently had significant investment in its retail centre, which opened in June 2013.
- 4.6 Winchester City Council was established in 1974 as a result of the amalgamation of Winchester City Council, Winchester Rural District Council (part) and Droxford Rural District Council.
- 4.7 Prior to the Boundary Review of 1999 (introduced in 2002), there were 55 Councillors representing 32 Wards. The result of the review was to increase Councillors to 57 and reduce Wards to 26, divided up as follows:-
- 6 x 1 Member wards (parished)
  - 9 x 2 Member wards (parished)
  - 5 x 3 Member Wards (parished)
  - 6 x 3 Member Wards (unparished - Winchester Town area)
- 4.7 The 57 Members are elected by thirds (19 each year, three years out of every four – see **Appendix C**). Parish council elections are timed to coincide with the relevant district ward elections, although with 43 parishes their electoral pattern is 19:19:5 (see **Appendix D**). For completeness, there are four Parish Meetings at Beauworth, Chilcomb, Exton and Warnford which do not, of course, have elections.

4.8 The basic statistics for the Council's area are as follows:-

- Population 118,400 (inc. 37,800 for the 6 Winchester Town Wards)  
(source - HCC Small Area Population Forecast 2014)
- Electorate 94,408 (Local Gov. electorate - June 2014)
- City Council Wards 26
- County Electoral Divisions 7
- County Councillors 7 (5 of whom are also City Cllrs)
- Parish Councils 43 (plus four parish meetings)
- Parish Councillors 369 (12 of whom are also City Cllrs)
- Council Dwellings 5,054
- Tax Base 45,392 dwellings
- Total Area of District 65,384 hectares (250 square miles)

4.9 The current Mayor of Winchester is the 815<sup>th</sup> which makes the Mayoralty the second oldest in the country. In an average year, the Mayor will attend around 450 engagements. The Mayor is also the Chairman of full Council meetings.

## 5 Governance Arrangements

5.1 **Appendix E** sets out the membership of all the Council's committees and other bodies. **Appendix F** provides a list of Portfolio Holder names and responsibilities and **Appendix G** lists the Planning and Licensing functions delegated to officers.

5.2 Following the District elections on 22 May 2014, the political balance of the City Council for 2014/15 is as follows (2013/14 figures given for information) :-

	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>2013/14</u> (from 7/2/14)	<u>2013/14</u>
Conservative	28	27	29
Liberal Democrat	25	27	25
Labour	3	2	2
Independent	1	1	1

5.3 Seats on committees and sub committees are allocated under alternative arrangements, although based on the political balance formula. The main committee sizes and political balance ratios for 2014/15 are set out in Appendix E.

- 5.4 When the Leader with Cabinet system was introduced in May 2000, the Council averaged around 180 member meetings per year. Figures for more recent years are as follows:-

	TOTAL
2008/09	162
2009/10	150
2010/11	149
2011/12	186
2012/13	133
2013/14	118

(for these purposes, a 'meeting' is defined as one where Members are in attendance and the Democratic Services team produce a full set of minutes. So, for example, Informal Scrutiny Groups are included, but pre-meets and briefing sessions are not).

- 5.5 The figure of 118 meetings for 2013/14 is split between 59 scheduled meetings and 59 ad hoc meetings and this 50/50 split has been the pattern for many years (although not always so exact!). The scheduled meetings are agreed a year in advance and form the Council's annual calendar of meetings, based upon five 'cycles' in a Municipal Year (the recently agreed timetable for 2014/15 is attached as **Appendix H**). The majority of the ad hoc meetings are Informal Scrutiny Groups.
- 5.6 Total figures for the actual/possible meetings attended by each Member are included in the annual advertisement of allowance payments received (a copy of those attendance figures for 2013/14 is attached as **Appendix I**). These figures do not include attendance at briefing meetings, nor outside bodies to which Members were appointed by the Council, nor any roles they perform as part of their constituency work. Members have the opportunity to inform their electorate about these other elements of their work through their individual website pages, although very little use is made of this facility.
- 5.7 As can be seen from the figures, the attendance levels are very good and meetings are always quorate (in fact full attendance is the norm). The system of having appointed/named deputies for each of the standing committees helps to maintain this position.
- 5.8 Role profiles have been produced for being a Councillor, plus for all the Member positions which attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (profiles attached as **Appendix J**).

## 6 The Decision Making Framework

- 6.1 The Council continued with the Leader with Cabinet system until the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. That Act required consultation with residents on two options about how the Council should be run - (a) a directly elected Mayor and Cabinet or (b) (Strengthened) Leader with Cabinet - appointed for a four year term by all 57 Councillors.
- 6.2 The consultation exercise ended on 8 October 2010 and option (b) was supported by the majority of people responding.
- 6.3 On 3 November 2010, the Council agreed to adopt the (Strengthened) Leader with Cabinet model as the basis for its decision making structure. This came into force in May 2011 and, inter alia, meant that the Leader was now appointed for his/her term of office as a Councillor and had the power to appoint the Deputy Leader and the Executive (Cabinet).
- 6.4 It should be mentioned here that, whilst Councils have also been allowed to consider returning to the traditional committee decision making system, the Group did not support a change to this model.
- 6.5 The number of Portfolio Holder posts and titles have seen minor changes over the years, whilst the number of Portfolio Holder Decisions (PHDs) made has steadily risen, as part of the Council's drive to deal quickly with the more routine business that previously ended up on committee agendas. At Council on 2 April 2014, there was a significant review of financial limits to Portfolio Holders (and Committees and Officers also) and so this is a trend that is likely to continue (see Cabinet report and minute as **Appendix K**).

Figures on decisions taken over the past 4 years are as follows:-

2010/11	-	50
2011/12	-	54
2012/13	-	77
2013/14	-	80

- 6.7 In addition to Cabinet, the Council has six other standing committees as follows:-

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see later under Scrutiny Arrangements)
- Audit Committee
- Licensing and Regulation Committee
- Planning Development Control Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Standards Committee

- 6.8 Cabinet currently has three standing sub committees - Cabinet (Local Plan) Committee, Cabinet (Housing) Committee and Cabinet (Traffic and Parking) Committee. Terms of Reference for these bodies are attached as **Appendix L**. There is general support for the Cabinet committees and the way they work, not least because their procedures allow involvement from a wider group of Members (i.e. standard invitees are The Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Shadow Portfolio Holders, Ward Members relevant to the agenda items and specific backbenchers from all parties). Although only Cabinet Members make the actual decisions, this opportunity for additional input at the decision making stage is appreciated by all parties and reduces the need for cross-referencing to scrutiny.
- 6.9 The Council also establishes annually an Appeals & Disputes Committee (for staffing issues) and a Housing (Appeals) Committee (for tenancy cases) which meet on an ad hoc basis as required. These bodies have rarely met during the past few years and the Group considered there was scope to amalgamate the two, as the nature of the work was similar.
- 6.10 The Group also identified possible future meetings efficiencies regarding the removal of the Personnel Committee, as its work could be dealt with either by Officers, or by Cabinet in a few instances, with high level performance issues (such as sickness absence,) being monitored by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.11 With regard to the Planning Committee, around 90% of applications are determined by officers and the scheme of delegation is included in Appendix G. This means that the Committee determines only the major and/or most contentious applications - on average about six or seven at each meeting. There is also a system of 'pre-emptive' sites visits where, two days prior to the meeting, Members and officers visit those application sites on the agenda which are particularly difficult to appreciate without such a visit. This system has worked well and all but removed the need to convene formal 'Viewing Sub-Committees' which met and determined certain applications on site (and there were usually five or six such Sub-Committees in a year).
- 6.12 Being a key regulatory function, performance figures are maintained for the planning service and those for 2013/14 are attached as **Appendix M**.
- 6.13 With regard to the Licensing and Regulation Committee, much of its workload is related to the Licensing Act 2003 and is generally referred to a Licensing Sub Committee (e.g. applications for premises licences, requests for licence reviews and hackney carriage/private hire driver issues). The Sub Committee met on seven occasions during the 2013/14 Municipal Year. As with the Planning Committee, there is extensive officer delegation and this is also included in Appendix G.

- 6.14 The Winchester Town Forum remains the Council's only area committee at this time. The Forum membership consists of all 18 Members who represent the six wards which make up the Winchester Town area. As there is no parish council for the Town area, the aim of the Forum is to provide a focus for local issues. The Forum sometimes utilises a programme of public meetings involving presentations on topics of interest, followed by questions and answers. The number of these sessions varies from year to year, although when held they are well attended (usually 60+ people per session) and are chaired by the Forum Chairman.
- 6.15 The Forum has some executive powers related to the award of grants and routine expenditure, subject to remaining within the Council's approved budget. Other matters can be recommended to Cabinet (see Terms of Reference at **Appendix N**). The Forum also proposes the annual Town Account budget to Cabinet for approval. In past years, the Forum has also established a number of Informal Groups to examine topics in more detail, for example Town Accounts, Grants and the Vision for Winchester.
- 6.16 There are three other informal forums set up by the Council – the West of Waterlooville Forum, the North of Whiteley Development Forum and the Barton Farm Forum. All three are advisory bodies with external representation and meet in public. They consider issues related to the large scale residential building in their respective areas (terms of reference at **Appendix O**).
- 6.17 With regard to joint working, three Cabinet Members represent the Council on the East Hants District Council/Winchester City Council Joint Environmental Services Committee (there is also a scrutiny version of this body).
- 6.18 At Council on 2 April 2014, a further joint body was established with Havant BC – the Joint West of Waterlooville Major Development Area Planning Committee – where the City Council is represented by five Members.
- 6.19 From time to time, Cabinet establishes Informal Policy Groups (IPGs) to assist with progressing major pieces of current work (i.e. a different remit to the Informal Scrutiny Groups as the IPGs are led by Portfolio Holders). In 2013/14, there were three IPGs: the Silver Hill Redevelopment IPG; the River Park Leisure Centre IPG; and the Electoral/Governance Review IPG.
- 6.20 With regard to outside bodies, the Council makes about 60 Member appointments each year. The list for 2014/15 is attached as **Appendix P**, with those bodies which the Group considered essential to the Council's work highlighted in bold.

## 7 The Scrutiny Framework

- 7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the Council's main scrutiny body and its meetings are regularly attended by the Leader and Portfolio Holders, who answer questions and are called to account.
- 7.2 The Committee establishes a number of Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) to assist in undertaking the scrutiny role. These ISGs usually consist of 5 – 8 Members appointed from across the Council and each group is chaired by one of six 'Scrutiny Leads' (who have to be a member of the main Committee). They are task and finish bodies which investigate particular areas of the Council's work (which include both retrospective matters and future policy development) and produce a final report with recommendations to both the parent Committee and Cabinet.
- 7.3 The ISGs are expected to conclude their work within six months, so that new Groups may be established to investigate different topics during the second half of the Municipal Year. A full list of all appointments made by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2014/15 is attached as **Appendix Q** and set out below is a list of recent topics scrutinised by ISGs:-
- Access to Services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas
  - Impact of Localism on the City Council and Communities
  - Provision of Public Transport in Town and Rural Areas
  - Young People and Employment/Training
  - LEADER Funding
  - Impact of Housing in Multiple Occupancy
  - City Council's efforts to reduce its Carbon Footprint
  - Review of Statutory Basis for Council Services
  - The Guildhall as a Commercial Venue
  - Review of Museums Services
  - How we resolve Exclusion
  - Member Involvement in Decision Making
- 7.4 In addition to the above list and in response to Member concerns that some recommendations from ISGs were not progressed appropriately, an ISG was established towards the end of 2013 with the specific remit of investigating the implementation or otherwise of ISG recommendations. The conclusions of that Group are attached as **Appendix R**, which include a key point that, in the future, such reviews should be at a more strategic level and fewer in number.
- 7.5 On a related matter, the Group considered that it may be preferable if ISG topics for review were allowed to emerge as important issues from the Council's ongoing work, rather than Members being compelled to propose several topics at the beginning of the Municipal Year.



- 7.6 The Group also commented that it may help to engage more Members if not all the Scrutiny Leads had to come from The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). It was also suggested that any members of the ISG, rather than just the Chair, should be allowed to participate in the discussion at OSC when the report was presented.
- 7.7 One particular proposal with a governance aspect has arisen from the work of the Member Involvement in Decision Making ISG, where a perceived lack of opportunity for all Members to influence significant issues being brought forward for decision was identified. As a solution, the ISG agreed to propose the establishment of an e-based Members Forum, where comments could be posted and exchanges take place on those issues identified in the Forward Plan. In this way, Members who were not closely involved in the decision-making process, could still have an opportunity to input their own views and ideas at an early stage. This proposal is likely to be introduced during the 2014/15 Municipal Year.
- 7.8 With regard to joint working, the Council is represented by three non-Cabinet members on the East Hants District Council/Winchester City Council Joint Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee.

## 8 Councillors – Time Commitment and Support Arrangements

- 8.1 A survey of all Members was undertaken in March 2014 asking them to assess the time they spent on both their preparation and attendance at meetings, and the work they did away from the Council offices.
- 8.2 The results of that survey are set out in **Appendix S**.
- 8.3 From this we can see that the average figure for time spent on Council activities is 19 hours per week for a non-executive member, and 37 per week for an executive member (as defined by Bands 1 – 3 of the Allowances Scheme).
- 8.4 This can be compared with information from the South East Employers Organisation, where their work as facilitators for several shire districts in connection with Independent Remuneration Panels during the past few years, has shown that the average time spent was between 11 – 15 hours per week for non-executive Members.
- 8.5 That figure is broadly consistent with the figure produced for the City Council's Independent Remuneration Panel by its Chairman (Dr Declan Hall) in 2011, which showed that the average time spent by a WCC non-executive member was 14 hours per week (this calculation was a refinement of information derived from the 2006 WCC Member Survey).

- 8.6 As a further source, the 2010 Councillor Census undertaken by the Local Government Association put the overall average figure higher at 23 hours, although one in five considered that 16 hours represented their time commitment. The higher overall figure can perhaps be explained because the survey did not distinguish between executive and non-executive members.
- 8.7 Regarding Councillor support, a Members Charter forms part of the Constitution and sets out the standards of service and support which each Member can expect to help them in their role as Councillor (copy attached as **Appendix T**). Members are expected to make their own arrangements for local surgeries both in terms of bookings and payment. This is also the case for Broadband provision. The Council does, however, offer a purchase scheme for mobile phones, but the take-up has been very limited.
- 8.8 Administrative support for the Leader of the Council is provided by the Chief Executive's PA. The Democratic Services Manager provides administrative support to the Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.9 Each year, a Member Training and Development Programme is agreed and this contains a combination of annual training sessions (e.g. Code of Conduct, Planning Matters, Audit) and briefings on topical issues, which are often ad hoc to assist Members in responding to new legislative or governance matters. The sessions held over the past two years are attached as **Appendix U**.
- 8.10 These briefings have become an important feature in the way the Council manages its business. Traditionally, such matters would have been placed on committee agendas, but the more informal setting of a briefing allows for all-Member participation and is more conducive to a full understanding of the topic. In particular, key emerging issues benefit from this process before they come forward to Cabinet or committees.

## 9 **Councillors – The Meetings Workload**

- 9.1 In recent years, the cycle of Cabinet and The Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings changed from four to six weeks and cross references between committees were kept to a minimum. Committee sizes were also reduced, as the Council believed that the best decisions came from smaller groups who can focus on their work, rather than having a much larger number of people meeting together, which can sometimes lead to digression and repetition.
- 9.2 Excluding full Council and all deputies, there are currently 66 seats available on Cabinet and the six standing committees. There are, on average, a further 112 seats available on all the other bodies established (including Informal Scrutiny Groups and Forums).

- 9.3 Of course, there is a significant difference in the time commitment of, say, serving on the Planning Committee compared to Personnel Committee. Therefore, set out in **Appendix V** is a calculation which aims to produce an average figure for how much time a Member needs to set aside for attending meetings (figures for both 2012/13 and 2013/14 are given).
- 9.4 In looking at these tables, five points need to be made:
- the calculations include full Council and all the standing committees, plus the Winchester Town Forum and Cabinet (Housing) Committee, as they all have scheduled dates and form the Council's annual Timetable of Meetings.
  - although not scheduled meetings, figures for the Licensing Sub Committee and the 'average' ISG have been added, because they form a regular and significant part of the meetings workload.
  - as mentioned above, the Council holds about the same number of ad hoc meetings each year as scheduled meetings. So, even allowing for ad hoc ISGs and Licensing Subs being included in the calculations, the total commitment figures could reasonably be increased by 50% to reflect the overall meetings workload for the average Member.
  - these figures are not intended to include time spent on preparation for meetings, consultation, attending informal briefings, site visits etc or any ward work; it is solely the time spent 'around the meeting table'.
  - the averaging process will, of course, mean that those Councillors who occupy SRA roles (and particularly Portfolio Holders) may well consider that they spend far more time at meetings each week.
- 9.5 As mentioned in Section 6, the Group identified the removal of the Personnel Committee and the amalgamation of the Housing Appeals Committee and the Appeals & Disputes Committee as possible future efficiencies.
- 9.6 Whilst not directly related to meetings, the Group highlighted three further workload factors:-
- (a) there is an expectation that Members attend the evening briefing sessions mentioned above and there were 20 such briefings in 2013/14.

(b) there is a similar expectation that all Members attend the key civic events (at least 6 per year)

(c) as there is no Winchester Town (Parish) Council, this has a significant impact on the workload of the (current) 18 Ward Members representing the Town area.

9.7 As a final point in this section, it should be noted that the City Council continues to be a very active authority in an economically vibrant part of the country. Consequently, there are always a number of major projects ongoing at any one time which require significant levels of Member involvement. The redevelopment of a major part of the town centre (Silver Hill) and the construction of 2,000 houses at Barton Farm are two current examples. There are also Major Development Areas at West of Waterlooville and Whiteley.

9.8 Other major projects under consideration are the renovation or replacement of the River Park Leisure Centre; replacement of the City Offices; development of the Station Approach, Old Depot and Cattle Market sites; and a programme for the Council to build 30 new Council houses per year.

## 10 **Councillors – The Representational Role**

10.1 Reducing the Council size to 45 means that Members will be representing more constituents than at present (and even more in the future based upon the population growth envisaged in the Local Plan process). Therefore, adopting ways of working which recognise this and still preserve the importance of the representational role is essential - and the fact that some Members prefer to concentrate on ward work rather than seeking executive positions, which is an important point sometimes overlooked.

10.2 One of the most stated reasons for becoming a Councillor is to serve the local community and achieve local improvements where possible. Therefore, the evidence provided by the recent survey was important and showed that, on average, a Member spent around eight hours per week on community and constituency work. This has always been a difficult area to quantify, as the interests of the Member and the area they represent means that there are likely to be significant variations in the time commitment.

10.3 For example, a Winchester Town Ward with several hundred Council dwellings is likely to generate a large workload of housing related issues and, as the Council has decided to retain its housing stock, this workload will continue.

10.4 Whereas a rural Ward encompassing six or seven parish councils each with their own priorities, will generate different demands on a Member's time. This is a particular issue for this District, because most rural Members try to attend all parish council meetings in their ward – and the larger parishes meet monthly, which creates an additional demand. Grouping together adjoining parishes for joint liaison meetings was tried some years ago, but was not successful.

- 10.5 However, some attempt must be made to quantify this factor and therefore the eight hour figure derived from the survey is probably the best estimate that can be obtained, bearing in mind the wide variation in Ward characteristics in the Winchester District.
- 10.6 Of course, it should be acknowledged that significant changes have occurred in the way in which the public seek information, compared to 15 years ago when the Council agreed to have 57 Members. The use of the internet has replaced a high proportion of direct contact and the amount of information available electronically has grown enormously. For example, the public is now more likely to seek details about services by first using the Council's website, rather than finding a Councillor to ask.
- 10.7 The reverse is also true, in that Councillors can use e mails, websites and social media to engage more easily with the local community. Case work is one aspect that can be more speedily handled, with the need to send letters through the post and personal visits to the constituent's dwelling greatly reduced.

## 11 **Councillors - Costs**

- 11.1 If the outcome of this review results in a reduction of 12 Members, there would be a saving in the Members Allowances budget of £66,960 pa (i.e. £5,580 Basic Allowance x 12). In addition, the average travel expenses per Member is about £200pa, so a saving of £2,400 would also be achieved.
- 11.2 There would also be a consequent reduction in the number of Members receiving a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA), if the Council continues to follow the statutory advice that not more than half of the Council should be in receipt of an SRA (there are currently 25). It is harder to identify the level of savings that would result from this, as the Independent Remuneration Panel (which must meet during Autumn 2014) will need to assess the overall position at the time. But it would not be unreasonable to anticipate at least some further reduction in costs (say £5,000).
- 11.3 Equally difficult to quantify is the administrative saving that will result from officers having to support a smaller number of Members. As can be seen from the Members Charter, the Council is (and always has been) very economical with this particular budget and consequently any savings will not be dramatic. But again, it is reasonable to assume some reduction in costs and £300pa per Member is estimated, giving an annual saving of £3,600.
- 11.4 There have been no financial assumptions made about a further reduction in the number of meetings, because having less members does not always mean that this will automatically follow. Having said that, the trend in the annual number of meetings has been downwards, based on the figures given earlier in the brief.

- 11.5 Therefore, as a general summary, reducing the Council by 12 Members could produce annual savings of about £73,000.

## 12 The Future

- 12.1 Although the Localism Act 2011 affected a number of governance issues, the Council had already been progressing for some time with a programme of organisational change, which initially had a target date of 2010. When that date was reached, the Council reviewed its position and embarked on a further, phased programme of transformation, which is now nearing completion.

- 12.2 The overall aim was to ensure that the City Council was in a position to meet the challenges of the future which, particularly in the case of finance, were likely to be very difficult over the next few years. The following figures produced by the Chief Finance Officer show the level of savings that have been required in recent years, and the projected deficits for the immediate future:-

	£	
2012/13	1,226,000	Net saving achieved
2013/14	829,000	Net saving achieved
2014/15	964,000	Net saving required
2015/16	597,00	Projected deficit
2016/17	414,000	Projected deficit

- 12.3 Consequently, all aspects of the Council's work have been reviewed and there have been resultant changes to staffing structures and decision making arrangements. Other key areas are currently under review, such as the Council's future office/civic accommodation.
- 12.4 The Council also operates shared services with an adjoining authority regarding IT and has outsourced (jointly with another authority) its refuse collection; management of the Leisure Centre is also outsourced. The Museums service is currently being developed into a joint trust with other parties. In addition, there are a number of 'shared' officer roles. Other opportunities for this varied pattern of service delivery may arise in the future, depending upon local needs.
- 12.5 The Council had full regard to the conclusions of the Peer Review undertaken in 2013 where the Review team '...found a real desire to transform governance and become more agile and streamlined.' They welcomed the Authority's overall direction of travel, whilst highlighting a number of areas for possible improvement (Review report attached as **Appendix W**). Therefore, the Council extended the remit of the Group steering the electoral review work to also cover governance issues, as there were clear areas of overlap.

- 12.6 Whilst the Commission emphasises in its guidance that the ‘correct’ Council size for each authority is judged on its own merits, a comparison with those Councils in the CIPFA ‘near neighbour’ group shows the City Council to be currently at the top of the range with 57 Members (see **Appendix X**). A more ‘average’ figure for that particular grouping is around 45 and this is now the figure proposed by the Council.
- 12.7 On this general point, the Group emphasised the importance of regular contact and good inter-relationships between Members, as that often produced the best work on behalf of the Council. There was a view within the Council that the current arrangements meant that many of the 57 Members rarely met each other, apart from at full Council meetings; therefore a smaller Council size would help to improve that situation.
- 12.8 In conclusion, reaching agreement on the right number of Members to administer the City Council in the future is a difficult matter and depends on a range of factors. It should be emphasised here that the Council continues to aspire to have a membership that is representative of the community it serves. Therefore, the Council size needs to be sufficient to attract all age groups by allowing Members to operate at a level which suits personal aspirations and circumstances i.e. time commitments, different levels of responsibility/workload, attracting working as well as retired potential councillors etc.
- 12.9 Bearing all that in mind, perhaps the two key questions to answer are how many Members are required to ensure that the work of the Authority is undertaken and monitored effectively, and how many Members are required to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of their community via their ward/representational role.
- 12.10 It is the City Council’s view that, taking all the above factors into account, in particular:-
- the economic growth and ongoing vitality of the District envisaged by the Local Plan and related work.
  - the number of major, current projects being overseen by the Council.
  - the high expectations of residents and visitors about how the Council should manage the District.
  - the significant house building activity and future housing demands in this area.
  - the retention of the Council’s housing stock.
  - parish functions in the Winchester Town area being undertaken by the Town Forum (comprising all City Councillors from the six Town Wards).

then 45 Members would be the correct answer to those questions and that this figure be the Council’s formal recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the most appropriate Council size for Winchester City Council.

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**COUNCIL SIZE BRIEF – LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A	Terms of Reference of Electoral Review/Governance IPG
Appendix B	Election by Thirds – Public Consultation Results
Appendix C	Councillors Order of Retirement
Appendix D	Parish Councils Order of Elections
Appendix E	List of Committees and Memberships
Appendix F	List of Portfolio Holders and Duties (plus Shadow Portfolio Holders)
Appendix G	Functions of Planning and Licensing Committees
Appendix H	Calendar of Committee Meetings
Appendix I	Councillors Record of Attendance
Appendix J	Member Role Profiles
Appendix K	Increase in Financial Limits
Appendix L	Cabinet Committees – Terms of Reference
Appendix M	Planning Applications - performance figures
Appendix N	Winchester Town Forum – Terms of Reference
Appendix O	Other Forums – Terms of Reference
Appendix P	List of Outside Body Appointments
Appendix Q	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Appointments
Appendix R	ISG on ISGs – Main Recommendations
Appendix S	Survey of City Councillors regarding Time Commitments
Appendix T	Members Charter
Appendix U	Briefing Sessions and Training Courses held
Appendix V	Estimates of time spent at meetings
Appendix W	Peer Review conclusions
Appendix X	CIPFA ‘nearest neighbour’ chart

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