

---

**Subject:** ELECTORAL REVIEW - OPTIONS FOR GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

**Meeting and Date:** ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE – 20 NOVEMBER 2017  
COUNCIL – 6 DECEMBER 2017

**Report of:** DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE

**Classification:** UNRESTRICTED

---

**Purpose of the report:** To present options for the future governance arrangements for the Council as part of the Council Size Review.

---

**Recommendation:** Electoral Matters Committee:  
(a) To agree a Council Size number for recommendation to Council.

Council:  
(a) To make a recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council Size.

---

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The most recent review of the Council's electoral arrangements was undertaken in 2002, with the new arrangements coming into effect at the May 2003 elections. After the 2015 district council elections, officers were considering whether to request Council's approval for a Periodic Electoral Review, due to the length of time since the previous review. However, the proposed four way district merger discussions meant that this was put on hold, as if the single Council for East Kent had progressed an Electoral Review for that new Council would have been required, negating the need for this Council to request a review its own arrangements. Following the decisions across East Kent on 22 March 2017, the need to consider an electoral review became relevant once again.
- 1.2 At the meeting of Council held on 17 May 2017, the full Council agreed to submit a request asking for a review of the number of elected members by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). As part of its submission, the Council agreed to submit a request for an indicative council size of 'around 35' (Minute No. 15).
- 1.3 This request was accepted by the LGBCE and the Council has been included within the programme of electoral reviews with a view to the new electoral arrangements being in force with effect for the May 2019 full council election.
- 1.4 This report seeks to present possible governance arrangements for different council sizes to assist members in identifying a Council Size for recommendation to the LGBCE. A breakdown of these options is set out in Appendix 3.
- 1.5 It should be emphasised that Members are not at this stage being asked to definitively decide on a set of governance arrangements. This will need to be the subject of a future report once the final council size has been determined by the LGBCE. Instead this report seeks to identify possible governance arrangements for the purpose of illustrating how each potential council size could be made to work.

## 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The first stage in the review process is for the Council to recommend a specific council size and demonstrate that the new size will have the right number of councillors to manage the business of the Council in an effective manner.
- 2.2 A presentation was given to councillors by the LGBCE on 6 September 2017 and as part of the presentation the LGBCE set out the timetable for the review as follows:

Stage	Deadline
Deadline for council and/or council groups' submission on council size	8 December 2017
Public consultation on new ward boundaries	30 January 2018 – 9 April 2018
Public consultation on draft recommendations	5 June 2018 – 13 August 2018
Publish final recommendations	October 2018
Publish Order	Late 2018
New wards boundaries and council size comes into force	May 2019 Elections

- 2.3 It should be noted that in terms of Council size submissions the LGBCE indicated to members at the meeting on 6 September 2017 that a submission below 29 members would not normally be accepted.
- 2.4 As shown in the table above, the electoral review of Dover District Council being conducted by the LGBCE consists of two distinct parts:
1. Council Size
  2. Ward Boundaries

The council size element is undertaken before the LGBCE starts to examine ward boundaries. This report therefore does not seek to draw any conclusions over the new ward boundaries that will result from a specific council size as this is not a matter that the Council is required to consider at this time.

- 2.5 As part of making its decision on the final council size, the LGBCE will consider the following areas:
- (a) **Governance Arrangements** – How the Council takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
- The LGBCE will be “looking for evidence about cabinet and/or committee responsibilities, number of committees and their workload, delegation to officials, other bodies and plans for the future.”*
- (b) **Scrutiny Functions** – How the Council scrutinises its own decision-making and the Council's responsibilities to outside bodies.

*The LGBCE will be “looking for evidence about the number of councillors your authority needs to hold the decision makers to account and ensure that the council can discharge its responsibilities to other organisations (e.g. other public sector bodies, partnerships and trusts).”*

- (c) **The Representational Role of Councillors in the Local Community** – How councillors engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

*The LGBCE will be “looking for evidence about how councillors interact with their communities, their caseloads and the kind of support they need effectively to represent local people and groups.”*

2.6 This report seeks to address these areas in detail below.

### 3. **Governance Arrangements**

#### Current Governance Arrangements

3.1 The Council’s current governance model is set out in Appendix 2 of this report. The full explanation of each committee’s function can be found in the Constitution, with particular reference to Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions).

#### ***The Council***

3.2 The Council is currently composed of 45 members elected every four years and deals with all matters not reserved for the executive or other bodies. This includes functions such as setting the budget, electing the Leader of the Council, reviewing the Constitution of the Council and adopting or approving the Policy Framework.

3.3 The full Council also appoints the following committees:

- Dover Joint Transportation Board
- Electoral Matters Committee
- General Purposes Committee
- Governance Committee
- Joint Staff Consultative Forum
- Joint Health, Safety and Welfare Forum
- Licensing Committee
- Planning Committee
- Regulatory Committee
- Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee
- Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee

#### ***The Executive***

3.4 The Cabinet, which is operated on the strong leader model of executive arrangements, is appointed by the Leader of the Council. While the Leader has delegated a limited number of functions to individual portfolio holders the majority of decisions that have not been delegated to officers are taken collectively by the Cabinet.

- 3.5 The Cabinet is currently composed of 7 members (including the Leader) holding 8 positions as follows:
- Leader of the Council
  - Deputy Leader (also holds a portfolio)
  - Portfolio Holder for Access and Licensing
  - Portfolio Holder for Built Environment
  - Portfolio Holder for Community Services
  - Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources & Performance
  - Portfolio Holder for Environment, Waste and Health
  - Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Environmental Health
- 3.6 The Cabinet has appointed a number of Project/Policy Advisory Groups and Executive Committees to exercise specific functions and advise the Cabinet or individual Portfolio Holders as follows:
- Commercial Investment Project Advisory Group
  - Developer Contributions Executive Committee
  - Dover Leisure Centre Project Advisory Group
  - Dover Town Centre and Waterfront Project Advisory Group
  - Homelessness Project Advisory Group
  - Investment Advisory Group
  - Local Plan Project Advisory Group
  - Residential Investment Project Advisory Group
- 3.7 The Cabinet has 11 scheduled meetings per year, though invariably the actual number of meetings held during a given municipal year will be higher. In addition, there will a number of Project/Policy Advisory Groups and Executive Committee meetings called as required during the course of the municipal year.

#### ***Other Bodies***

- 3.8 The following 2 committees are appointed outside the rules of political balance by reason that they are appointments of fewer than 3 members but are included for completeness:
- East Kent Services Committee
  - South Kent Coast Health and Wellbeing Board

#### ***Committee Arrangements***

- 3.9 All councillors are automatically members of the Full Council and Cabinet Members are members of the Cabinet. In addition to this the Annual Meeting of Council appointed members to a total of 84 Committee Seats (excluding the Cabinet, Project/Policy Advisory Groups, Executive Groups and appointments of fewer than 3 members), on the basis of proportional entitlement (either required or agreed to by Council to be treated as proportional) as follows:

**Table 1: List of Committees appointed by Full Council**

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>TOTAL SEATS</b>	<b>Number of Scheduled Meetings*</b>
Dover Joint Transportation Board	7	4
Electoral Matters Committee	5	As Required
General Purposes Committee	5	As Required
Governance Committee	7	4
Joint Staff Consultative Forum	5	4
Joint Health, Safety and Welfare Forum	5	4
Licensing Committee	15	4
Planning Committee	10	12
Regulatory Committee	5	6
Scrutiny (Community & Regeneration) Committee	10	11
Scrutiny (Policy & Performance) Committee	10	11
Total	84	60

(\*) Excludes additional meetings called during the municipal year and meetings of any Sub-Committees

- 3.10 The table above results in a current mean average of **1.86 committee places** per member, excluding full Council, Cabinet, Project/Policy Advisory Groups and Executive Committees. It should be noted that within this average, some members will be appointed to more and some less than the average number of seats.

#### Future Governance Arrangements

- 3.11 In examining future governance arrangements for the Council, as set out in Appendix 3, this report has as a general principal sought to only propose governance arrangements that are broadly similar (<2.0 seats per member) to the existing average of 1.86 seats per member. This has been done in order to minimise any significant additional burden of committee work resulting from there being fewer members in total on the Council.
- 3.12 The first step in the process of reviewing the future governance arrangements is to look at the number of committees appointed and the number of members serving on each committee.

### Committee Sizes

- 3.13 There is no maximum size for a Committee of Council, though it is assumed that it will always be a proportion of the total number of councillors rather than the whole. The Cabinet, under s.9C the Local Government Act 2000, and the Licensing Committee, under s.6 of the Licensing Act 2003, have specified minimum and maximum size ranges and are considered separately in this report. (see also Appendix 1)
- 3.14 In respect of minimum size, again other than for Cabinet and the Licensing Committee and its Sub-Committees, a quorum is prescribed by statute for meetings of the full Council (one quarter of the whole number of members). For other committees the minimum size must be two or more members.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.15 In the case of Dover District Council, the Constitution specifies that committees should have a quorum of one quarter of the committee's total membership, with a minimum of 3 members if the quorum figure of one quarter is smaller than 3 members.
- 3.16 Although it would be potentially possible to amend the quorum to a smaller number than one quarter of the whole number of members of a committee or sub-committee, it is not proposed that this be done. In addition, retaining a minimum number of 3 members is also recommended. A committee of fewer than 3 members would in effect always be determined by the casting vote of the Chairman as the casting vote rules would be in effect. It is therefore not recommended that a committee size smaller than 3 members is used.
- 3.17 Assuming that the current quorum rules were maintained, it is proposed that for any decision-making body a membership larger than 3 members is used wherever possible due to the significantly increased risk of inquoracy if only 1 member were to be absent. This could adversely impact on the Council's decision-making processes if meetings were to regularly fall inquorate.

### Cabinet

- 3.18 It is not for the Council to set the size of the Cabinet and this is a matter reserved for the Leader of the Council. Any suggestions on Cabinet size included within this report are therefore just that, suggestions which the Leader is not bound by.
- 3.19 The Cabinet must be composed of not fewer than 3 (including the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader) but not more than 10 members (including the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader). The quorum for a meeting of the Cabinet is currently 4 members.
- 3.20 The role of the Executive, which was being implemented in Dover at the time of the previous electoral review, undertakes much of the responsibility of full council and the previous committee system. Many of the decisions that would have previously been made at full council are now made by the Leader and/or Cabinet. This has greatly reduced the volume of decisions that need to be made by non-executive councillors outside of those members on a committee exercising a regulatory function such as the Planning, Governance, Regulatory and Licensing Committees.
- 3.21 There is a high level of personal responsibility placed on each Cabinet Portfolio Holder with a substantial amount of time and energy required to deliver the role effectively. The Executive as a whole and individual Portfolio Holders are held to account for the decisions made through the scrutiny process, which delivers

---

<sup>1</sup> Sharp v Dawes (1876) which defines a meeting as 'a gathering or assembly of two or more persons for a lawful common purpose'.

transparency and accountability in decision-making within the council.

#### Licensing Committee

- 3.22 The Licensing Committee must consist of a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 members. The Licensing Committee, in accordance with s.9 of the Licensing Act 2003, appoints Sub-Committees of 3 members to conduct hearings.
- 3.23 The members of the Licensing Sub-Committees are drawn from the total membership of the Licensing Committee and are appointed by name as with any sub-committee.
- 3.24 It has been existing practice to appoint a membership for the Licensing Committee that is a multiple of 3 to ensure that all members can be appointed to a Sub-Committee. In the event that a Licensing Committee that was not a multiple of 3 were to be appointed it would result in 1 (if 10 or 13 members were to be appointed) or 2 (if 11 or 14 members were appointed) 'floating' members only being able to serve as substitute members on the Licensing Sub-Committees. The appointment of a Licensing Committee of 10, 11, 13 or 14 members would therefore result in several considerations that would need to be weighed when considering what reductions in governance terms could be made to the number of members serving on the Licensing Committee.
- 3.25 The first consideration is that in the event that no substitutes were needed by a Licensing Sub-Committees during a municipal year, it would mean that these 'floating' members would not be called upon.
- 3.26 The second consideration is that a councillor should wherever possible not sit on a sub-committee considering a matter in their ward/town area. This therefore requires a sufficient number of members on the Licensing Committee to ensure there is a plurality of electoral areas represented.
- 3.27 The final consideration is that a Licensing Sub-Committee hearing must be held within a specified timeframe depending on the nature of the application. The larger the number of available members the easier it is to find three members who can sit on a Sub-Committee, potentially at short notice such as with a Temporary Event Notice application.
- 3.28 That being said, at the lower end of the 'about 35 members' range it might be necessary to choose a number other than a multiple of 3 to ensure that the overall burden on elected Members does not significantly increase but this should be weighed carefully in light of the above considerations.

#### Delegated Decisions

- 3.29 Decisions are made by the Council every day. These decisions cover a wide range of functions and some can affect large numbers of the district's residents, while others may affect only a single individual. The level of impact that a decision might have affects how the decision can be made.
- 3.30 The most significant type of decision is a 'key' decision. A key decision is one which:
- Results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or savings which are, significant (£200,000 or more) having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the budget relates;
  - Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District; or

- Has a particularly significant impact on any community as experiencing social exclusion or discrimination, whether geography or interest defines that community and even if that community is only located in one ward in the area of the local authority.
- 3.31 The majority of day-to-day decisions are taken under delegated authority by officers under authority from the Leader, Council or a specific committee. The delegating of specific powers, duties or functions to officers can speed up council decisions and ensure that council meetings are not tied down by procedural and everyday administrative decisions. It also enables councils to use the technical knowledge, training and experience of officers to support their decisions.
- 3.32 Decisions to delegate specific powers to members, officers or committees are made at a formal council, cabinet or committee meeting and specify what the delegation authorises the delegate to do. They are usually required to observe the strategies, policies and guidelines adopted by cabinet or the council and may be required to report periodically to the council on decisions made. The Council's Constitution contains a full list of all delegations in Part 3 Responsibility for Functions.
- 3.33 The Council publishes by way of decision notices all member decisions taken outside of meetings under executive powers and all officer decisions that are key decisions or considered significant decisions. During the year 2016/17, there were 34 decision notices issued in respect of decisions taken by members or officers that fell within this category. These decisions ranged from the Leader making nominations to an outside body to the purchase of land for the new leisure centre.

#### Planning Committee

- 3.34 During the year 2016/17 a total of 1072 planning applications were determined (1020 non-major applications and 52 major applications), of which 78 (7.27%) were determined by the Planning Committee and 994 (92.73%) were dealt with by officers under delegated powers.

#### Licensing Committee

- 3.35 During the 2016/17 municipal year, a total of 568 decisions on licensing applications were made, of which 8 (1.4%) were determined by the Licensing Committee and 560 (98.59%) were dealt with by officers under delegated powers.

#### Regulatory Committee

- 3.36 During the 2016/17 municipal year, a total of 655 decisions on applications within the remit of the Regulatory Committee of which 10 (1.52%) were determined by the Regulatory Committee and 645 (98.48%) were dealt with by officers under delegated powers.
- 3.37 On this basis you can see that the majority of decisions were taken by officers, with a smaller number of decisions directly taken by Members. However, under the current delegation arrangements those decisions taken by Members were those that were the most significant or of greatest public interest, thereby maintaining the importance of the role undertaken by elected members in the Council's decision-making framework.

## **4. Scrutiny Functions**

### Current Arrangements

- 4.1 The Local Government Act 2000 requires that where a Council has adopted an Executive model of governance it must make arrangements that "must include

provision for the appointment by the authority of one or more [scrutiny] committees of the authority.”<sup>2</sup>

4.2 The Council must ensure that the scrutiny committees have the power to exercise the following functions:

- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive;
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive;
- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive;
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive; and
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

4.3 The Council has made provision for this in Article 6 and Part 4 (Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules) of its Constitution. In addition, the Council has voluntarily chosen to adopt a rule that scrutiny will be chaired by a member from a group other than the largest political group on the Council. The intention of this is to ensure the independence of the scrutiny function.

4.4 The Council originally appointed four scrutiny committees but in 2006 reduced this number to the current two scrutiny committee model. The terms of reference of the scrutiny committees are as follows:

Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee

- Budget and Major Policy
- Call-in
- Performance Monitoring and Improvement
- Scrutiny Co-Ordination

Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee

- Community Reviews and Accountability
- Public Health
- Major Projects
- Crime and Disorder

4.5 It could be characterised in general terms that there is an inward (Policy and Performance) and outward (Community and Regeneration) looking committee, although there is a significant degree of overlap between the two remits.

4.6 It is also the role of the scrutiny committees to act as a conduit through which the public can engage with the Council's decision-making process. The public speaking procedure adopted for scrutiny committees enables it to hear from members of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Local Government Act 2000 (s.21)

public and consider the points they raise in its deliberations for forming recommendations to the Cabinet.

- 4.7 Another part of the public engagement undertaken by the scrutiny function is to receive public petitions from residents. Although not a decision-making body in its own right, the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee can request additional reports in respect of petitions or make recommendations onto the relevant decision-making bodies. It is not a requirement that petitions be received by scrutiny but this has been the adopted historic position.

#### Future Scrutiny Arrangements

- 4.8 The current two scrutiny committees have a total membership of 20 members (10 x 2) which equates to 44% of the total membership of the Council. In addition to this an additional 9 members (7 members of the Cabinet and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council) of the Council (20%) are ineligible to serve on a scrutiny committee by virtue of the positions that they hold. As with the general governance arrangements, in looking at alternative arrangements, the intention with any proposed model is to ensure that the workload for members does not significantly increase as a result of fewer total members of the Council and also to ensure that an effective scrutiny process that meets the objectives of the Local Government Act 2000 is retained.
- 4.9 There are two potential models for scrutiny considered in this report – the single scrutiny committee model and the multiple scrutiny committee model.

#### *The Single Scrutiny Committee Model*

- 4.10 As previously mentioned, the Council is required to make “provision for the appointment by the authority of one or more [scrutiny] committees”. This means that the Council does not have to retain the current two committee model, as it could combine the terms of reference to create a single scrutiny committee.
- 4.11 The creation of a single scrutiny committee while representing a change in the current arrangements could have a number of potential benefits over the current multiple scrutiny committee model, as follows:
- As the sum of all scrutiny functions, it would create a strong counter to the executive through its ability to exercise the call-in functions, consider cross-cutting and wider strategic issues and provide a consistent, single point of focus for public engagement in the decision-making system.
  - It would provide for a more flexible model avoiding gaps or overlaps between multiple scrutiny committees while giving the breadth of remit to respond to a wide range of issues.
  - A single scrutiny committee would be easier to support administratively (1 work programme) and, given the reduction in the size of the officer corps, reduce the pressure on the wider corporate diary that serving multiple scrutiny committees creates.
  - It would enable members with a broad range of expertise to avoid being forced into choosing a specialism based on the separate remits of multiple scrutiny committees.
  - It prevents an inconsistency of approach to scrutiny that work undertaken by separate committees can create.

- It could still create specific ‘task and finish’ groups from within its membership to focus on a particular area of work (such as service reviews or specific regeneration projects) and potentially adopt innovative practices for scrutinising specific issues that might not apply to the wider scrutiny function.
  - A wider remit avoids the temptation to search for business purely to fill agendas of scheduled meetings.
  - The single scrutiny committee model would provide for a larger committee size than multiple scrutiny committees would provide robustness in ensuring a quorum of members were present for meetings.
- 4.12 By way of illustration of some of these points, there have been a number of instances of ‘joint’ co-located scrutiny committee meetings on cross-cutting issues that have involved community, policy and/or performance issues in a single topic. The issue of Dover town regeneration is scheduled to be one such future topic.
- 4.13 The potential disadvantages of this model would in effect constitute the advantages of having multiple scrutiny committees and so has been addressed under that section.

#### *The Multiple Scrutiny Committee Model*

- 4.14 The multiple scrutiny committee model would be the retention of the current two scrutiny committee model. This could either be with the retention of the same number of members on each committee or with a reduction from the current numbers to reflect the reduction in the total number of members on the Council.
- 4.15 The retention of the current the multiple scrutiny committee model, albeit with a reduced number of members on the committees, offers the following potential benefits:
- That by having specialised remits, it would enable members to specialise in certain areas of scrutiny to the degree that a wider remit, cross-cutting single committee might not encourage.
  - It enables different approaches to scrutiny to be followed by each committee with the potential for innovative scrutiny arising.
  - That Members and officers are familiar with the current model.
- 4.16 This would be the option that would preserve the existing status quo, subject to any alterations in the specific remits of each committee that may or may not be felt necessary.

#### *The Preferred Model*

- 4.17 There is no preferred model as this report only seeks to prove that an effective scrutiny process can be retained with a smaller council size and both approaches can deliver an effective scrutiny function. To this end the proposals for both options are outlined in Appendix 3.
- 4.18 That being said, the creation of a single scrutiny committee does offer greater potential for a robust and flexible scrutiny process with fewer members.

## 5. **The Representational Role of Councillors in the Local Community**

- 5.1 Dover District Council was formed on 1 April 1974 by the merger of the Borough of Deal, the Borough of Dover, the Borough of Sandwich and the Dover and Eastry Rural District Councils. The Council covers an area of approximately 314 square kilometres with a population of 113,228.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.2 The Dover District is also fully parished with 32 parish and 3 town councils and served by 7 Kent County Councillors representing 5 county divisions. The majority of the district falls within the Dover Parliamentary Constituency, although the wards of Sandwich and Little Stour & Ashstone are part of the South Thanet Parliament Constituency.
- 5.3 The Dover District is an area of many contrasts, with varied landscapes of rural farmland, former coalfield sites and coastal areas, including the iconic White Cliffs, interspersed with villages and the three historic coastal towns of Deal, Dover and Sandwich. In addition, housing growth in Whitfield and Aylesham in the coming years will have a significant impact of these communities and the wider district.
- 5.4 As with many districts, the Dover District has areas of visible wealth as well as areas of visible or hidden deprivation. Each of these has a variety of different needs that district councillors must deal with in their representational roles.
- 5.5 The Council has adopted job descriptions for councillors describing the key tasks for each role within the council in order to assist them in this role and ensure that appropriate training and support is provided. These job descriptions can be found within Article 2 of the Council's Constitution and the job description for Ward Councillors is set out at Appendix 4 for information.
- 5.6 The council also provides a comprehensive training programme for councillors. The programme includes mandatory training for councillors on the Governance, Planning, and Licensing committees. There is also discretionary training provided which at the last induction included topics such as casework and constituency business, scrutiny skills, budget training, social media and IT. The council also holds an event for prospective councillors prior to full Council elections to explain the role of councillors and how time commitment is divided between council meetings, reading reports and constituency work.
- 5.7 The amount of work undertaken by individual members varies, depending on the degree of visibility that each member has within their wards and the geographic, social and economic characteristics of their individual wards. New members in multi-member wards with long serving members may find for example that their constituents initially gravitate to those established member(s) until they have been able to engage with constituents and had the opportunity to establish their own reputations. The way in which members undertake this engagement again varies by member, though could involve surgeries, blogs, face-to-face meetings with residents, responding to email queries, etc.
- 5.8 Many Members will also choose to attend local community meetings, such as Parish Council meetings and meetings organised through resident associations or local community groups with the intention of listening to the views of the residents and, where appropriate, championing those views within the Council.
- 5.9 The results for the most recent National Census of Local Authority Councillors (2013) found that the average number of hours per week councillors spent engaging with constituents, conducting surgeries and answering queries was 6 hours per week. This gives an average of 24 hours per month spent on constituent work.

---

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics 2015 Population Estimates

- 5.10 Those Members who were on the Council at the time of the last boundary review in 2003 (which reduced the number of members from 56 to 45 and the number of wards from 31 to 21) will have witnessed a change in way in which members of the community access services and indeed their elected representatives over the last 14 years. The increase in the capabilities of the Council to deal with queries, service requests and payments on-line has seen many members of the community move to a 'self-serve' approach to a much greater extent than in 2003.
- 5.11 The rapid increase in smart device ownership since the release of the first iPhone in 2007 has resulted in 81%<sup>4</sup> of people having access to a smart device. This means that even people without traditional home internet access can now contact the Council and their Elected Members through e-mail and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) which supplements or replaces more traditional methods such as face-to-face contact, letter writing and the telephone. Whilst the use of social media and other online communication methods has provided alternatives to traditional contact methods with residents, the increased use of emails and social media has resulted in the public having greater expectations that the Council and councillors will be instantly contactable. The Council has issued all Members with iPads and council email addresses to facilitate this contact and better assist their constituents. In turn, Members are also now more easily able to contact officers through email and find out information themselves on-line through the iPad.

## 6. Comparison with Other Districts

- 6.1 As Members will be aware, two of the Council's three immediate geographical neighbours have undergone Council Size reviews. In 2014, Canterbury City Council and Shepway District Council underwent reviews that reduced the number of members from 50 to 39 and 46 to 30 members respectively. Thanet District Council with 56 members remains unchanged.
- 6.2 In addition to the Council's geographical nearest neighbours, this report has considered the proposed Council size in relation to the Nearest Neighbours model prepared and published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). This identifies the Council's 15 nearest two-tier district council neighbours, being statistically similar neighbours rather than geographically close. For completeness, the remaining Kent Borough and District Councils have also been included.

Authority	Population	Electorate (2017) <sup>5</sup>	Number of Cllrs
DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL	113,228	87,212	45 (2017)
Adur District Council (*)	63,500	48,736	29
Allerdale Borough Council (*) (+)	97,000	72,738	56
Ashford Borough Council (+)	126,200	90,988	43
Bassetlaw District Council (*)	114,800	86,586	48
Canterbury City Council (*)	159,965	105,702	39
Dartford Borough Council (+)	105,500	76,205	44

<sup>4</sup> Deloitte, 6th annual Mobile Consumer Survey (2016)

<sup>5</sup> As per the LGBCE figures for 2017 electorates

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Electorate (2017)<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Number of Cllrs</b>
Fenland District Council (*)	100,200	75,113	39
Gravesham Borough Council	106,800	76,762	44
Havant Borough Council (*)	123,600	95,103	38
Lancaster City Council (*)	143,500	104,899	60
Maidstone Borough Council	166,400	118,077	55
Newark and Sherwood District Council (*)	119,600	87,185	39
North Devon District Council (*) (+)	94,600	75,927	43
Sedgemoor District Council (*)	121,400	91,699	48
Sevenoaks District Council	119,100	88,301	54
Shepway District Council (*)	110,034	81,116	30
Swale Borough Council (*)	145,000	102,828	47
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	127,300	95,487	54
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	117,100	82,125	48
Waveney District Council (*)	116,500	90,335	48
West Lancashire Borough Council (*)	113,400	84,937	54
Wyre Forest District Council (*)	99,900	78,140	33

(\*) CIPFA Nearest Neighbour Authority

(+) Currently undergoing a boundary or council size review

- 6.3 As the table above demonstrates, there is no consistent council size by population or electorate. For example, North Devon District Council and Shepway District Council have 43 and 30 councillors respectively despite North Devon having a smaller population and electorate. These inconsistencies can be explained by the individual governance needs of authorities, local geographic characteristics and the time since the last review of their electoral arrangements.

#### Comparison with Canterbury and Shepway

- 6.4 Despite the general picture of local authority arrangements, when examining the sizes of the two recently reviewed neighbouring authorities in East Kent a more consistent baseline range of 30 to 39 members can be identified. Canterbury City Council with a significantly larger population of 159,965 and electorate of 105,702 has 39 councillors and Shepway District Council with a slightly smaller population of 110,034 and electorate of 81,116 has 30 councillors. The Dover District with a population of 113,228 could therefore be realistically assumed to fall somewhere on the lower end of the 30 to 39-member scale.
- 6.5 The next table summarises the similarities and differences for Dover, Canterbury and Shepway.

<b>Dover District Council</b>	<b>Canterbury City Council</b>	<b>Shepway District Council</b>
Approximately 314 square kilometres in size	Approximately 308 square kilometres in size	Approximately 356 square kilometres in size
Mixture of urban and rural areas	Mixture of urban and rural areas	Mixture of urban and rural areas
Population: 113,228	Population: 159,965	Population: 110,034
Electorate: 87,212	Electorate: 105,702	Electorate: 81,116
Electors per Cllr: 1,938 <sup>6</sup>	Electors per Cllr: 2,710	Electors per Cllr: 2,704
45 Councillors	39 Councillors	30 Councillors
21 Wards	21 Wards	13 Wards
35 town and parish councils (fully parished)	26 town and parish councils (1 unparished area)	30 town and parish councils (6 unparished areas)

- 6.6 As shown in the table above, the numbers of electors per councillor for Dover is currently considerably lower than that of Canterbury and Shepway. The following list shows how the councillor to elector ratio would change using the 2017 electorate figures for the council size options set out in Appendix 3.

<u>Number of Councillors</u>	<u>Electorate per Councillor</u>	<u>Number of Councillors</u>	<u>Electorate per Councillor</u>
45	1,938	33	2,642
35	2,491	32	2,725
34	2,565	31	2,813
		30	2,907

- 6.7 On the basis of the above, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that a number between **32 – 35 members** for Dover District Council would be broadly consistent with our East Kent neighbours in both number of elector per councillor and number of councillors per total electorate/population.

## 7. Identification of Options

- 7.1 It is the view of the LGBCE that determining the future Council size is a separate issue from that of determining the number and boundaries of council wards. This report therefore asks Members to consider the three areas (governance arrangements, scrutiny function and representational role) and make a recommendation to the LGBCE on the future Council size. The final number agreed

<sup>6</sup> As per the LGBCE figures for 2017 electorates

by the LGBCE will be used as the basis of the next stage when considering options for ward numbers and boundaries.

- 7.2 Members are not at this stage being asked to definitively decide on a set of governance arrangements as this will need to be the subject of a future report once the LGBCE has agreed a future Council size. Rather this report seeks to identify possible governance arrangements for the purpose of illustrating how each potential council size could be made to work without any significant increase on the burden on elected members or increases to delegated decision-making.
- 7.3 As stated in the briefing to Members on 6 September 2017, the review once commenced will be followed to completion by the LGBCE. It is therefore for the Council to seek to make a more definitive recommendation on council size from its initial request of 'around 35 members' and recommend a specific number as its submission to the LGBCE.
- 7.4 It should also be noted that in addition to the Council's submission to the LGBCE on Council size, individual political groups and councillors are entitled to make separate submissions of their own to the LGBCE.

## 8. Evaluation of Options

- 8.1 There are levels at which the Local Government Boundary Commission would consider an authority to be too small to discharge its statutory functions or too large to be able to function in an effective manner. The Local Government Boundary Commission has previously advised that it would need to give detailed consideration to any proposals for council sizes of below 29 councillors in order to ensure that such a council size would not jeopardise the ability of a council to manage its business effectively. To this end, there are no proposals for a number below 30 councillors in Appendix 3.
- 8.2 The Council's submission should be broadly consistent with the Council's initial indicative submission. A number between **32 – 35 members** would be broadly consistent with our East Kent neighbours and the indicative submission made to the LGBCE.

## 9. Resource Implications

- 9.1 There will be some savings resulting from a reduction in the number of Basic Allowances paid to councillors. Each councillor is currently paid £3,980.00 per annum in Basic Allowance and there are some minor savings to be realised in respect of ICT provision (i.e. iPad replacements, etc.). If the single scrutiny model is adopted and/or the number of Cabinet members reduced, then there would be consequential savings in Special Responsibility Allowances. This would be £3,708 for the Chairman of a scrutiny committee, £927 for the Vice-Chairman of a scrutiny committee and £5,562 per Cabinet member.
- 9.2 However, it should be emphasised that any potential savings are not the primary driver of the review of council size and this should be considered as a secondary concern in determining a council size for submission to the LGBCE.

## 10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Committee Functions

Appendix 2 - Current Committee Decision-Making Model

Appendix 3 – Possible Alternative Committee Decision-Making Models

Appendix 4 – Councillor Job Description

11. **Background Papers**

Electoral Review of Dover District Council – A Guide for Councillors

Contact Officer: Rebecca Brough, Democratic Services Manager, 01304 872304  
[rebecca.brough@dover.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.brough@dover.gov.uk)