

Appendix 1:

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review of Council Size: Coventry City Council Size Submission

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Introduction

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) review of Coventry City Council started in October 2022.
2. The review was triggered due to 6 out of 18 wards being imbalanced across the City therefore generating an unfair representation at local government elections. These 6 wards have a variance greater than +/- 10% compared to the average. In addition to this the last electoral review of Coventry City Council was completed in 2003 and the Commission has a duty set out in law to review every authority from 'time to time'. The Commission interprets this to be approx. 12-14 years.
3. The Commission will seek to deliver electoral equality for electors in local elections in this review.
4. This submission presents Coventry City Council's 'Council Size Submission'. This provides the LGBCE with the Council's view on the optimal Council size and supporting evidence across three broad areas. These areas are:
 - Strategic Leadership – the role of Councillors in decision making and council business demonstrating how responsibilities are distributed across the Council.
 - Accountability – the role of Councillors in holding decision makers to account and to ensure that the Council can discharge its responsibilities to outside bodies.
 - Community leadership – how Councillors represent and provide leadership in their communities and how this affects workload responsibilities.

Methodology

5. This report has been produced by a project team led by the Electoral Services Team and has been overseen by the cross Party Electoral Arrangements Advisory Panel.
6. To provide an evidence base for this report, a Councillor Survey was sent out to all 54 councillors. 32 councillors returned the survey giving a response rate of 59%.

Background about the city of Coventry

7. Coventry is a diverse and cohesive city with a relatively young population, with a median age of 35 years compared to the UK average of 40 years. In recent years the city has experienced an 8.9% growth in its population, from 316,915 in 2011 to 345,300 residents on Census Day 2021. This is higher than the rate in the region (6.2%) or England (6.6%), making Coventry the seventh-fastest growing local authority in the West Midlands region.
8. In 2021, just over one-fifth (22%) of the city's population are children and young people aged under 18, 65% are of working-age (18-64), and the remaining 13% are aged 65 and over. As well as experiencing notable growth amongst some age groups of children, the city's population has grown particularly amongst younger adults. This is contributed to by the growth and success of the city's two universities in attracting students locally and internationally. In addition the growth is fuelled by migration to the city of young adults to work and creation of better-paid jobs in certain sectors of the local economy.

9. The [One Coventry Plan](#) sets out our shared vision and priorities for the city. The plan outlines the city council's approach to:

- Increasing the economic prosperity of the city and region;
- Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities
- Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change.

The Council will achieve this by being:

- A council with a strong and sustainable financial position, with resources and assets that are aligned with our priorities
- A council that plays a key role as a civic leader, working in genuine partnership with local residents, communities and partners.

The achievement of the vision and priorities in the plan are fundamental to Coventry growing as a city and ensuring our residents and businesses prosper. Examples of how the One Coventry Plan aims to achieve improved outcomes include;

- Positioning the city to benefit from the transition to a net zero economy by capitalising on the opportunities presented by the green industrial revolution;
- Securing investment in schemes such as Coventry Very Light Rail and the West Midlands Gigafactory, ensuring job creation and public infrastructure development that will support Coventry and wider West Midlands;
- Dealing with the issues most important to our communities, such as the cost-of-living crisis.

10. The Council has gone from strength to strength in the last few years with several notable achievements. These include:

- In 2019 being shortlisted for the prestigious national award of Council of the Year as part of the LGC Awards, which celebrates excellence in local government.
- In July 2022, the Council's Housing and Homelessness Service was named the Large Team of the Year in the LGC Awards, against a backdrop of a record number of entries from council teams across the UK.

11. The Council has also ensured high profile national events for the city to the benefit of its residents and those further afield. This includes Coventry hosting:

- The UK City of Culture in 2021/22 – which enabled the Council to secure over £90 million in external funding to deliver the much-improved public realm work in the city centre and investment in many of the city's cultural and heritage venues;
- The MOBO Awards and the MOBO Fringe Festival in December 2021;
- The Radio One Big Weekend in May 2022;
- Being a host city for three sports of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in July 2022;
- Being the sole host of the International Children's Games – consisting of more than 1,500 young people aged between 12 and 15 from 31 countries across the world competing in seven sports – in August 2022.

12. Our COVID-19 journey across the city has been a truly 'One Coventry' response. We have worked closely with our local NHS partners, Public Health England, care services, universities, schools and businesses across Coventry to minimise the impact and harm of COVID-19. The One Coventry response has ensured a coordinated response across the city, with a focus on how the council and partners can protect and maintain critical services to support residents and reduce the burden on those most vulnerable and under-represented.
13. The approach taken has been influenced and led by 'One Coventry' values which focus on working together with Partners to improve the City and people's lives. This is achieved by being open, fair and transparent, involving the right people, embracing new ways of working to continuously improve the services we offer, engaging with our residents and empowering our employees to enable them to do the right thing. This is enabled by the principle of putting diversity and inclusion at the heart of all we do.
14. Coventry City Council has facilitated a One Coventry response to the rising costs of living, led by Councillors and in partnership with community, voluntary, statutory sector organisations and businesses. In Coventry there are strong foundations in place, created through our partnership and community work, that has been built upon to enable a comprehensive and impactful response to the crisis. By targeting existing resources and engagement at the most vulnerable groups in our communities it is possible to support those with the greatest need.
15. Coventry's partnership response has included the creation of an online single point of access hub for all cost of living and wellbeing related information (<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/cost-living-wellbeing-support>). This contains information about financial support with energy and housing costs, support with food, fuel and other essential items, support to households at financial risk, and information and advice on benefits, debt and housing matters.

Coventry's demographics

16. Within the LGBCE's guidance it is recommended to examine "demographic pressures" upon the local authority. Examples included were "distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations", or whether large growth in the population is anticipated. Therefore, this section details recent and projected demographic trends.
17. The last boundary review undertaken by the LGBCE in Coventry was in 2003. According to the Office for National Statistics' 2021 mid year estimates, between 2003 and **2021** (the latest year available), the number of people living in the City increased from **300K** to **343K**; a growth of **14%**. The population of adults aged 18+ in Coventry (the base population from which the electorate is drawn) increased from **232K** to **266K** in 2021, a growth of **15%**.
18. The LGBCE uses the concept of registered electorate variance from the Coventry average per ward and will intervene by requesting a review and five and ten year forecast if over 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/- 10% from

the average electorate for the authority. However, within the population of adults aged 18+, not all adults will be registered to vote. This is important because the LGBCE uses the number of electors per ward (people registered to vote) to determine “electoral fairness”.

19. The table 1 below outlines the data sourced from the LGBCE which was used to determine the requirement for the review. Based on the December 2021 electoral register, Coventry had three wards (16%) with a +10% variance (Henley, Longford and Lower Stoke) and three wards (16%) with a -10% variance (St Michael’s, Wainbody and Whoberley).

Table 1 – Voter ratios in Coventry for 2021 (LGBCE sourced data)

| Ward Name | Councillors | Electorate* | Variance* |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Lower Stoke | 3 | 15,188 | 19% |
| Henley | 3 | 14,655 | 15% |
| Longford | 3 | 14,081 | 11% |
| Woodlands | 3 | 13,630 | 7% |
| Holbrook | 3 | 13,467 | 6% |
| Westwood | 3 | 13,210 | 4% |
| Upper Stoke | 3 | 13,108 | 3% |
| Binley & Willenhall | 3 | 12,977 | 2% |
| Foleshill | 3 | 13,036 | 2% |
| Radford | 3 | 12,958 | 2% |
| Bablake | 3 | 12,855 | 1% |
| Wyken | 3 | 12,547 | -1% |
| Sherbourne | 3 | 11,979 | -6% |
| Earlson | 3 | 11,801 | -7% |
| Cheylesmore | 3 | 11,731 | -8% |
| Whoberley | 3 | 11,191 | -12% |
| St. Michael's | 3 | 10,659 | -16% |
| Wainbody | 3 | 10,012 | -21% |
| Coventry | 54 | 229,085 | 12,727 |

*Source LGBCE review documentation using December 2021 electoral register, where the variance calculation is using 12,727 as the average number of electors per ward.

20. For the LGBCE review, to ascertain the population size into the future, the starting point is the expected adult population drawn from the Office for National Statistics’ ‘Sub-National Population Projections’ (SNPP). The most recent SNPP (**2018 - based**) projects the City’s population from 2018 until **2043**.
21. Furthermore, the LGBCE requires an estimate of the proportion of the adult population registered to vote. The historical data for Coventry between 2020 and 2023 yields an average ratio of **0.76%** electorate to adult population, which has been used for the purposes of this forecast (See Appendix 2 Forecasting Report).

22. This gives an estimated electorate via the SNPP method of **250K** electors by 2029, but this figure has been revised to **247K**, to take account of the council's housing development forecast plan from 2022 to 2031+ (See Appendix 2 electorate forecasting submission).
23. Coventry is and will continue to be an expanding, young and diverse population, given its large and growing migrant and student (especially international) populations.
24. According to the 2021 Census, the population grew by 9% since the 2011 Census (compared with 7% nationally and 6% for the West Midlands region) and the median age remained the same (34 years of age) (compared with 40 years of age for England, which is growing year on year).
25. The results from the 2021 Census also suggest: 28% of usual Coventry residents are born outside the UK (compared with 18% for England), 45% identify with an ethnic group other than White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (compared with 26% for England) and 18% have a non-UK identity only (compared with 10% for England), with notably varying concentrations of these communities across wards.
26. The 2021 Census also reports variation across Wards in where students live, with, notably, proportionally large populations reported for St Michael's, Wainbody and Westwood, exceeding the 15% of the total population though to be students 16+ years.

| Economic activity status – ONS Census 2021 | |
|---|---------------------|
| Ward | Students 16+ |
| Bablake | 6% |
| Binley and Willenhall | 7% |
| Cheylesmore | 8% |
| Earlsdon | 11% |
| Foleshill | 14% |
| Henley | 8% |
| Holbrook | 9% |
| Longford | 8% |
| Lower Stoke | 12% |
| Radford | 11% |
| St Michael's | 52% |
| Sherbourne | 10% |
| Upper Stoke | 11% |
| Wainbody | 33% |
| Westwood | 20% |
| Whoberley | 14% |
| Woodlands | 6% |
| Wyken | 7% |
| Coventry | 15% |

27. Given the more transitional nature of student and new migrants residents, population numbers year on year in the future are likely to be more volatile in the wards of St. Michael's, Wainbody, Foleshill, Upper Stoke, Lower Stoke and Radford.
28. Council Officers are currently working with ONS colleagues to improve the methodology used to project population numbers in the future for Coventry and Coventry wards, which takes better account of these more transitional communities.

Coventry's regional role within the West Midlands

West Midlands Combined Authority

29. Coventry City Council played a pivotal role in setting up the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) moving powers from central government to locally elected politicians in the West Midlands. The WMCA is composed of 18 local authorities (Coventry being one of the seven constituent authorities) and four Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). It was formed in response to the context of international, national and regional challenges including skills deficits, unemployment, austerity, increasing demand for public services and the need to improve connectivity within the West Midlands.
30. The purpose of the WMCA is to drive inclusive economic growth and support healthier, happier, better connected and more prosperous communities in the region through co-operation. To propel this economic growth, the WMCA is focussed on the following key areas: economic growth, environment, health and wellbeing, housing and land, productivity and skills, public service reform and transport.
31. The creation of the WMCA meant that certain key regional functions (such as skills) were devolved down from Central Government to the WMCA. However, this regional approach entails more responsibilities and duties for Councillors in the region than historically. This is especially important considering Coventry is one of the constituent members (with full voting rights) of the WMCA. The seven Council's which are constituent members work together with the other partner bodies and the directly elected mayor to improve and develop the region, particularly in regard to those strategic issues that cross local authority boundaries. There are eleven Boards and Committees that Coventry Councillors are appointed to, including the WMCA Board.
32. It should be noted that members of the Council's opposition group do not hold positions within the WMCA. For this reason, the impact of the WMCA's creation only impacts ruling group Councillors.

Other regional/national councillor involvement

33. The Coventry and Warwickshire LEP was originally established to promote business growth and prosperity within the region which has input from councillors this is due to change due the Levelling Up White Paper of February 2022 which mandated Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to integrate into local democratic institutions from 1st April 2023 onwards. As such, Coventry & Warwickshire LEP is closing at the end of March 2023, but Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub will become a standalone entity and will also

integrate existing Coventry & Warwickshire business networking functions. The Growth Hub will therefore have a new board of directors and revised governance structure as a result, and Coventry City Council is expected to be one of the Board members, with Councillors also reviewing updates on the work of the Growth Hub as required.

34. The WMCA and the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-regional economic planning exhibit key areas of regional work that Councillors are involved in, however, Councillors regional responsibilities go beyond this. Councillors represent Coventry City Council on numerous regional bodies, which include the Canal and Rivers Trust Regional Advisory Board, the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee, the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, West Midlands Pension Committee, the Board of West Midlands Rail Ltd,
35. Councillors are involved in several national bodies, including the Bus Lane Adjudication Service Joint Committee, the LGA General Assembly, the Parking and Traffic Regulation Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee, the Special Interest Groups of Municipal Authorities,

International involvement

36. Coventry is known throughout the world as a city of peace and reconciliation and is recognised as playing a key role in establishing twinning relationships between communities across the world. Coventry maintains active relationships with a small number of its twin cities, including Kiel and Dresden in Germany which like Coventry suffered significant loss of life and damage during the second world war. Civic exchanges involving councillors mark significant occasions such as attendance at Remembrance commemorations and provides a foundation for other dialogue, for example the current link between adult education in Kiel and Coventry on the 'Shared Lives' project that focuses on migration and integration through language learning.
37. Coventry operates on the global stage to deliver economic development, attract inward investment and provide international trade opportunities to businesses based here. The City works closely with the Department for Business and Trade and other partners nationally and internationally to develop and attract opportunities for bi-lateral trade and investment. This activity involves councillors potentially supporting the hosting of delegations from key overseas regions or attending market visits to areas of opportunity with significant investor leads. In addition, attending key international events such as MIPIM France (the world's leading real estate event) is essential to promote the city's key investment and regeneration opportunities.
38. Coventry has two leading universities (Coventry University and the University of Warwick) with a global reach. Both universities have numerous international hubs with locations including China, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America. Collectively the universities are home to 67,000 students with a third of these being from overseas representing 290 different nationalities.
39. Further international reach is generated through the major events delivered within the City. Recent events of significance include UK City of Culture 2021, hosting elements of the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the 2022 International Children's Games.

Growing involvement

40. Coventry Councillors have a significant presence with the region and nationally. In total 12 councillors are involved in 20 different regional meetings/committees/boards. Nationally, 11 councillors are involved in 14 different national meetings/committees/boards.
41. According to the Councillor Survey, 3% of respondents spend over 15 hours a month on regional business. 40% spend between 1-5 hours on average a month on regional business, with over half of respondents 54% spending no time on regional business a month.
42. Regional working plays an important part within many Councillors' roles, especially for Councillors with executive responsibilities. Regional work is only expected to increase as central governments ambitions for greater devolution are realised.

Coventry's political context and governance model

43. Coventry City Council is made up of 54 councillors. The city is divided into 18 wards, each of which is represented by three Councillors. The Council has been under Labour control since 2010 with seats currently held by 38 Labour,

15 Conservatives and 1 Green councillors. Councillors are elected by thirds, with elections held over a four-year cycle. The most recent elections were in May 2022, and the next 'fallow year' is in 2025.

44. The Council has operated the Leader and Cabinet model since it was introduced in 2000. At the present time, in addition to the Leader and Deputy Leader, there are 10 Cabinet Members, each with their own portfolio of responsibilities. There are also 5 Deputy Cabinet Members who support Cabinet Members in carrying out their responsibilities but are not Members of the Executive.

| Member | Portfolio |
|--|---|
| <p>The Leader Policy and Leadership</p> <p>Councillor G Duggins</p> | <p>One Coventry Council Plan City of Culture 2021 Legacy Scrutiny External relations / public relations Image and reputation Chair of Cabinet / Management Board meetings Emergency Planning Regional Matters West Midlands Combined Authority Corporate Governance Information Management and Governance Risk Management</p> |
| <p>The Deputy Leader Policing and Equalities</p> <p>Councillor A S Khan</p> <p>Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor P Akhtar</p> | <p>Community Safety Community Cohesion Public Protection and Licensing Prosecution and Enforcement Democratic Services, including Lord Mayor's Electoral Services Equalities Legal Services Training (Members) Constitutional Matters and Political Management Domestic Violence and Sexual Exploitation Local Policing Media Strategy Events Parks International Liaison and diplomacy Peace, reconciliation and twinning Deputising on Leader Items</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Strategic Finance and Resources</p> <p>Councillor R Brown</p> | <p>Strategic Finance Medium Term Financial Strategy Budget Setting External Resources Operational Finance incl. Revenues and Benefits Service Transformation and value for money Procurement Human Resources Organisational Development Key Staff Recruitment and Retention Customer Services Health and Safety</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Pensions |
| <p>Cabinet Member Children and Young People</p> <p>Councillor P Seaman</p> <p>Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor B Gittins</p> | <p>Children and Families</p> <p>Children and Young People's Social Care</p> <p>Child Exploitation</p> <p>Young People</p> <p>Youth Offending Service</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>*S19 Children Act 2004 Lead Member</p> <p>Fostering and Adoption</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Education and Skills</p> <p>Councillor K Sandhu</p> | <p>Post 16 Education and Training</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Early Years</p> <p>Special Educational Needs and Disability</p> <p>Libraries</p> <p>Adult Education</p> <p>Higher and Further Education (incl. Universities)</p> <p>Skills and Employability</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change</p> <p>Councillor J O'Boyle</p> | <p>Economic Development</p> <p>City Centre (Regeneration)</p> <p>International Trade and Inward Investment</p> <p>Commercial and Operational Property (including catering)</p> <p>Local Enterprise Partnership</p> <p>Urban Regeneration</p> <p>Transportation</p> <p>Tourism and Marketing</p> <p>Sustainability and climate change</p> <p>Digital Strategy</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member City Services</p> <p>Councillor P Hetheron</p> <p>Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor G Lloyd</p> | <p>Highways, Drainage and Lighting</p> <p>Licensing Policy (Hackney Carriage and Private Hire)</p> <p>Public Realm</p> <p>Street Services (Ground Maintenance, Refuse (domestic and commercial), Street Cleaning)</p> <p>Waste Management</p> <p>Flood Management</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Bereavement Services</p> <p>Traffic Management and Road Safety</p> <p>Parking Policy and Operations</p> <p>Information Technology</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Adult Services</p> <p>Councillor M Mutton</p> | <p>Social Care for Adults and Older People</p> <p>Better Care Fund</p> <p>Transforming Care</p> <p>Carers</p> <p>Adult Safeguarding</p> <p>Adult social care integration with health</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Public Health and Sport</p> <p>Councillor K Caan</p> <p>Deputy Cabinet Member</p> | <p>Health Strategy and Policy</p> <p>Integrated Care Systems</p> <p>Health Inequalities and Marmot</p> <p>Air Quality</p> <p>Local Health Economy</p> <p>Public Health</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| Councillor G Hayre | Sexual Health Teenage Pregnancies Mental Health Poverty Fuel Poverty Sport and physical activity |
| Cabinet Member Housing and Communities Councillor D Welsh Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor S Nazir (Excluding Planning Policy) | Archives Arts Heritage Museums Conservation Social Enterprise Strategy Mutuals Community and Voluntary Sector Relations Community Centres Refugees and Asylum Seekers Welfare Advice Services Housing and Homelessness Planning Policy |

Scrutiny at Coventry City Council

45. The role of Scrutiny in the Council is vital to ensuring that decision makers are held to account and that policy and strategy are formulated carefully. It is critical to ensuring that the Council's work has positive influence on the residents of Coventry.
46. Scrutiny is a cross-party function of the Council and the majority of non-executive Councillors sit on at least one scrutiny board.
47. Scrutiny at the Council functions in the following manner: Cabinet Members and senior officers are called to public meetings of Scrutiny Boards, in order to provide information on proposed executive decisions as well as service delivery and performance. Decision makers may be questioned or required to provide information on strategies or policies after implementation to monitor progress and ensure accountability. Scrutiny identifies which decisions and service areas to scrutinise.
48. There are also powers within the constitution to call in decisions after they have been made.
49. All of these powers ensures that decision makers are held to account. In order to make the role of scrutiny both more accountable and accessible, some scrutiny meetings are held in community locations.
50. Scrutiny can also require certain public sector external partners responsible for service delivery within the local authority to attend meetings and be held accountable. These partners include health service providers and commissioners, and the police.
51. The Council has a Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and five scrutiny boards. Each of the board chairs sit on the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee. This Committee is scheduled to meet eight times a year. Each of the other boards are scheduled to meet six times a year and extra meetings are called when required (see table below). There are also several task and finish review groups that carry out in depth scrutiny into a specific function or topic, lasting between

six months and a year. Their function is to consider a topic or question in detail and to make recommendations to Cabinet.

52. Councillors may be expected to attend one to two meetings a month on average. Each scrutiny board has nine Councillors with task and finish groups having between three to seven Councillors.
53. The number of scrutiny committees within the authority reflects Cabinet Member portfolios as well as service areas.
54. Table 2 of number of Scrutiny Committees

| Board/Committee | Members | Frequency | Typical Duration |
|--|---------|-------------|------------------|
| Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee | 9 | 8 pa | 2-3 hours |
| Finance and Corporate Services | 9 | 6pa | 2-3 hours |
| Education and Children's Services | 9 | 6pa | 2-3 hours |
| Business, Economy and Enterprise | 9 | 6pa | 2-3 hours |
| Communities and Neighbourhoods | 9 | 6pa | 2-3 hours |
| Health and Social Care | 9 | 6pa | 2-3 hours |
| Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 4 | As required | |

Delegated functions Coventry City Council - Planning

55. Non-executive functions (such as planning or licensing) are delegated by the Council to the relevant regulatory committees. The work of these bodies is outlined in more detail below. A range of routine matters are delegated to employees to facilitate the smooth day-to-day running of the Council. These are outlined in detail in the Constitution
56. Due to the growth in external investment leading to multiple large infrastructure projects going ahead within the city, the role of planning in Coventry has never been more important due to a number of large complex housing developments and City Centre regeneration, figures which are below.

| Row Labels | Count of Application Reference |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| + 2018 | 80 |
| + 2019 | 66 |
| + 2020 | 53 |
| + 2021 | 63 |
| + 2022 | 77 |
| + 2023 | 4 |
| Grand Total | 343 |

57. Councillors determine roughly 3% of all planning applications with there being about 300 applications roughly every 3 weeks. 10 (average 3-4 applications per meeting) of these go to Planning Committee. The criteria for whether a planning application is considered by Planning Committee is that it has 5 or more or more objections to it and/or that a Councillor has requested it is

considered by Committee; or that the applicant is a Councillor, senior officer of the Council or an officer from the Planning Department.

58. In Coventry there is a single council wide Planning Committee with no area committees. Cabinet Members do not serve on the Planning Committee, only Councillors with non-executive responsibilities. On average the planning committee takes up to approximately 8 hours of a Councillor's time every 3 weeks (including approximately up to 4 hours of preparation) or 112 hours a year.
59. Table 3

| Meeting | Members | Meetings | Typical Duration |
|--------------------|---------|----------|------------------|
| Planning Committee | 12 | 17 | 4 hours |

Delegated functions Coventry City Council - Licensing

60. Licensing authorities are responsible for protecting people's health, safety, and wellbeing as well as the environment and amenities. Supporting these objectives requires a regulatory regime that directs a clear set of service standards and offers advice that supports businesses and residents to thrive and grow. This is the role that licencing plays within the city.
61. Table 4 shows the elements of licencing which are covered by statutory committees (excluding taxi licences).

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Scrap Metal Licences | Personal licenses |
| Premises licenses | Gambling and gaming licenses |
| Temporary events | Sex Establishments and Sexual Entertainment Venues |

NB – Officers have delegated authority in respect of Trading Standards matters and these are therefore omitted from the table

62. As demonstrated by Table 3 (concerning Planning), Statutory Committees take up a minimum of 30 hours every year for each of the 15 Councillors.
63. Statutory Sub-Committees can take up over 36 hours every year. These meetings are attended by three Councillors from the membership of the main Licensing and Regulatory Committee. The membership of Sub-Committees meetings are ad hoc taking into consideration Member availability, experience and the location of the premises concerned, whilst ensuring political proportionality is met. Committee meetings have a standing membership with Sub-Committee meetings being ad-hoc. Table 5 below evidences the commitment and time taken for the various licencing panels within the council.

64. Table 5 – Membership, frequency and typical duration of Licencing meetings

| Name | Members | Meetings | Typical duration |
|-------------------------|----------------|--|-------------------------|
| Statutory Committee | 15 | 12 (one per month are scheduled but sometimes cancelled if not required) | 2.5 hours |
| Statutory sub-committee | 3 | These are held when required 6-8 (Review and Application Hearings) are held on average per year | 3.5 hours |

Delegated functions Coventry City Council – Taxi Licensing

65. Coventry City has 499 licensed hackney carriage vehicle, 260 licensed private hire vehicles, 731 hackney carriage drivers, 372 private hire drivers and 31 private hire operators. Officers have certain powers of delegations which include with consultation with the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee (Committee) powers to revoke drivers' licences normally as a result of information received from the Police (3 in the last year) however, other decisions concerning drivers is decided by the Licensing & Regulatory Committee. There are approximately 15 hearings a year for new applications and renewals and 6 reviews of licences decided by the Committee.

Other important meetings / working groups attended by Councillors

66. Aside from the examples cited of Planning and Licensing, there are other boards and committees which necessitate councillor representation. These are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6 – Membership, frequency and typical duration of other important meetings

| Meeting | Members | Meetings | Typical duration |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--|-------------------------|
| Audit and Procurement Committee | 12 | 4 | 2 Hours |
| Ethics Committee | 4 (+ 2 reserve) | 4 | 1.5 Hours |
| Appeals Panel (Community Services) | N/A | The City Council establishes Appeals Committees from time to time to hear cases, where there is a right of appeal, against decisions made by the City Council, for example, Social | As required |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|-------------|
| | | Services Home Care Charges appeals. It is anticipated that the majority of each meeting will be conducted in private with only the initial formalities at the start of the meeting being considered in public. | |
| Appointments Panel | N/A | Appointment Panels are established as and when required. | As required |
| Coventry Health and Well-being Board | 5 (+1 by invitation) + other Council Officers and Local Partners | 4 | 2 Hours |

External Partnerships

67. As previously stated, the Council has a strong relationship and involvement with the West Midlands Combined Authority. Details of their meetings are outlined in the table 7 below.

Table 7 – WMCA Meetings

| Meeting | Members | Approximate Number of meetings per annum | Average length of meetings |
|---|-------------|--|----------------------------|
| West Midlands Combined Authority (Board) | 2 (+2 subs) | 1 x Monthly | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee | 1 (+1 sub) | Bi-monthly | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Environment Board | 1 | Quarterly | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Housing and Land Delivery Board | 1 | 6 | 1½ hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Investment Board | 1 | Monthly | 1-2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 1 (+1 sub) | 7 | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Strategic Economic Development Board | 1 | 5 | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Delivery Committee | 2 | Monthly | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee | 1 | Monthly | 2 hours |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Wellbeing Board | 1 | 5 | 2 hours |

68. There are also a number of boards, groups and organisations in the City which Councillors serve on that operate or contribute to addressing inequalities as detailed in Table 8 below.

Table 8 – External boards, groups and organisations

| Meeting | Members | Approximate Number of meetings per annum |
|--|----------------|--|
| Coventry Ambassadors Social Enterprise Board | 1 | As required |
| Coventry Law Centre | 2 | Monthly |
| Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre Board | 3 + 1 Observer | Monthly |
| Police & Crime Panel | 2 + 2 subs | 7 |
| Citizen's Advice Bureau Management Board | 1 | Bi-monthly |
| Tansley Charity Trust | 4 | 2 |

Other organisations

69. The Council has incorporated a group structure for all of its various wholly owned companies, the company portfolio for the City Council is diverse and varied from hotel and leisure to a materials recycling facility.
70. A governance framework sits around this company model which includes the creation of a shareholder committee as a subcommittee of Cabinet.
71. Whilst the Shareholder Committee will not have operational control over Companies, as all decisions regarding the day to day operation of each Company, its business developments and commercial opportunities, staff terms and conditions and the development and implementation of its internal procedures rest with the Directors of each Company, the Shareholder Committee does receive updates on the various companies performance and takes any Shareholder Decisions which are required in line with the company's articles of association. The Committee also acts as the relevant decision making body for joint venture arrangements that the City Council has entered into with partners.
72. The elected members sitting on the Shareholder Committee protect the Council's interests as shareholders and they require bespoke training to enable them to undertake these complex decision making roles. The activity of the Shareholder Committee is subject to scrutiny from elected members sitting on Scrutiny boards as well as those elected members who are appointed to the City Councils Audit Committee.

Community Involvement of Councillors

73. As stated in the methodology, the responses to the Councillor Survey and Journal have provided the majority of data and evidence within this section.

Engagement with residents

- 74. The LGBCE ask that submissions demonstrate how Councillors provide effective community leadership, and what support in turn the Council offers to assist Councillors in this role. The Councillor Survey highlights that councillors most prefer email engagement with electors. 100% of councillors listed email as a means of communication, this was followed by 94% using telephone and 87% using social media as a means of communication.
- 75. Over 80% of councillors mention community meetings and 75% face to face interaction at council offices and residents' homes.
- 76. The Councillor Journal (see Figures 5 and 7) highlights that the four councillors spent 38% of their cumulative time on community/ case work with the median respondent spending 10 hours that week. The majority of this time involved councillors interacting with residents by phone/email, on the street, or in community meetings.
- 77. In the Councillor Survey, communication through emails and telephone calls ranked the top most important method of engagement with electors. This was followed by social media and then newsletters. Respondents to the survey could also list other methods of engagement that they used, friends and families and door knocking were mentioned the most.

Table 9 - Proportion of weekly hours according to journal responses.

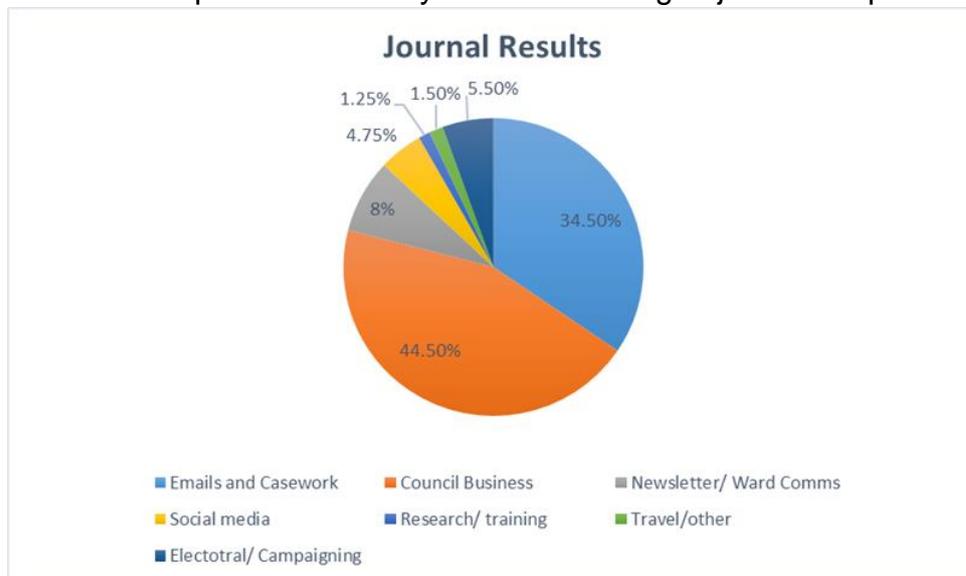


Table 10 - Total weekly hours spent on Council activities from Members' Survey

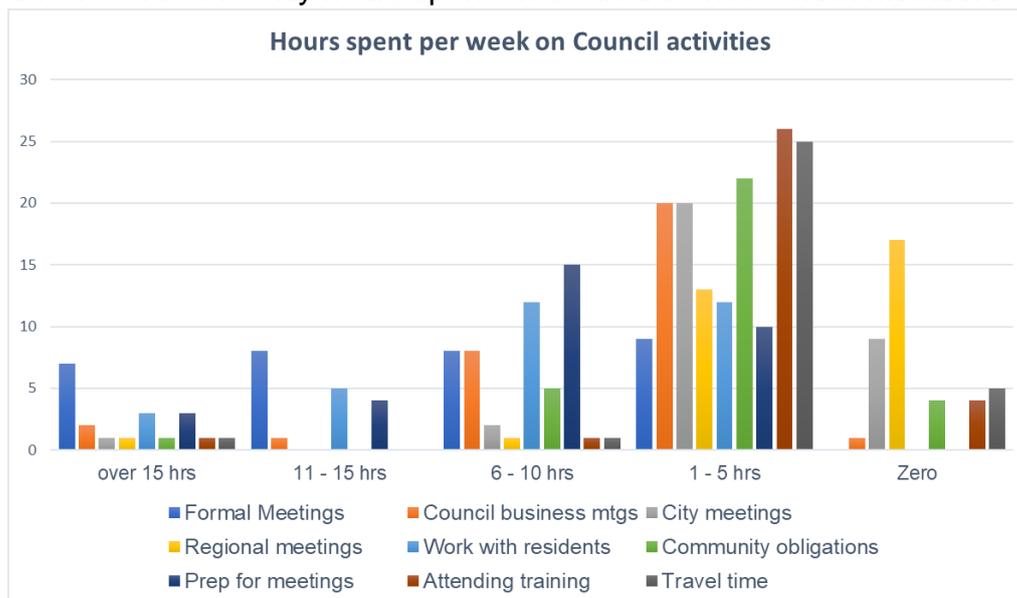


Table 11 - Total weekly hours worked by respondents in journal

| Respondents | Total Weekly Hours |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Councillor 1 - | 28 |
| Councillor 2 - | 37.5 |
| Councillor 3 - | 27.75 |
| Councillor 4 - | 27.25 |
| Median | 30.25 |

Support for Councillors

78. There are 19 (17.6 FTE) members of staff within Members Services supporting Members including the civic office.
79. A new and comprehensive Members' Training and Development Strategy is in its first year of implementation. The strategy provides a framework which includes a set of mandatory training, as well as both skills based and knowledge based supplementary training. Councillors are also able to access the corporate training offer.
80. The training programme responds to Councillors' training needs and has recently delivered personal safety training in response to increased concerns about intimidation and harassment, particularly with the increase in social media use by Councillors.
81. The Council also has a specific section of the intranet which provides information, guidance and quick links for Councillors to carry out their role, such as a casework support and performance data, but also supports their well-being, including access to occupational health services and what to do if they are experiencing abuse and intimidation. These pages are regularly updated to ensure information is current and up to date.

Developing a place-based approach – One Coventry Delivered Locally

82. Coventry City Council is leading, through the One Coventry Partnership, a place-based approach with partners and communities to develop ideas for integration, stronger partnership working, and more effective use of collective resources. A

model is being designed through integrated community prototypes and other place-based partnerships, which focuses on improving outcomes and tackling inequalities. It supports the delivery of more preventative and better joined-up approaches to service delivery, across sectors and in collaboration with communities. Within the prototypes and locality approaches, organisations and services work creatively and closely together in local community settings, strengthening partnership approaches, and providing more immediate and wraparound support to residents.

83. The need to work differently to respond to the future needs of our communities, and the changing role of the council, is well recognised. Through a One Coventry approach, our partnership and communities work ensures that we are well placed to make the best use of our collective capacity and resource across the city. Elected Members understand and share the challenges and opportunities arising in their wards. This insight informs the community prototypes and place-based partnership approach, ensuring it is tailored to the needs of each locality. In addition, Elected Members play an important role in championing this work and are integral to ensuring the buy-in of local people and communities.
84. Community prototypes are enabling the One Coventry Partnership to develop collective creativity and resourcefulness, drawing upon lessons learnt from both the city's collaborative response to the COVID pandemic and wider research. The approach is also actively enabling a practical response to the current Cost of Living crisis, as outlined above.
85. The first community prototype commenced in 2021 in the Bell Green, Wood End and Henley locality, followed by a second prototype in 2022 in Canley and Tile Hill. Further place-based partnership approaches have also started in St Michael's and in Spon End, in collaboration with the local social housing association, Citizen Housing. Council officers are working with and in the heart of the community alongside cross-sector partners and residents to understand and collectively address priorities and to develop preventative and integrated approaches to improving resident outcomes. There is potential for and it is expected that Elected Members will play a more active role in guiding and delivering the work going forward. There has been strong commitment from all involved to try things out and improve ideas as the prototypes and place-based partnerships develop, informed by local need and feedback.
86. Development of the community prototypes and place-based partnerships is ongoing. Early evidence, which includes feedback and real-life stories, suggests that working in localities, is achieving positive outcomes. Partnerships have been strengthened through closer, more collaborative working in a way that is focused on resident outcomes. This work presents an exciting opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of local people.

Determining the optimal council size – options appraisal

87. There are three options available for the council size, increase the size, reduce it, or make no change from the present 54 councillor arrangement. The LG BCE state that they "have no pre-conceived views on the number of councillors necessary to run any particular local authority effectively, and we are content to accept proposals for an increase, decrease or retention of the existing number of

councillors, but only on the basis that they can be justified.” All three options were analysed by the project team in drafting of this report and are evaluated in turn.

Option one - reducing the number of councillors

88. The team analysed the argument for reducing the number of Councillors to two per ward.
89. Coventry has one councillor per 4,300 electors. Coventry’s statistical nearest neighbour group is made up of 16 similar local authorities and the councillor/elector ratio ranges from 1:2,051 to 1:4,730. Coventry has the fifth highest ratio in the group. Coventry’s ratio is higher than the other 6 West Midlands metropolitan authorities, with only Birmingham having a higher ratio. This indicates that if the number of Coventry councillors were to be reduced, the electoral inequality compared with other authorities would worsen.
90. 69% of Councillors feel they have adequate time to carry out their role, although it was recognised that with more time, more could be done. Of those who felt they had adequate time, comments included that this was only because they were retired, in part time employment, had a flexible employer or carried out the role full time.
91. One comment felt that the growing commitment and expectation means the role is becoming more like a job which “presents a real challenge to achieving diverse representation”. Reducing the number of councillors would further increase the challenge of promoting diversity and ensuring that the cohort of councillors is representative of the community.
92. Managing a work/life balance was also identified as a challenge and any reduction in numbers would increase the pressure on existing Members.

Option two – increase the council size

93. Despite the increasing workload and pressures on the role, responses to the survey did not identify an appetite to increase the council size. While a couple of respondents to the survey suggested that the number of councillors should be increased. One commented “For the size of population Coventry is under-represented by elected members” and just under a third said they did not have sufficient time to carry out their role, the majority of the comments were in support of Coventry retaining the same number of Councillors.
94. Measures are in place to support councillors as their roles change including the new training strategy and support from the Members Services Team.
95. An increase in the number of councillors is not identified to be necessary by the large majority of current councillors. Any increase in council size would also have a financial implication.

Option three – maintain the current council size

96. The majority of comments relating to Council size made in the survey were in support of Coventry retaining the same number of Councillors. “I think the current size is about right”. There was also some support for retaining an equal number of councillors in each ward. One respondent commented “If there is more than 1 Councillor with extra roles and responsibilities in a Ward, then they could be over-burdened with casework. In a large Authority there is a need for at least 3 elected Councillors to allow proper representation for constituents.”

97. 69% of Councillors feel they have adequate time to carry out their role, although it was recognised that with more time, more could be done. Of those who felt they had adequate time, comments included that this was only because they were retired, in part time employment, had a flexible employer or carried out the role full time. One comment felt that the growing commitment and expectation means the role is becoming more like a job which “presents a real challenge to achieving diverse representation”.
98. Any reduction in the number of councillors would make promoting diversity (including those in and outside employment and with other commitments) more challenging and would both disincentivise candidates in full time employment from applying and make it more difficult for councillors in full time employment to fulfil their duties.
99. Similarly, any reduction would also make maintaining a healthy worklife balance more challenging.
100. There was also a recognition of reliance on ward colleagues and that if the number of Councillors was reduced this would impact negatively on their ability to effectively carry out their role.
101. The total population of Coventry has grown 25% since the last boundary review in 2003 with the population of adults aged 18+ in Coventry (the base population from which the electorate is drawn) increasing by 29%.
102. The electorate figure used for the 2003 boundary review was 224,325, with a current electorate of 233,963 (2023) which has shown an increase of 9,638 (+ 4.3%). The anticipated growth from now until 2029, using ONS SNNPs is 15,286 (+7%).
103. In light of this anticipated increase which is greater than the previous review if there was reduction in councillors and/or ward numbers it is likely that this would be detrimental to the effectiveness of the local authority.
104. When asked whether the time being spent on council business has changed over recent years, over two thirds of respondents to the survey reported that they are spending more time. Reasons given include increasing demand and need and the use of social media. One respondent commented that while the latter provided opportunities to communicate more directly with residents “it has also created an expectation and additional workload”.

Conclusion

105. The report has identified a range of evidence to be taken into account when determining the Council size and recommends option 3 to the LGBCE as the best way of meeting its aims for achieving a council size that allows the council to take decisions effectively, manage the business and responsibilities of the council successfully, and provide effective community leadership and representation.
106. Rising demand for services, challenging budget cuts, growing levels of casework, electorate growth and the increasing ease (via social media etc) that residents contact councillors means that any reduction in numbers would be detrimental.
107. Any reduction in the number of councillors would impact the residents of Coventry as it would undermine councillors’ ability to effectively represent their communities, carry out their executive roles and contribute to the growing regional agenda which has been highlighted in this submission.
108. Any reduction could also make it harder to attract councillors and impact negatively on diversity.

109. The rising population, the new place based approach intensifying councillors role in the community and the importance of Coventry making an effective regional contribution as one of the WMCA's constituent councils also need to be taken into account.
110. Arrangements are in place and continue to be developed to support councillors in their growing and changing roles including the training strategy and through Members Services.