

Middlesbrough Council

Council Size Submission: Template

Middlesbrough Council

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How to Make a Submission

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

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

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

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

About You

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

DELETE AS APPROPRIATE

OPTION A: This submission was by developed by Officers of the Council and was approved by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board.

OPTION B: This submission was by developed by Officers of the Council and was considered by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board. Upon consideration the Overview and Scrutiny Board decided to submit an alternative proposal.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

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

Not Applicable

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

Middlesbrough Council has operated the Elected Mayor/ Executive Governance model since 2002. In 2013 a Governance Referendum was held in which it was opted to retain the elected Mayoral system. Middlesbrough is separated into 20 Electoral Wards with 46 Councillors plus the Elected Mayor. Councillor and Ward structure is eight Wards have three Councillors; 10 Wards have two Councillors and two are single Member Wards.

In 2022 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) was invited to provide guidance and support in relation to the Council's governance processes. Further to CIPFA's arrival the Council is undergoing a Governance Improvement Journey which has seen both Members and Officers work collaboratively to improve the Council's Governance processes.

As the Council's proposal is to increase the number of Councillors by one, wider council effectiveness will not be impacted. However, due to the projected increase in electorate increasing the number of Councillors will provide more effective support to residents.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Middlesbrough Council is an urban unitary authority with responsibility for the

provision of the full range of local authority services including housing, adults' and children's social care services, education services, highways and environmental services.

In 2004 the Council transferred its housing stock to Erimus Housing, now Thirteen Group.

By and large the Council has chosen to keep services in house wherever possible, although certain social care services are provided through the private and not for profit sector.

The current electorate is 99, 071 (2023). The estimate for 2027 is 103,605.

Of the 20 wards in Middlesbrough, six (30%) are in the top 1% most deprived wards in England, as defined by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as of 2019. These wards are North Ormesby, Brambles and Thorntree, Berwick Hills and Pallister, Newport, Park End and Beckfield, and Longlands and Beechwood.

A further two wards (Central and Hemlington) are in the top 3% most deprived. This means Middlesbrough has a total of eight wards (40%) which are in the top 3% of the most deprived Wards in England.

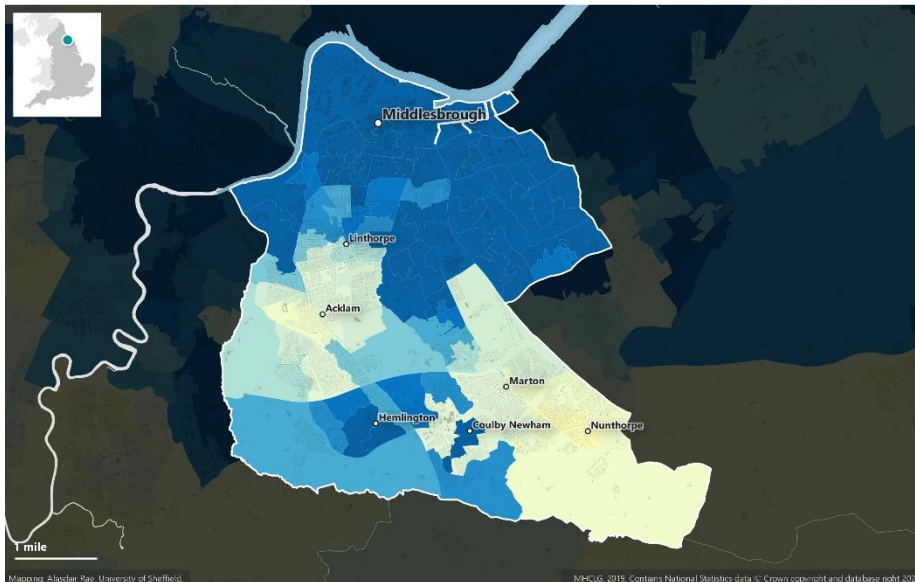
There are no other wards in Middlesbrough which fall into the top 10% most deprived in England.

From the same data-set Middlesbrough is the fifth most deprived local authority area in England. It has become more deprived since 2015.

Each of the 32,844 LSOAs (neighbourhoods) in England are given a score based on their deprivation level. They're also given a rank based on their score. Based on the LSOA scores, it's possible to estimate ranks for the wards in Middlesbrough.

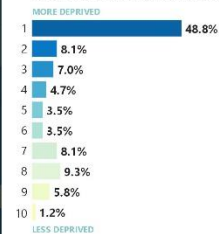
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

MIDDLESBROUGH



Local authority profile

% of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile



What this map shows

This is a map of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 data for **Middlesbrough**. The colours on the map indicate the deprivation decile of each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) for England as a whole, and the coloured bars above indicate the proportion of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile. The most deprived areas (decile 1) are shown in blue. It is important to keep in mind that the data relate to small areas and do not tell us how deprived, or wealthy, individual people are. LSOAs have an average population of just under 1,700 (as of 2017).



Between 2015 and 2019, five wards have improved their ranking (becoming less deprived) and 15 have become more deprived.

Whilst it is appreciated that there are no absolute Member / constituent ratios, and that weighting in respect of deprivation or other factors is not easy, the Council would contend that in areas such as Middlesbrough, which experiences high levels of deprivation and multiple deprivation, there should be a higher rather than a lower ratio of elected Members per constituent.

This is especially relevant in Middlesbrough where large numbers of adults experience literacy problems, and have difficulties in dealing with (amongst other matters) statutory agencies.

As the Council is proposing an increase of one Member it is not envisaged the way Members work in their communities will change significantly. To provide an overview of what this work entails the Council Constitution includes a Role Profile (Job Description) that applies to all elected Members. This is attached at Appendix 1. The job role outlines the nature of work carried out in the local community. Contained in this Job Role the Key Tasks of all Members include:

- To provide local leadership in developing and maintaining active involvement of constituents in local democracy.
- To work for real and sustainable improvements in the economic, social and environmental well-being of the communities and local people they represent.
- To represent and act as an advocate for the interests of the Ward for which they were elected, and to deal effectively with constituents' enquiries and representations.

The Job role also outlines key tasks which include:

- To attend and actively contribute to meetings of Full Council.
- To fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of a Member of the Council, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct.
- To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council’s policies, and of the community’s needs and aspirations in respect of the Council’s roles and functions.

Council Size

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

Strategic Leadership

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

Topic		
Governance Model	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p><i>Middlesbrough is made up of 20 wards (10 three member wards, 8 two member wards and 2 one-member ward), comprising a total of 46 councillors plus the Elected Mayor. Following the elections on May 4 2023, the political balance of the Council is currently 24 Labour, 4 Conservatives, 2 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independents.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has adopted the Elected Mayor and Cabinet model as its political management structure. Every four years, the Council (and Mayor) are elected after which the Mayor appoints up to 9 Members to their Executive.</i></p>
	Analysis	TO FOLLOW – will include reference to the governance improvement plans .
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>The Executive consists of the Mayor and six other elected Members each of which have a specific portfolio.</p> <p>The Executive meets monthly and is responsible for implementing the Council's budget and policies as well as forming partnerships with other key organisations. Serving as an Executive Member can be a full-time role.</p> <p>Individual Executive Members play an active role in formulating and developing proposals that are presented to Executive for consideration. Individual portfolio holders have delegated powers to take decisions.</p> <p>Details of portfolios can be found at: Executive posts Middlesbrough Council</p>

		The Executive has established several sub committees and Advisory Groups, such as Joint Archives Committee and the Local Plan working group. Officers are also delegated responsibility for executive functions, as detailed in the Council's Constitution.
	Analysis	Executive meetings usually last about 1 hour and in 2022 (May - May) met 14 times and took 75 decisions.
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>Full Council - all councillors sit on Full Council, which is the 'sovereign body' of the Council and is chaired by the Chair of Council (a Member elected by Council at the AGM). The Full Council is responsible for setting the budget, and making decisions such as changes to the Constitution, changes to the Policy Framework and approving the Budget.</p> <p>There are three schemes of delegation: Council, Executive and Officers. Each Scheme of Delegation relates to different functions e.g. Matters which are the responsibility of the Executive have delegations to individual Executive Members and Council delegations can be either Committees or Officers. The Officer Scheme of Delegation contains those delegations to individual officers from either Executive or Council. The Schemes of Delegation are part of the Council constitution: Middlesbrough Council constitution Middlesbrough Council.</p>
	Analysis	<p>The full Council meets every six weeks with each meeting lasting around 2.5 hours. Attendance levels are high with an average attendance of 40 Councillors (85%).</p> <p>Members of the public may ask questions of Members at meetings of the Council. In 2022 approximately 70 questions from the public were submitted.</p>

Accountability

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

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

<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<p>The Mayor and Executive would be held to account by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and 5 thematic Scrutiny Panels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and Scrutiny Board – 13 Members • Adult Social Care and Services – 9 Members • Children and Young People – 9 Members • Environment – 9 Members • Health – 9 Members • Regeneration – 9 Members <p>In addition to the Middlesbrough Health Scrutiny Panel there is also South Tees Health Scrutiny Joint Committee and Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee which undertake jointly with other relevant local authorities, scrutiny of any issue or topic relating to health services delivered across South Tees and the Tees Valley. In recent years health scrutiny has taken up an increasing amount of Members' time given the integration of health and social care. This can often give rise to very emotive and complex issues.</p> <p>Task and finish groups would only be established if required and would consist of a small number of panel members (approx. 4). The task and finish groups would meet on an ad hoc basis so it is difficult to estimate a time commitment.</p> <p>Following a recent review, the number of Scrutiny Panels is felt to be adequate and would not change as the current panels align to each of the Council's directorates.</p>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Council considers it important to have Scrutiny Panels of this size. Given scrutiny's role in amplifying the voices and concerns of the public, it is essential that the Committees, as far as possible, include Members from across the town.</p> <p>The Council has always maintained close links with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), and has been held as an example of good practice by the CfGS.</p> <p>In Middlesbrough all Executive Members are expected to attend Overview and Scrutiny Board at least once a year to provide updates on the challenges and opportunities relating to their portfolio.</p> <p>The Executive is also held to account by the Council's scrutiny panels who examine the activity associated with their portfolio.</p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Board has the power to call in decisions made by the Executive using the Council's Call-</p>

	<p>In procedure. They also have powers to scrutinise the activities and decisions of some partner organisations, including the NHS.</p> <p>The average length of a Scrutiny Panel meeting is around 2 hours and the average number of reports considered at each meeting is 1-2, panels receive evidence in the form of presentations relating to the topic that they are investigating.</p> <p>Before each meeting of a scrutiny panel a pre-agenda meeting takes place involving the Chair and Vice-Chair. These meetings are supported by Democratic Services officers and play a key role in supporting Members in the scrutiny process.</p> <p>When appropriate, Scrutiny Panel members, and meetings of the Scrutiny Panels, go out into the community to consult and to take evidence.</p> <p>In May 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published new statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities having considered the findings and recommendations of the House of Commons CLG Committee report on the effectiveness of local authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees published in December 2017. The Scrutiny arrangements in place in Middlesbrough are largely consistent with the recommendations across the six areas covered in the guidance.</p>				
<p>Statutory Function</p>	<p>This includes planning, licensing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>				
<p>Planning</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="343 1384 526 1848"> <p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> </td> <td data-bbox="526 1384 1460 1848"> <p>There is a single council wide planning committee comprising 10 Members. There are no plans to introduce area planning committees. Executive Members are allowed to serve on the Planning Committee, currently there are no Executive Members sitting on the Committee.</p> <p>95% of applications are determined by officers under delegated powers with 5%, the larger and more controversial or complex applications, determined by the Planning Committee. On average the Committee considers 3 applications per meeting.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="343 1848 526 2072"> <p>Analysis</p> </td> <td data-bbox="526 1848 1460 2072"> <p>The Planning Committee meets monthly and on average the meeting lasts 2.5 hours.</p> <p>It has been recently agreed that site visits will no longer take place unless absolutely necessary due to cost implications to the Council.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<p>There is a single council wide planning committee comprising 10 Members. There are no plans to introduce area planning committees. Executive Members are allowed to serve on the Planning Committee, currently there are no Executive Members sitting on the Committee.</p> <p>95% of applications are determined by officers under delegated powers with 5%, the larger and more controversial or complex applications, determined by the Planning Committee. On average the Committee considers 3 applications per meeting.</p>	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Planning Committee meets monthly and on average the meeting lasts 2.5 hours.</p> <p>It has been recently agreed that site visits will no longer take place unless absolutely necessary due to cost implications to the Council.</p>
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		<p>All Members of the Committee (plus any Councillor who will serve as a substitute on the Committee) are required to undergo planning training. This training covers the role and responsibilities of the Committee and the planning service, the legislative and policy framework, how planning decisions are taken and the Member Planning Code of Good Practice. The Head of Planning also provides briefings on national planning policy, local plan updates, design training, enforcement, review of development sites and workshops on evolving masterplans. On average these last for 2 hours with around 10-15 Members attending.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>The Licensing Committee comprises of 14 Members and is responsible for licensing and registration functions principally in relation to taxis, gaming, alcohol, entertainment, food and sex establishments.</p> <p>The Licensing Committees act in a quasi-judicial capacity to hear a range of licensing matters predominantly applications and reviews for taxi licenses for both operators and drivers.</p> <p>There are also 3 Sub Committees of the Licensing Committee which consider issues under the Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005 and Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub Committee A • Sub Committee B • Sub Committee C
	Analysis	<p>There have been no changes to the Licensing Committee since the last Ward Boundary Review and it is not anticipated that there will be any significant changes in the future.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<p>There are a number of other committees/ working groups appointed by the Council which deal with the functions of the Council. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Officer Appointments Committee – 7 Members • Constitution and Members Development Committee – 9 Members • Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee – 7 Members • Corporate Health and Safety Group – 10 Members • Corporate Parenting Board – 9 Members • Staff Appeals Committee – 9 Members • Standards Committee – 9 Members • Teesside Pension Fund Committee – 9 Members • Works Council – 10 Members <p>There are 155 committee places in total across all committees which have been allocated as follows:</p>

		<u>Group</u>	<u>Number in group</u>	<u>Allocation of places</u>	<u>Number of places (rounded)</u>
		Labour	24	80.87	81
		Conservative	4	13.48	13
		Middlesbrough Independent Councillors Association	14	47.17	47
		Liberal Democrats	2	6.74	7
		Unallocated* Independent and vacant	2	6.74	7
		Total	46		155
		* Do not count as a group Mayor is not included			
	Analysis	It has been recommended that the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee be split into 2 separate Committees, Corporate Affairs Committee and Audit Committee. It is assumed this will require 7 Members to sit on each committee and will result in an increase to 162 committee places.			
External Partnerships		<p>Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.</p> <p>The Council's external partners include:</p> <p>Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA); River Tees Port Health Authority; South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board; North East Migration Partnership; Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership; Middlesbrough Children's Trust; Middlesbrough Children's Improvement Board; South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership; Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board; Middlesbrough Environment City Trust Ltd; North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO); Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF); Youth Offending Executive Management Board.</p>			
	Analysis	Upper tier Councils in England were each required to establish a Health and Wellbeing Board, as a Committee of the Council, under Section 194 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The purpose of Health and Wellbeing Boards is to provide collective leadership to improve health and wellbeing across the local authority area. The Board meets 4 times per year and comprises 4 Members, the Mayor, 2 Executive Members and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board.			

	In 2019 the Health and Wellbeing Boards of Middlesbrough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Council merged to become the Live Well South Tees Board. The Live Well South Tees Board is jointly chaired between the Mayor of Middlesbrough and the Leader of Redcar and Cleveland Council.
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Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Council Constitution includes a Role Profile (Job Description) that applies to all elected Members. Contained in this Job Role the Key Tasks of all Members include: ➤ To attend and actively contribute to meetings of Full Council. ➤ To fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of a Member of the Council, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct. ➤ To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's policies, and of the community's needs and aspirations in respect of the Council's roles and functions. ➤ To participate effectively in and attend all meetings of any Council body, as required. ➤ To participate in the activities of and attend all meetings of any outside body to which they are appointed, providing two-way communication between the body and the Council. ➤ To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's Services, management arrangements, powers and duties, and constraints, in particular as they affect the area and communities they represent; and to develop good working relationships with relevant Members and Officers of the Council.

- To actively participate in casework and Members' surgeries, in order to address constituents' problems.
- To act as a champion for, and represent the interests of, their local area and communities to the Council.
- To promote open government and democratic renewal through encouraging their local community to participate in the governance of the area.
- To act as champions for children looked after by the Council.
- To ensure that all Committees (including Executive Committees) on which they serve fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities.
- To represent the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities in their involvement with outside bodies, in particular in relation to duties as a school governor.
- To take up any opportunities for Member development to help improve their performance as an effective and influential Councillor.

Ward work is a key aspect of the representational role of an elected Councillor and includes dealing with resident's concerns and representing the concerns and interests of individual constituents and the ward more generally.

6 of the 46 Councillors in Middlesbrough regularly hold ward surgeries: several are now using street surgeries in addition to or in place of ward surgeries to try and make contact with harder to reach groups of residents.

Middlesbrough has 19 Community Councils. Community Councils were originally established as part of the Council's Community Development strategy but have since been developed into independently constituted bodies. The aim of Community Councils is to enable local residents to work collectively for the good of their community, and the first objective listed in the model constitution adopted by all Community Councils is:

"To enable residents to meet regularly and receive reports from Ward Councillors on matters of local importance".

Membership of Community Councils is comprised as follows: "

(a) all residents in the area (.....)

(b) all ward Councillors for the area (....) ”

Most Members attend meetings of their Community Council on a regular basis, and a number of Community Councils are chaired by elected Members of the Council. Councillors have the opportunity to hold office in Community Councils (i.e. Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary or Treasurer).

Middlesbrough Council appoints Members to approximately 133 seats on some 69 ‘Outside Bodies’.

These bodies range from national organisations (e.g. Local Government Association), through regional and sub-regional organisations (eg Association of North East Councils, North East Regional Employers Association, Teesside International Airport Consultative Committee and Board, Tees Valley Community Foundation), to town-wide and neighbourhood organisations (Middlesbrough CAB Management Committee, Middlesbrough Environment City Trust Ltd, local community centre management committees, etc). Some of these ‘Outside Bodies’ are statutory bodies (e.g. Cleveland Fire Authority). Finally, there are joint Committees comprising representatives from Middlesbrough and neighbouring authorities (e.g. Joint Archives Committee, River Tees Port Health Authority)

As of September 2023:

1 Councillor serves on 11 outside bodies.

2 Councillors serve on 10 outside bodies.

2 Councillors plus the Elected Mayor serve on 8 outside bodies.

1 Councillor serves on 7 outside bodies,

2 Councillors serve on 5 outside bodies,

3 Councillors serve on 4 outside bodies,

1 Councillors serves on 3 outside bodies,

10 Councillors serve on 2 outside bodies,

14 Councillors serve on 1 outside body,

9 Councillors serve do not serve on any outside bodies,

In spite of the clear commitment to providing representation on Outside Bodies, there are still vacant seats on several of these.

In addition to Outside Bodies, several Members serve as School Governors.

As of September 2023, 7 Members serve as School/Academy Governors (1 Councillor serves on 2 Governing Bodies and 6 Councillors serve on 1 Governing Body/Trust)

39 Councillors do not serve on a Governing Body/Trust

The Council facilitates paperless working by providing instant electronic access to papers for all formal Council, Executive and Committee meetings via the Mod.Gov

		Committee Management System. Members are encouraged to adopt this way of working as it allows for instant access to papers for meetings and a facility to store and access papers for meetings on a mobile device. Members are issued with laptops to facilitate access to committee papers and agendas.
	Analysis	In addition to attendance at Committees, many councillors are representatives on outside bodies or are school governors. Also due to budget cuts, some services are not as readily available which leads to an increase in people attending ward surgeries/street surgeries to complain or raise concerns about services which adds to a councillors' day to day workload.
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	The Council operates a Constituency Casework Support Service, commonly referred to as the One Stop. This is essentially a clearing house and monitoring system for residents' complaints or requests to their Ward Councillor. Last year Councillors submitted 3,510 referrals through the One-Stop system. Not all Councillors use the One-Stop, they go direct to the relevant Council Department. The number referred direct to service departments is not recorded.
	Analysis	Although the traditional way of meeting constituents is through the use of surgeries, casework for Councillors also comes through letters, phone calls, emails, contact through social media, responses to leaflets, street surgeries and door-knocking. An increasing number of queries come through emails. Many Members are active on social media and this can also generate enquiries from constituents. Many people expect speedy responses from issues raised via social media which adds to the pressures on councillors.

Other Issues

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

The Council aims to ensure that Councillors can fulfil their roles effectively and efficiently and in order to do this they provide continuous training and development opportunities for councillors. Following each election, a robust induction programme is delivered for new and existing councillors. Councillors who sit on regulatory committees are required to complete the necessary training before being allowed to fully take part in the meeting.

Regular members briefings take place to keep members informed of any new developments, legislative changes or new policies and members are always briefed fully prior to the annual budget meeting to allow them to ask questions on the full implications of any measures included in the budget proposals, prior to the Council meeting.

The demographic makeup of Councillors is not currently reflective of the area which they represent particularly in terms of age, ethnicity, and gender. A possible contributory factor is work commitment, for both ward and Council business. This can include attending meetings, sitting on outside bodies, constituency matters and member development. This restricts the range of people who can commit to the necessary time requirements.

Summary

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

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

The following options have been considered:

a) Status Quo

Maintaining the existing number of councillors is not supported as it does not address the volume of ward work or the projected increase in some ward's electorate which would restrict Councillors abilities to effectively and efficiently represent their constituents and fulfil their roles as community leaders. If the number of councillors were to remain at 46 Councillors, it could mean a likely average increase in time spent by Councillors on case work on top of their other Council duties and outside commitments. Maintaining the status quo would not be adequate particularly in relation to the Stainton and Thornton Ward where the existing councillor has an increase of 30% in the electorate.

b) Reduction in size

The number of councillors was reduced in 2013 from 48 to 46. A further reduction in the number of councillors would be detrimental to the ability of councillors to effectively represent their constituents and provide effective governance and community leadership. There are no plans to change the size or frequency of committees. A reduction in the number of councillors may mean that councillors will have to sit on more committees, and this would have an impact on the amount of ward work they would be able to complete and the amount of time they could spend on their community leadership role. If the members council role was increased, it could detract people from standing as a councillor if the role was to take up most of the week, which would leave little time for non-Council commitments. Achieving a better diversity of Councillors is likely to be impacted even more as younger people are less able to devote time because of full-time paid work or other commitments.

It is very important to the Council that, as far as possible, councillors come from a range of different backgrounds, age, sex, employment status and disability. Any reduction in the size of the Council runs the risk of reducing the diversity of its Members. For those groups (e.g. self-employed or working full time) who would find an increased workload a barrier to becoming a councillor.

c) Increase in size

It is proposed that the number of councillors increases to 47. The reason for the proposed increase is that the Stainton and Thornton Ward has a variance of over 30%. The Ward currently only has one councillor serving the whole ward. In addition, there are future housing developments planned which would fall within this ward and the number of constituents would become disproportionately onerous for just one councillor. It would also likely not allow for proper representation of residents if it remained a single-member ward.

Increasing to 47 councillors would maintain the current levels of time spent on average by councillors on the whole range of their Council duties as the case work from an increased electorate and their allocation to committee places would be spread across more councillors, meaning they could provide better community representation and leadership and the diversity of councillors would be less impacted.

It is anticipated that there will be a requirement to fill 155 seats (set to be increased to 162 seats) on Committees under the current Committee structure and political balance table. This figure does not include the Executive Committee

Executive members cannot serve on Scrutiny Committees. Also, as noted above no Executive Member currently serves on the regulatory committees.

The final number of Members will need to be sufficient to facilitate robust democratic arrangements, adequate community representation, effective and convenient local government and to ensure that Councillors can properly engage with their electorate at a ward level and serve on both the Executive and Council Committees.

Conclusion

Having carefully considered whether retaining or reducing the size of the Council could provide effective strategic leadership, community leadership and accountability we have concluded that these options would not meet these objectives. A reduction in the number of councillors would reduce their capacity to be community leaders and remain properly accountable to their constituents.

Like most Councils, Middlesbrough Council has had to contend with very significant budget reductions in recent years. In addition, this has caused an increasing pressure on Council services which are delivered by a reduced workforce. As a result, decisions around identifying and agreeing savings are becoming increasingly more difficult and take up much more Member time (both the Executive and Scrutiny) than in previous years. Austerity has also increased the amount of ward case work Members have to deal with.

It is therefore proposed that the number of councillors increases to 47. The reason for the proposed increase as set out above is that the Stainton and Thornton Ward has a variance of over 30%. The Ward currently only has one councillor serving the whole ward. In addition, there are future housing developments planned which would fall within this ward and the increase in the number of residents and managing their expectations in terms of representation would become disproportionately onerous for just one councillor. It would also likely not allow for proper representation of residents if it remained a single-member ward.