

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND
APRIL 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is the submission of Cambridge City Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on its proposals for council size. LGBCE advised in September 2017 that a review of the city's warding boundaries will be undertaken in 2018/19 as Trumpington ward has an electoral variance of over 30%, which is a trigger for a review.
- 1.2 The first stage of the review is consideration of the number of councillors for Cambridge City Council (known as council size).
- 1.3 A cross party Member Working Group (MWG) met on 24 January 2018.
- 1.4 The member working group was made up of representatives of the three groups on the City Council (all 3 group leaders were included), 3 Labour councillors, 2 Liberal Democrat councillors and 1 Independent/Green councillor. Its work began from first principles – how many councillors does Cambridge City Council need to 2024 and beyond – based on the LGBCE's technical guidance criteria.

2. Summary of the City Council's proposal on council size

- 2.1 The proposal is for a council size of 42 councillors. The city council will continue with elections by thirds.

3. Cambridge: an overview

- 3.1 Cambridge is the county town of Cambridgeshire. A district council, it is surrounded by the more rural South Cambridgeshire District Council, which has recently been reviewed by the LGBCE. There are five district councils in Cambridgeshire. Cambridge City has no parish councils.

- 3.2 Cambridge is home to the world class University of Cambridge, which, with the colleges which make up the University, is a major employer, land owner and developer. Addenbrookes Hospital is an internationally recognised teaching hospital and on the site of one of the largest bio-medical campuses in Europe. 44,000 jobs are envisaged in the Local Plans of the city and South Cambridgeshire. The new Local Plan is currently in the final review stages set by the Planning Inspector and will be adopted this year. There has been and remains a strong consensus in favour of growth at the city council.
- 3.3 The city has a population of 131,800, up from 109,000 in 2001. It is projected to grow to 150,000 by 2031. The land size is 4,070ha. Over 6,200 new homes have been built since 2008 (which is a 13% increase on the existing stock). A total of 14,000 are due to be built by 2031.
- 3.4 Around 50,000 people commute into the city daily. A Greater Cambridge Partnership, made up of the city council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council is tasked with utilising central government funding to deliver transport and economic development solutions to ensure the successful growth of the city and sub-region.
- 3.5 Because of the universities and language schools in the city, there are over 30,000 students making the mean average age 31, one of the youngest in the country.
- 3.6 Full details of the council's governance arrangements, its scrutiny functions and the representational role of city councillors are detailed in the **appendix**.

4. Future trends and options discounted

What council will we be?

- 4.1 The council was subject to a Peer Review in December 2017 and it will be taking on board the review team's recommendations over the coming year. One aspect will be some re-calibrating of the decision making arrangements from May 2018 to spread the work for councillors more evenly without reducing the principles which underpin governance described in this submission.
- 4.2 The council has complex partnership arrangements. The city council has been transforming its service delivery and has established shared services with its neighbour South Cambridgeshire District Council in the areas of domestic and trade waste collection, internal audit and development control (the latter will be the largest such service at English district council level) and three-way sharing (including additionally Huntingdonshire District Council) in

ICT, legal services, building control and CCTV. There will be a consolidation of the shared services agenda.

- 4.3 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, with a directly elected Mayor, will be one year old in May 2018 and the working relationship between the council and the Combined Authority and directly elected Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough continues to evolve.

Why are we proposing 42 councillors and not a smaller or larger Council?

- 4.4 Councillors firstly considered whether we should be a smaller council. As this report illustrates, Cambridge is experiencing an exponential growth in population, houses and employment. The dominance of employment and study through the large international institutions of the University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University and the teaching hospital at Addenbrookes and a local business community with an equally international workforce, means there is considerable annual turnover of the resident population and its registered electorate. Students in the city may be registered at home or in Cambridge. Given this context not all residents will be actually registered to vote but that does not mean they do not generate case work or councillor contact. Whilst the ratio of councillors to electorate at December 2016 was 2,037, the ratio of councillors to population on the same date was 3,138. Overall population churn is a significant factor in Cambridge in comparison to cities or towns with more settled populations.
- 4.5 The city council's external partnerships are extensive and complex. For the first time for many years, some thorough work in 2015-17 on councillor remuneration by the Independent Panel on Members Allowances identified the considerable workloads of councillors from all parties. Most recently the formation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has added a local democratic dimension to the work required by the Council and its members making decisions and scrutinising them. Members also concluded that a smaller overall number would risk the diverse set of councillors that the city strives to achieve. In this context, councillors have concluded that a smaller council would not meet the democratic expectations of the electorate, residents and its partners.
- 4.5 So therefore should the number of councillors increase? The evidence illustrates that the workload of councillors is manageable although sometimes challenging for those holding positions of additional responsibility. The council is not failing in any of its decision making requirements, or performing poorly (the recent Peer Review in December 2017 confirmed this). In the council's opinion, neither the councillor to electorate ratio, nor councillor to population ratio forecasts to 2024 illustrates a significant enough change to sensibly argue for an increase in the council size.

Co-terminosity

- 4.6 The council had previously stated to the LGBCE (at the time of the review of Cambridgeshire County Council boundaries in 2015/2016) that co-terminosity within the city curtilage was important.
- 4.7 However, having considered what is the best council size for now and for the period under this boundary review to 2024, any argument for co-terminosity (12 wards and 36 councillors), is far outweighed by the case put in this submission based on current and future councillor workload and representational requirements of a rapidly growing city.

1. Governance and decision making

What Governance arrangements are in place for the authority?

1.1 The council comprises 42 councillors in 14 wards. Each ward elects 3 councillors – one councillor per year – apart from every fourth year when elections are held to elect county councillors to Cambridgeshire County Council. The political balance for 2017/18 is Labour 26, Liberal Democrat 13, Independent 2 and Green 1.

1.2 Since 2002 the city council has operated under the leader and cabinet model as provided for by the Local Government Act 2000. Councils were required to review executive arrangements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and adopted the ‘strong leader’ model in 2011. The city council has seven executive councillors who take individual decisions in their portfolio areas. Each Executive Councillor attends a scrutiny committee, at least four times a year, which firstly considers officer reports prior to those decisions being taken, a form of pre-scrutiny.

1.3 ‘Full’ Council sets the overall policy and budgetary framework. It meets five times a year, although in recent years there have been additional meetings because of requirements reflecting the rapidly changing environment (becoming a member of a Combined Authority, creating a Greater Cambridge Partnership, Local Plan stages of approval).

1.4 There are four scrutiny committees and four main regulatory committees.

1.5 There is rigorous scrutiny both from the members of council and from an active and engaged local media and citizen journalists. Cambridge City Council is fortunate to have an engaged population. In 2016/17, 1,200 members of the public attended council meetings with 425 public speaking contributions. The council’s democratic processes reflect a city and a populace that values open debate. Members of the council are committed to deep and meaningful community engagement, consultation and participation.

Executive responsibilities

1.6 There are seven executive councillors. Executive councillors each have a portfolio of services, plans and policies for which they are responsible and these are listed below. The key decisions and most non-key decisions required of each executive councillor are pre-scrutinised by a scrutiny committee (see section 2 below). Executive councillors have made between 20 and 30 formal decisions each in the last year.

1.7 The portfolios are:

- Strategy and Transformation (and Leader of the Council)
- Finance and Resources
- Communities
- Environmental Services and City Centre
- Housing
- Planning Policy and Transport
- Streets and Open Spaces

1.8 There are also currently ten lead councillors who are appointed by the Executive to assist them in some areas of policy development. For example, there is a lead councillor for homelessness and refugees. The lead councillors do not make decisions.

Work patterns of the Executive

1.9 This will vary with each portfolio but, in general terms, each councillor will attend regular meetings with officers to monitor performance and develop policy options.

1.10 They will attend meetings of the relevant scrutiny committee as described in section 2 below, attend meetings of the external bodies and/or shared service boards which relate to their portfolio.

1.11 They will attend meetings with stakeholders concerning their portfolio.

1.12 A review of councillor workloads was undertaken in 2015/16 and 2016/17 when the Independent Remuneration Panel on Allowances reported on recommendations for updating the Members' Allowances Scheme. It was found that the average time spent by councillors on council work was over 10 hours per week with members of the Executive or with additional roles of special responsibility, dedicating more like a minimum of 20 hours.

1.13 Currently the majority of the executive councillors have full-time jobs.

Regulatory Committees:

Planning Committee

1.14 This comprises of eight councillors with alternate members who sit if one of the eight is unable to attend. It meets 12 times per year. There is an active interest in planning matters in Cambridge and the public attend and speak on the majority of applications. It is a historic city with spatial planning challenges. In 2017, 149

applications were determined by committee. Under delegated powers, officers determined 92% of all applications received

Joint Development Control Committee

1.15 This is a joint decision making committee set up through statutory powers in 2007 comprising the city council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. There are six city councillors which sit on it. It meets most months and determines the major and strategic planning applications on the Cambridge Fringes (ie which cut across the two district councils' boundary).

Licensing Committee

1.16 The committee meets quarterly to make policy decisions. There are four sub committees of three members each which meet in rotation to determine applications under the Licensing Act or issues relating to individual taxi drivers. In 2017/18 this is scheduled to meet on 15 occasions.

Civic Affairs Committee

1.17 This committee deals with audit, accounts, electoral issues, governance, complaints and standards issues. It meets five times a year.

Area Commitees

1.18 The council has four Area Committees dividing the city into four geographic areas. These each meet quarterly.

1.19 Every city councillor is a member of one of four area committees covering the city. They hear issues local residents wish to raise in open forum, deal with local grants and environmental improvement projects and environmental enforcement performance, specific issues of local concern, promotion of new initiatives and consultations, policing priorities in the local area.

Meetings calendar

1.20 The total number of formal council meetings in 2017/18 is scheduled to be 95 (in 2016/17 it was 124). Attendance by councillors at these meetings is high.

1.21 There is a schedule of meetings which councillors agree annually. There has been a need to hold some additional meetings in recent years because of (usually an external) time pressure for a decision.

Demands on time

1.22 There are councillor role descriptions to assist public understanding rather than as a job description. These are on the website:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/councillors-duties-conduct-and-allowances>

1.23 There is a comprehensive induction programme for newly-elected members (three years out of four there will be some turnover) to which all members are invited to attend for any refresher. Members of Planning and Licensing Committees receive specialist training annually. There are twice monthly member briefing sessions (topic based or personal development). In the last year, there have also been specialist sessions on chairing skills and dealing with the media/presentation skills. Members are encouraged to attend external training and conferences and there is a budget set aside for this. Each group has a member training champion.

1.24 There have not been issues with recruitment and retention and members have a very good attendance record. As meetings are well attended, business can always be done. Additional meetings, which can be called at relatively short notice, are also well attended.

Outside bodies

1.25 The extent of councillor representation on external bodies is listed below. These are known bodies and does not take into account attendance at local community forums as part of their ward work.

1.26 The following outside bodies have councillor representation:

- County Council Health and Well Being Board
- County Council Health Committee
- County Council Joint Area Committee
- Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel
- The Junction
- Cambridge Live
- NW Quadrant Community Forum
- Southern Fringe Community Forum
- Clay Farm Advisory Group
- Storey's Field Community Trust
- Conservators of the River Cam
- Greater Cambridge Partnership Local Liaison Forums

1.27 Individual executive councillors also have decision making positions on the following bodies:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority cabinet member
- Community Safety Partnership
- Greater Cambridge Partnership board member
- Shared Services Leaders' Board
- CCTV shared service board
- Cambridge Investment Partnership
- Children and Young People's Area Board

- Visit Cambridge (not for profit tourism body)
- Cambridge Business Improvement District
- Cambs and Peterborough Recycle
- Shared Service Board (Waste)
- Total Transport Steering Group

2. Scrutiny functions

1.28 There are four scrutiny committees. The focus on pre-scrutiny of executive decisions allows for transparent decision making and ensures public debate before Key and some non-Key decisions are taken. The majority of council members take at least one seat on one of the council's four scrutiny committees, allowing a range of perspectives to be brought to bear on decisions. The pre-scrutiny committee process has also been a useful development route for councillors to go from committee member, to chair, to executive councillor.

1.29 Scrutiny committees are scheduled to meet four times a year. Each meeting will have, on average, six to ten decisions for pre-scrutiny. Meetings can last between two and four hours.

1.30 There are annual reports to scrutiny committees on the work of the partnerships on which the council is a member.

1.31 The Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the decisions taken by the council's representative on both the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

1.32 The city council appoints three members to the Greater Cambridge Partnership Assembly which pre-scrutinises the decisions required of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Board. A city councillor currently chairs the Assembly. This meets quarterly.

1.33 There are two city councillors on the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which meets monthly, and one city councillor on the Combined Authority Audit and Governance Committee, which meets quarterly. There are substitute members for all these positions.

1.34 Senior officer support is given to scrutiny committee members briefing and prior to consideration at a scrutiny committee meeting. Before the day of a scrutiny committee, there are also scheduled separate briefings for the chair and spokespersons with senior officers. Any member of the scrutiny committee can ask for an item to appear on an agenda

3. Representational role

1.35 Since the last boundary review was implemented in 2004, the council has continued with elections by thirds. As described earlier, its student population and international and short-term workforce has grown. The city's electoral register has an annual 'churn' approximating to a third, which means that the councillor relationship with its electors can be short-term and there are perennial issues to be addressed. Housing growth means councillors are developing relationships with new communities which will evolve over time. Councillors have found that this aspect of their work is often some of the most rewarding

1.36 An officer post of Executive Assistant to the leader and members provides administrative support to help members in their roles. Members will undertake the following activities to carry out their representational role with electors:

- represent individual residents and local organisations undertaking casework on their behalf;
- represent ward interests within and outside the council;
- advocate for the council in the ward and its communities;
- communicate in the community on council strategies, policies, services and procedures;
- liaise with executive councillors, other councillors, officers and partner organisations to ensure that the needs of local communities are identified, understood and supported;
- promote tolerance and cohesion in local communities;
- sit on outside bodies as a representative of the council, ensuring that the council's interests are maintained, and the working arrangement between the council and the organisation is developed in a coordinated manner;
- sit on Partnership meetings to champion the council's interests.

1.37 The council has a well-resourced community development service which works with councillors at the ward level. Councillors also engage through:

- An Equalities Panel (with councillor, staff and public representation)
- A Children and Young People's service (events organised throughout the year, with also targeted work on priority policy areas)
- Community grants programme (£900k for 2018/19)

1.38 In addition to responding to casework from constituents, many members are also proactive in the community, whether it be door-to-door canvassing or using social media and email to communicate with constituents. This proactive way of working brings its own casework. There is no hard and fast way in which members engage with their constituents, but by way of example, some are detailed below:

- door-to-door canvassing;

- production of e-bulletins;
- e-mail communication to constituents;
- social media, i.e. Twitter, Facebook etc.;
- blogging;
- hard copy newsletters;
- community meetings;
- surgeries;
- street surveys

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