

APPENDIX B

Dacorum Borough Council

Council Size Submission:

This report is the submission of Dacorum Borough Council (the Council) to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on its proposals for Council Size.

January 2024

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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.

This submission is made on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council and was agreed at full Council on XXXXX

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.*

The Commission identified the Council was due for review as last review was carried out in 2006.

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?

Electorate changes since 2006

The Boundary Commission's last review of the Council's size and ward boundaries reported in 2006. The Council adopted the Leader and Executive model in 2001 and this model has since been embedded within the work of the Executive as part of the Council's wider governance framework

At the start of the last review in 2006, 52 councillors represented 106,238 electors, an electoral ratio of 2043; the review at that time reduced the number of councillors to 51.

In 2016 the number of electors had risen to 107,108 and in December 2022 there were 112,155 registered voters (excluding overseas voters), giving an electoral ratio of 2199.

This is likely to increase to 124,239 by 2030 an electoral ratio of 2436. This figure is based on planned housing development as set out in the draft Local Plan, which includes significant growth planned through the Hemel Garden Communities project.

Governance, Decision Making and Scrutiny

Dacorum is made up of 25 wards, comprising 51 councillors. Each ward is represented by a varying number of councillors, the highest being three councillors to a ward, and the lowest being one councillor. Following the local elections in May 2023, the political balance of the Council stands at Liberal Democrat: 28 seats, Conservative: 18 seats, Labour: 3 seats and 2 Independent Members.

All councillors serve on the Full Council, which is the sovereign decision making body of the Council and is chaired by the Mayor. The Mayor is elected annually by full Council and is the ceremonial representative of the District and in 2022/23 attended just over 100 external events, raising money for several charities.

The current Leader and Executive governance model has operated effectively since its introduction and there are no plans for it to change in the foreseeable future. The model provides a framework for agile and efficient decision-making with scrutiny and policy development support provided by the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Audit Committee.

Transference of function and demand since 2006

There have been significant changes on the demands on local authorities since the last review in 2006, particularly in terms of increased regulatory requirements, the climate change agenda, a step-change in partnership working beyond the Council to both address public service needs and deliver essential transformation, development and growth, and meeting the changing needs and expectations of the public who expect a modern, responsive and transparent service.

Modern forms of communication, via email, mobile phone, video conferencing and the greater use of social media have made meeting the changing demands on local authorities and councillors more efficient even though this technology has also brought greater expectations in terms of the immediacy of response.

These challenges, coupled with decreased centralised funding and the need to increase revenue, has meant the council has had to evolve and adapt governance and departmental structures in order to meet these requirements.

The Council has developed an ambitious commercial strategy, internal transformation programme, housing improvement plan and climate change programme to ensure that it can meet the changing legislative, environmental and fiscal environment it works within and this requires strong political leadership to lead the change agenda.

The governance structure led by councillors, whilst remaining constant in its overall structure, has adapted many times since the last review in order to meet the changing demands and was most recently amended following the all-out council elections in 2023 to ensure that portfolios align with departmental structures, and provide the required oversight and political leadership. This review also introduced a new Portfolio for Climate and Ecological Emergency to provide greater focus in that area.

The current pool of 51 members has meant that there continues to be a strong group of talented and experienced councillors to fill Cabinet positions when required and to also meet the demands of the Council's scrutiny and regulatory committees (see further details on those committees below).

It is the view of the full Council that a reduction in numbers of councillors could lead to there being insufficient numbers of councillors to fill all the Cabinet and Committee vacancies, which would impact on the sound decision making and political leadership that the Council provides.

Governance and capacity issues

There have been no governance issues raised by any inspectorate or other third party, which have been connected to the number of councillors or the Council's overall governance structure. Attendance at Cabinet and Committees is generally strong with enough members to substitute any absences if required. There have been no issues making any Cabinet or Committee meeting quorate; however, this could become an issue if the number of councillors is reduced to below the current 51.

As set out above there has been steady, but not significant levels of growth in the electorate since the last review in 2006, which will continue to grow to 2030 and beyond. This will mean that the electorate ratio will have increased by 393 during the period 2006-2030.

This electorate growth when considered with the changing demands placed on local authorities within the last 20 years may by themselves suggest that the council size should increase. However, this needs to be considered in the context of the changing forms of communications that the council and councillors use to serve their communities, which makes this much more efficient than it was 20 years ago and enables councillors to perform their community leadership roles to a wider constituency number with a similar amount of time resource.

In terms of governance structure, the base structure has remained unchanged since 2001 and working experience has shown that the current structure works efficiently. The number of councillors required to serve on relevant committees is adequate to operate the structure and meet any changes to serve the projected increase in population to 2030.

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?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

Setting and local geography

Dacorum is a district council with borough status located in Hertfordshire. The modern local government district of Dacorum was created on 1st April 1974 under the Local Government act 1972. The district was granted borough status in 1984.

The Council's central office, The Forum is located in Hemel Hempstead town centre. The borough also includes the market towns of Berkhamsted and Tring and surrounding villages.

Dacorum is located just beyond the Greater London area and, as a result, a significant portion (60%) lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Borough also contains a high percentage of rural land (85%), while much of the countryside is situated within The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The special landscape character of the AONB adds significant value to the environmental quality of the district.

Hemel Hempstead, and the village of Bourne End are unparished areas. The rest of the borough is divided into 16 civil parishes.

Demographics and community characteristics

Dacorum has a population of 155,100 (2021 ONS data) which makes it the largest district in Hertfordshire by population.

The population breakdown by age (Herts Insight 2023) currently is:

- 20.1% children (those aged under 16).
- 62.4% aged 16 to 64.
- 17.5% of people aged 65 and over.

The mid-2043 population predictions for Dacorum as set out below highlight that age demographics are projected towards a higher growth in the 65 and over group compared to other groups:

- 18.5% children (those aged under 16).
- 58.2% aged 16-64.
- 23.3% aged 65 and over.

In terms of its ethnic make-up 2021, 21.3% of Dacorum residents were from an ethnic minority (not white-British). This is slightly lower compared to both England's population (26.5%) and Hertfordshire's population (28.2%).

As a borough, Dacorum has low levels of deprivation.

- The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score for Dacorum is 12.17
- The borough ranks at 261 out of 326 local authority areas, placing it in the 20% least deprived local authority areas in the country. It has no areas in the most deprived 10%.

However, it is important to note that there are several small areas (LSOAs) throughout the borough where deprivation is very apparent. The 5 wards with the highest deprivation rate in 2021 were Highfield, Grovehill, Warners End, Corner Hall which are all in Hemel Hempstead and Hemel Hempstead town ward itself. **Councillors to comment on how serving these areas of deprivation impacts their constituency work – i.e. does it generate more work than other wards?**

Crime in Dacorum is relatively low in comparison to county, regional and national averages. There were 63.3 crimes per 1,000 residents in Dacorum, which is lower than England's 83.9.

Economy

Dacorum added £4,453 million into the national economy in 2019. Ranking Dacorum fourth in gross value added (GVA) when comparing the 10 districts in Hertfordshire.

There were approximately 134,000 jobs in Dacorum in 2021 and 76.6% of the working aged population were employed in 2022.

In 2022, the average annual pay for Dacorum residents is £29,431. This is slightly higher than the average annual pay across England of £28,000.

The largest industry in Dacorum is the wholesale and retail trade and the largest occupation types in Dacorum are professional occupations.

The above statistics demonstrate that Dacorum is a relatively affluent borough with strong economic performance with relatively lower levels of deprivation and crime incidents.

Constraints and challenges ahead

Local government remains under financial pressure and this has resulted in Dacorum needing to reconsider capital spending projects, find savings and general additional revenue, whilst continuing to deliver on its priorities.

The effects of Covid-19, and high inflation have had a significant impact on the Council's finances and significantly reduced reserves. This will continue to impact council decision-making and priorities in the short-medium term as the council plans for the future.

Housing growth is planned throughout the borough, with the largest growth planned through the Hemel Garden Communities project in Hemel Hempstead, but the planned growth is not expected to significantly change the demographics in any one group by 2030.

Dacorum retains ownership of its council housing stock, which consists of approximately 10,200 homes, 2000 of which are sheltered housing for older people. Dacorum also own the freehold for approximately 1800 leasehold flats. The housing stock continues to generate significant demand on the Council's staff and councillors to ensure that the Council's stock is maintained to a good standard and regulatory compliance achieved whilst balancing the Housing Revenue Account.

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>Strategic Leadership</p> <p>The Council operates a Leader and Executive Model. The Leader is elected at the annual meeting of the Council after the four yearly Council elections for a four-year term. The Leader in turn appoints his Portfolio Members, which currently cover the following portfolios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Corporate and Commercial Services➤ Housing & Property Services➤ Neighbourhood Operations➤ Climate & Ecological Emergency➤ Place➤ People & Transformation <p>The Executive (Cabinet) holds public meetings in accordance with the published Committee timetable for the effective discharge of its functions, on dates and times agreed by the Cabinet and meets every month except during August.</p> <p>Cabinet Members play a key role in the development of strategic and major operational strategies and policies. They make decisions collectively at Cabinet and individually through their Portfolios, provide political leadership and implement policy through senior officers. Individual members are responsible for and play an active role in the development and clearance of all published Cabinet and delegated authority reports, which are in their name. Members hold regular scheduled briefings with Strategic Directors, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service,</p>

ahead of all Cabinet meetings.

The Leader of the Council estimates that he spends four days per week on his council duties. Members of the Cabinet estimate they spend 2-3 days a week on their duties (which includes both their executive and elected member functions).

In addition to formal and informal meetings of the Cabinet, portfolio holders meet regularly with officers to provide strategic guidance and receive briefings.

Accountability (scrutiny, regulatory and partnerships)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees review and scrutinise all key decisions before they go to Cabinet for decision. Scrutiny committees also have the power to call-in decisions for further scrutiny if decisions are not made in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles.

Cabinet members are not permitted to be on scrutiny meetings (scrutiny meet on average 9 times per year) and 42 scrutiny members (14 on each committee) are required to serve these meetings, plus substitutions if required. The current Cabinet is 6 members plus the Leader of the Council. Therefore 49 members are required to serve the Executive decision process including scrutiny alone.

In addition to the Executive decision making framework the council has the following regulatory committees:

- Development Management (14 members) – meets 15 times a year
- Licensing (13 members) – meets 9 times a year if required.
- Appeals and Reviews Committee (8 members) (ad-hoc as required)
- Audit Committee (6 member) meets six times a year
- Standards Committee (5 members) meets 4 times a year

Dacorum also has the following committees/steering groups noted below:

- Member Development Steering Group (6 members) meets 4 times a year

- Joint Negotiating Committee (4 members) meets 5 times a year if required
- Electoral Review Committee (6 members) ad-hoc as required
- Health and Well-being Committee (12 members) meets four times a year.

In total therefore 74 seats are required to be filled for the regulatory and other committees/working groups, although the frequency of these meetings varies in accordance with the committee timetable and whether there is relevant business to be considered.

In summary, there are a total of 116 committee seats to be filled by 51 councillors to fill the scrutiny, regulatory and other committee seats (excluding Cabinet seats and full Council) at a ratio of 2.27 seats per member.

The above ratio enables each councillor to take part in a variety of the council's decision-making and regulatory committees, which has proven to be effective and enabled sound decision-making. Reducing the numbers of councillors would mean this ratio would move up which would be problematic in terms of attendance as many councillors have full time jobs and other commitments and workloads need to remain proportionate.

Increasing the number of councillors would dilute the influence of individual councillors and prevent councillors from gaining a holistic view of the Council's functions and would not be desirable.

In addition to formal Council business a number of councillors are appointed as Council representatives on outside bodies. These organisations include local charities, community groups and regional and national bodies. In total there are 57 outside appointments made. Meeting frequencies vary but are generally no more than quarterly.

The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?

- *If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.*
- *By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will*

		<p><i>this make of them?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The current Leader and Executive governance model has operated effectively since its introduction and there are no plans for it to change in the foreseeable future. The model provides a framework for agile and efficient decision-making with scrutiny and policy development support provided by the three statutory Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and the Audit Committee.</p> <p>The current number of councillors (51) is sufficient to adequately serve the current governance structure.</p> <p>Alternative numbers have been considered but for the reasons set out above 51 members provides the right balance and enables councillors to take part in various scrutiny and decision-making committees, which ensures that the public are appropriately represented from councillors with relevant experience and local constituency knowledge.</p>
<p>Portfolios</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<p>Dacorum currently has six portfolios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Corporate and Commercial Services ➤ Housing & Property Services ➤ Neighbourhood Operations ➤ Climate & Ecological Emergency ➤ Place ➤ People & Transformation <p>This was increased to 6 following the May 2023 elections by the addition of a Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Emergency.</p> <p>Portfolio Holders are responsible for the functions and services, which fall within their remit as agreed by the Leader of the Council. The services which fall under each Portfolio are set out in Part 3 of the Constitution, published on our website, and change from time to time to reflect council priorities.</p> <p>Portfolio Holders agree the strategic direction for the services within their portfolio, oversee performance and agree any strategy, policy, project, or initiative before it goes to Cabinet for final approval. Portfolio Holders also exercise decision making directly for major operational issues affecting their portfolios.</p>

		<p>In 2022/23 there were 42 Portfolio Holder decisions across all Portfolios.</p> <p>The role of Portfolio Holder is not a full time position but Members estimate that they spend 2-3 days per week carrying out their responsibilities including general members responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many portfolios will there be? ➤ What will the role of a portfolio holder be? ➤ Will this be a full-time position? ➤ Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?
	Analysis	<p>The number of portfolios has remained broadly constant over the last 20 years and for the last two electoral terms has involved either 5 or 6 Portfolios. The functions and services that portfolios cover is a decision of the Leader of the Council and are amended from time to time but there are no significant changes proposed that are likely to impact the number of Portfolio Holders in the short to medium term.</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	Key lines of explanation	<p>The Council has a scheme of delegation in place as set out in Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Constitution to ensure the operational efficiency of the Council. Cabinet delegate operational decisions to officers but the most strategic and significant applications and decisions are reserved for members.</p>
	Analysis	<p>Portfolio Holder decisions require appropriately skilled and experienced members to ensure that decisions are made fairly and proportionately. Therefore it is essential to have a significant pool of members to be able to call upon from the party forming the administration. This has been achievable with the current 51 member base but could be a challenge if this number was reduced.</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

	<p>others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.</p>
<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<p>Dacorum has 3 main Overview and Scrutiny Committees which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Finance and Resources (14 members) ➤ Housing and Community (14 members) ➤ Strategic Planning and Environment (14 members) <p>The number of members on each committee has remained constant over recent years. 14 members enables good representation from the administration but more importantly from opposition members as each committee has to be politically balanced.- A membership of 14 enables scrutiny to benefit from the knowledge & experience of councillors, representing the borough as a whole.</p> <p>Each committee is responsible for different functions of the Council as set out in Part 2 of the constitution and the portfolios are broadly aligned to Council departments.</p> <p>The OSC vision is – ‘Scrutiny making a difference: member-led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committees promote service improvements, influence policy development and hold the Executive to account for the benefit of the whole community of Dacorum’</p> <p>OSC therefore has a broad vision and purpose and is used to scrutinise and assist with strategy, project and policy development and review service performance and the outputs from approved policies, strategies and projects.</p> <p>The scrutiny committees each meet 9 times a year.</p> <p>The work programme is developed in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each committee and approved by committee at each meeting.</p> <p>The committees have the power to call-in decisions of the Executive for further review, although this power is rarely required due to the significant level of pre-decision scrutiny which takes place.</p> <p>In addition to ordinary meetings, the Committees can agree to establish task and finish groups to review and develop important policies, projects or initiatives. There are currently two tasks and finish groups set up to consider the Council’s Housing Maintenance Contract and Local Plan development.</p> <p>The Council is currently undertaking a review of its scrutiny function which is being facilitated by the Centre for</p>

	<p>Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) XXXX Include findings once received.</p> <p>The Council's scrutiny function is further enhanced by its Audit Committee which comprises six members for each meeting.</p> <p>The work programme of the Committee is developed at the start of the municipal year, and reviewed quarterly. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman play an active role in developing the work programme also. There are normally between six meetings annually.</p> <p>The Audit Committee has the specific role of monitoring the budget, approving the Council's Statement of Accounts, and considers matters of risk management, and any internal audits which have been carried out. The committee also carries out the Council's treasury management functions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How will decision makers be held to account? ➤ How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be? ➤ How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place? ➤ How many members will be required to fulfil these positions? ➤ Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority. Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value. 	
Analysis	<p>The Council has a positive and effective scrutiny function with good engagement from members. The function does require a significant numbers of members to fill the committee seats (42) across the three committees plus six on Audit but they provide a vital function in an Executive form of governance to hold the Executive to account. The recent scrutiny review XXXXXX</p>	
Statutory Function	<p>This includes planning, licencing 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>	
Some	Key lines of explanation	<p>The Development Management Committee (DMC) is the committee responsible for determining planning applications across the borough. It consists of 14 members and</p>

		<p>substitutes can be called from the wider member pool if required as long as they have received prior training. The scheme of delegation in part 3 of the Constitution delegates decisions to officers, but has a number of exclusions from delegation including; major applications, those with significant public interest, those which are called-in by ward members and where there is a contrary view to the officers recommendation from a town or parish council – all of these exclusions are reserved for committee decision.</p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>In 2022/23 95% of the applications received were determined by officers, but the exclusions from delegation mean that DMC still has a significant workload and in the last two financial years will determine circa 90 applications each year.</p> <p>DMC meets on average every 3 weeks (15 times a year) and these meetings can be demanding for members, lasting between 1- 4 hours. Applications can be complex and require significant preparation time to read the application reports before the meeting in order to prepare.</p> <p>Some applications also necessitate members making a site visit to consider the site and surroundings prior to the meeting.</p> <p>DMC considers applications from across the borough and therefore it is important that there is geographical representation from the boroughs three main towns and the rural parts of the borough. The current 14 members provides an adequate pool of members to support the committee but less than 14 would not provide sufficient members to adequately serve the committee.</p>
<p>Licensing</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<p>The Licensing and Health and Safety Enforcement Committee is responsible for fulfilling the role of the statutory Licensing Authority under the Licensing Act and Gambling Act as well as other regimes such as Hackney Carriage licensing. It is also responsible for certain functions under health and safety law. The main committee delegates most decisions to officers unless objections to applications are received in which case they are referred to one of two sub-committees for decision.</p> <p>The two sub-committees are the Licensing Health and Safety Enforcement Sub-Committee (7 members) and a Licensing of Alcohol and Gambling Sub-Committee (3 Members), which are drawn from the main committee. The sub-committees have delegated responsibilities as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.</p> <p>Applications reported to the main committee and sub-committees can be complex and will generally involve public representation and can last anywhere between 1-3 hours. As</p>

		<p>with DMC, the committee meetings require significant preparation time to read and consider reports before the meeting.</p> <p>The Licensing committee is scheduled for meeting 9 times a year but are cancelled if there is no business.</p> <p>In 2022/23 3 full Licensing Committees took place, 5 Licensing Health and Safety Sub-Committee and 1 Licensing of Alcohol and Gambling Sub-committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The current structure of the Licensing committee works efficiently and provides an adequate pool of members.</p> <p>Members are required to be trained and therefore members are allocated specifically to the committee, although substitutes can be called from the wider membership if required.</p> <p>The current split of functions between the main committee and sub-committees works efficiently and reduces the burden on the full committee.</p> <p>There are no plans to change the composition of the committee in the foreseeable future.</p>
Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<p>The Council has the following other regulatory Committees:</p> <p>Appeals and Reviews Committee (8 members) (ad-hoc as required). The terms of reference include the determination of appeals against employee dismissals, determinations on Tree Preservation Orders, hearings on Business Rate Discretionary Rate Relief where certain financial limits are exceeded. In 2222/23 this meeting met 4 times.</p> <p>Standards Committee (5 members) meets 4 times a year if required - The terms of reference include the determination of councillor complaints that have been referred and the consideration of related codes of conduct. In 2022/23 this committee met twice, although neither meeting was required to consider a formal councillor complaint. Traditionally, the number of complaints against councillors in Dacorum is low with most complaints being dealt with at the assessment stage of the complaints process, which is led by the Monitoring Officer</p>

		<p>Joint Negotiating Committee (4 members) meets 5 times a year if required. This committee is used to enable the negotiation and resolution of trade relation matters with the council's trade unions. In 2022/23 JNC was not required to meet.</p> <p>The Electoral Review Committee (6 members) is an ad-hoc committee and meets as required to consider electoral matters such as boundary reviews, polling place reviews and electoral reviews. In 2022/23 the committee was only required to meet once but the work of the committee in 2023/24 will increase as it will play an important part in this Electoral Review.</p> <p>Health and Well-being Committee (12 members) meets four times a year. The terms of reference for this committee are to review internal and external providers of health services within Dacorum. The remit of the committee was reviewed in 2023 to give it a greater focus to review and develop services provided by the council rather than just the external focus it had previously.</p> <p>There is limited delegation from the above committees to officers as most matters are considered directly by committee members. This makes member training and pre-meeting briefings particularly important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	<p>The above committees all play a vital role to ensure that the Council's functions and services are effectively discharged. The workload for each committee varies and fluctuates depending on the workplans and matters arising in-year but the structure allows meeting dates to be flexible as required. There are no plans to change the structure of these meetings in the short-medium term although the remit of each committee is reviewed from time to time.</p>
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>	
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council outside bodies</i> <p>A number of councillors are appointed as Council representatives on outside bodies. These organisations</p>	

	<p>include local charities, community groups and regional and national bodies such as the Local Government Association. In total there are 57 outside appointments made. Meeting frequencies vary but are generally no more than quarterly.</p> <p>These groups are generally not decision-making forums in the sense that they have no decision-making authority to bind the council and any decision relating to the Council affairs or business would need to go through internal decision-making processes if an official Dacorum vote on a matter was required.</p> <p>The Council is a party to various inter-authority partnerships or companies, but generally officers are appointed to formal decision making roles. There are examples where councillors are on Joint Committees such as the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee, where appointed councillors do have voting rights, but those voting rights would only be exercised where decisions have been through the appropriate decision making process within the Council.</p> <p>There has in recent years been an increase in the level of partnership working on the growth and infrastructure agenda with the nine other districts and boroughs in Hertfordshire and the County Council, together with other external organisations. Senior Members including the Leader are represented and vote accordingly. These include the Herts Growth Board, Herts Innovation Quarter (Enterprise Zone, mainly based in Hemel Hempstead), South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan, the Hemel Garden Communities Board and Hemel Place Board.</p> <p>Workload is generally limited to attendance at meetings with some preparation time to read agenda papers in advance if any are produced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
Analysis	<p>Membership of outside bodies is an important part of councillors' representative roles in order to represent the Council in the wider community. It enables councillors to hear first-hand the issues affecting their constituents and enables councillors to develop strategy and policy to impact their local areas. The list of outside bodies was reviewed following the local elections in May 2023 and some organisations were removed from the list who no longer wanted representation. The list remains under review, but it is not expected to significantly change in the near future and</p>

therefore demand on councillors is likely to remain constant.

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
<p>Community Leadership</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <p>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></p> <p>Councillors engage with their communities to understand the issues that are important to them. This is done in different ways by different councillors. Some councillors are very active in their communities with representation roles on community groups and local charities. Other councillors are much more active and use social media to a greater extent to understand local issues.</p> <p>Many councillors have dual representation roles either at County Council level or Town and Parish Council level and this enables councillors to gain a holistic view of issues at all levels of local government.</p> <p>Many councillors use social media or email groups to communicate and to get wider messaging out, and reach parts of the community on a group basis which would have been problematic at the time of the last review. Social media also enables councillors to gain a greater understanding of issues affecting the local area. Councillors have set up facebook groups, which have enabled direct interaction with residents in order to develop solutions to local issues.</p> <p>Ward surgeries or group meetings are much less frequent than they were in 2006 and are infrequently used although they can still be arranged if there are issues of particular concern to the locality.</p> <p>The Council does not have geographical area committees and all committees and decision-making forums cover the whole borough. Area representation comes from committee membership which provides cross borough input.</p>

		<p>At Dacorum all councillors have at least two seats on different committees and this allows councillors to take that community knowledge and use it to develop strategy, policies and projects that will benefit the communities they represent and enable sound decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident’s association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Modern forms of communication has made the representation role of councillors much more effective. They are able to gain a greater insight into local issues, assist individuals and use this knowledge to develop council policy that can make a difference to their wards. Changing the number of councillors is unlikely to significantly change the effectiveness of community leadership as it is now more efficient via modern methods of communication to reach out and support individuals and groups.</p>
<p>Casework</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<p>A large number of queries which would have been previously directed to councillors are now solved through direct contact with the council, which is done by phone, email or social media.</p> <p>Therefore contact with councillors now often involves more complex matters such as planning or public policy issues where advice is being sought, or where dissatisfaction is being expressed resulting from the action or a decision of the Council.</p>

		<p>Initial contact with councillors is often made through email, or phone and issues are often picked up through community groups on social media. This has changed significantly since the last review in 2006 where most enquiries would have come by letter or phone and social media was in its infancy. Most communication with residents is now undertaken by email and phone, which has made communication a lot easier.</p> <p>Issues raised by residents can often be resolved by referral to relevant officers and occasionally more direct intervention is required to coordinate officer or members in order to seek an appropriate resolution.</p> <p>Members generally believe that casework is proportionate to the borough councillor role and manageable and can be dealt with on average with XX hours per week. They do not feel that increasing or decreasing the numbers will significantly change this workload.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The level of casework remains manageable and enables councillors to represent their constituents in an effective manner within the existing pool of 51 members.</p>

Other Issues

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

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

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.

Councillors continue to work hard to represent and support their communities and perform their role within the council's governance framework.

The role requires significant time investment to meet the demands of constituents, work with fellow councillors and officers to develop strategy, policies and projects, which can make a real difference to communities.

Any reduction in the number of councillors would require higher attendance across all meetings and it is the view of councillors that this would put a disproportionate burden on councillors when considered with the other representation roles many of them carry out.

The Council continues to find itself in a challenging environment as the recovery from Covid -19 and high inflation continues, which will mean that the demands on the Council and councillors will continue to increase. However, the Council has become a much more efficient organisation since the last review in 2006 and therefore many local issues can be resolved by officers before they require input from councillors.

The Council's overall governance structure has remain relatively unchanged since the last and experience has shown that the current 51 members is adequate to serve that structure.

Whilst the electorate has grown since 2006, the borough has not seen significant growth in the electorate to councillor ratio which remains proportionate. Accordingly, the Council recommends that the councillor number of 51 should remain unchanged.