

County Labour Group

# Council Size Submission: Template

Gloucestershire County Council

## Contents

How to Make a Submission .....	2
About You .....	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only).....	2
Local Authority Profile.....	4
Council Size.....	8
Other Issues .....	14

## 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.

**We are the Labour Group on the County Council which currently consists of five members.**

## 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.*

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

## 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?

The Commission carried out an electoral review of Gloucestershire between September 2010 - March 2012 which reduced the council size from 63 to 53. The joint submission of the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups to the 2010 – 12 review recommended that the optimum council size to enable convenient and effective local government for Gloucestershire County Council would be 63. There have been incremental governance changes since the last review; these include:

- Responsibilities for public health and creation of a dedicated role of Director of Public Health <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/2022-news-archive/news-may-2022/gloucestershire-has-a-new-director-of-public-health/>
- Introduction of integrated commissioning across care and health with creation of the NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board <https://www.nhsglos.nhs.uk/> and the close monitoring of NHS performance and its impact on the Council by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=772>. This is in addition to the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=653>.
- Establishment of a Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee reflecting the fact that Gloucestershire has a standalone directly managed service <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=860>. This service has been in the equivalent of 'special measures' and subject to repeat inspections of its improvement plan.
- Appointment of a Director of Economy and Environment, who is also the Chief Executive of GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership, with a stated intention to integrate its work with that of the Council <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/2022-news-archive/news-october-2022/council-appoints-new-director-of-economy-and-environment/>. To achieve alignment and accountability there has been both a Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=731> and a Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=725> including local District Councils.

- A lengthy improvement process following an Ofsted judgement in 2011 that children's social care was inadequate <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/916>. This led to the establishment of a cross party Children's Services Improvement Board. After monitoring visits and repeat inspection, the service was judged to have made significant progress but requires improvement to be good (April 2022) <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=39264>. A further improvement plan is now in place with a refreshed Improvement Board including all the political groups.
- The establishment of Leadership Gloucestershire <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/joint-ventures/leadership-gloucestershire-working-together-for-you/> bringing together public sector organisations and chaired by the Leader of the County Council. This has spearheaded a devolution bid in 2016 and has recently been engaged in a "County Deal" proposal submitted by GCC, GFirst and Gloucestershire NHS seeking a transference of powers and resources from Central Government.

We take the view that there have been greater challenges facing the authority since that last review and that these require increased Member capacity to scrutinise improvement processes, engage in wider partnerships and hold the Council's Executive to account. We have stated that the "County Deal" will be deficient and create a democratic deficit if it simply transfers powers to the Executive and have argued for consideration of alternative governance models including unitary status including the option of creating two authorities covering the County of Gloucestershire. Irrespective of the outcome of any "County Deal" discussions, a situation where increased strategic and commissioning roles fall to the County Council – along with evident service failings, there is a need for more elected member capacity to investigate, scrutinise and hold the Executive to account.

### 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?

### Geography

Gloucestershire is a predominantly rural county with two urban centres, Gloucester and Cheltenham that serve as the main business and commercial heartland. The urban settlements are complemented by vibrant market towns that act as valuable employment hubs and key providers of services. The development of the County has been strongly influenced by connectivity to the Midlands and South West via the M5 corridor and to London, the South East and Wales via the M4 corridor. While the M5 and M4 provide connectivity to surrounding areas they also act as a natural barrier for residents impacting the community identity of the surrounding areas. The River Severn which runs through the county, provides a similar barrier.

Just over half (51.4%) of the County is designated as an AONB. There are three AONBs in Gloucestershire, the Cotswolds AONB, Malvern Hills AONB and Wye Valley AONB. In addition to the three AONBs, Gloucestershire is also home to the Royal Forest of Dean, which covers an area of 9,064 hectares (35 square miles) and is situated between the Rivers Wye, Leadon and Severn in West Gloucestershire. The presence of three AONBs and the Royal Forest of Dean, can be seen as a barrier to growth, as it places constraints on development in rural areas. However, this environmental quality makes Gloucestershire an attractive area for businesses and residents to locate and also attracts large numbers of visitors.

The county has a strong sense of place and is fairly unique in that its county boundaries are coterminous with the boundaries for the LEP, Police Force Area and Integrated Care Board. This strong sense of place is reinforced by the fact that in 2011 83.1% of Gloucestershire residents also worked within the county<sup>1</sup>, meaning it is a strong functional economic area in its own right.

## Demography

In 2021 the population of Gloucestershire was estimated to be 645,076. Gloucestershire accounted for around 11.3% of the population of the South West and 1.1% of the population of England and Wales. Within the county, Gloucester district had the largest population with approximately 132,416 people or 20.5% of the county's population, followed by Stroud (18.8%), Cheltenham (18.4%), Tewkesbury (14.7%), Cotswold (14.1%) and finally the Forest of Dean (13.5%)<sup>2</sup>.

There were 243 residents per square kilometre in Gloucestershire in 2021. This was lower than the national average of 395 residents per square kilometre in England and Wales but in line with the regional average of 239 residents per square kilometre. Across the county there is considerable variation in population density, the urban districts of Cheltenham and Gloucester have densities of 2,549 and 3,267 residents per square kilometre respectively. In contrast, Cotswold district has a density of 78 residents per square kilometre, which puts it in the 10% most sparsely population district and unitary authorities in England and Wales. These differences become even more pronounced at a small area level, the county's most densely populated Lower Super Output Area was St Paul's 4 in Cheltenham which had a

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 Census, ONS

<sup>2</sup> 2021 Census, ONS

density of more than 14,600 people per hectare, in contrast Northleach<sup>2</sup> in Cotswold had a density of 17 people per hectare. These extremes pose challenges for service delivery<sup>3</sup>.

The population of Gloucestershire increased by 48,092 people (8.1%) between 2011 and 2021. The rate of growth in Gloucestershire was higher than nationally, with the population of England and Wales increasing by 6.3% between 2011 and 2021. Growth across the county has been uneven, population growth was greatest in Tewkesbury, with the population increasing by 15.8% from 2011 (a gain of approximately 12,951 people). As well as being the district with the highest growth in Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury has had one of the highest growth rates nationally, it was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> out of 331 district and unitary authorities in England and Wales. Cheltenham saw the smallest population growth in Gloucestershire, with the population increasing by 2.7% since 2011 (a gain of 3,104 people). This puts Cheltenham in the bottom 25% of district and unitary authorities in England and Wales in terms of population growth<sup>4</sup>.

Gloucestershire's main source of population growth is internal migration, between 2019 and 2020, internal migration increased Gloucestershire's population by 0.51%. There were also more people immigrating to Gloucestershire than emigrating, which increased the population by 0.16%. In contrast there were more births than deaths meaning natural change reduced the county's population by 0.14%<sup>5</sup>.

Gloucestershire has an older population than nationally, with those aged 65+ accounting for 21.7% of the population, higher than the national average of 18.6%, conversely it has a lower proportion of people aged 0-15 and 16-64. In the county's more rural districts of Cotswold and the Forest of Dean the older population is even more pronounced than the county average with more than 25% of the population being over 65<sup>6</sup>. There are several universities and colleges in the county, which result in pockets of high student populations. This is particularly noticeable in Gloucester and Cheltenham, Hartpury in the Forest of Dean and around Cirencester in Cotswold district.

Population projections suggest the population in Gloucestershire will rise by 50,291 between 2018 and 2028, rising from 633,558 to 683,849. This increase of 7.9% on the 2018 projections is substantially higher than those for England (5.0%). Within the county, Tewkesbury and Cotswold are projected to have the largest percentage increases in population over the next 25 years (16.4% and 14.0% respectively). Cheltenham is projected to have the smallest increase (1.8%)<sup>7</sup>.

The notable feature of the projections is the sharp increase in the population aged 65 or over, which is projected to increase from 134,973 in 2018 to 167,288 in 2028. The percentage increase of 23.9% over this period is higher than the national average for England (19.6%). As a result of this growth the proportion of people in Gloucestershire who are aged 65 or over is predicted to rise to 24.5% of the population by 2028, while the proportion of people aged 0-19 and 20-64 is projected to fall. Considerable percentage

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 2021 and 2011 Census, ONS

<sup>5</sup> Mid 2020 Population Estimates, ONS

<sup>6</sup> 2021 Census, ONS

<sup>7</sup> 2018 Based Sub National Population Projections, ONS

increases in the 65+ age group are predicted in all districts. The increase is predicted to be greatest in Cotswold (65.1%) and lowest in Cheltenham (45.5%)<sup>8</sup>.

## Community characteristics

In general, Gloucestershire is not a very deprived county. An average IMD rank for each of the six districts in Gloucestershire shows that even the most deprived districts (Gloucester City, and Forest of Dean) fall in the middle quintile (middle 20%) for deprivation out of 317 English authorities. Tewkesbury, Cotswold, and Stroud districts are in the least deprived quintile, with Cheltenham in the second least deprived quintile. However, there are pockets of deprivation, 12 areas of Gloucestershire are in the most deprived 10% nationally for the overall IMD. These 12 areas are predominantly located in Gloucester, with two in Cheltenham and one in the Forest of Dean<sup>9</sup>.

In 2021 93.1% (600,314 people) of Gloucestershire's population identified as "White". Gloucestershire was less diverse than the national average, with 81.7% of residents across England and Wales identifying as "White". However, in and around the urban districts of Gloucester and Cheltenham and around the market towns of Cirencester, Bishops Cleeve and Stroud the population is more diverse. The areas making up Barton and Tredworth in Gloucester are the most diverse in the county, with three LSOAs having less than half their population identifying as "White".

## Economy

The total GVA of the Gloucestershire economy was approximately £18.3 billion in 2020, representing 13% of the value of output in the South West and 0.9% of the UK economy. According to latest figures, GVA per head in Gloucestershire was £28,600, which was above the South West (£24,965) and below the UK average (£29,063)<sup>10</sup>.

There are around 28,835 businesses in the county<sup>11</sup> supporting a workforce of approximately 307,000 people<sup>12</sup>. The majority of the businesses in the county are small, with 85% employing less than 9 people; this reflects the picture at national level<sup>13</sup>. Both manufacturing and health are significant sectors in terms of employment accounting for 10.4% and 14.0% of employment respectively<sup>14</sup>. Other major sectors include education, accommodation and food services and wholesale and retail. The cyber sector is also important to the county due to the presence of GCHQ in Cheltenham, the importance of the sector is expected to grow in coming years due to the creation of a Cyber Central Business Park in Cheltenham, at the heart of this park will be the National Cyber Innovation Centre, the UK home of the cyber, digital and creative sectors.

There is a positive entrepreneurial culture in Gloucestershire, businesses starting up have very high survival rates with 90.3% of businesses born in 2019 surviving 1 year and 45.4% of business born in 2015 surviving 5 years, this compares to a national average of 88.3% and 39.6% respectively. The unemployment rate is also consistently lower than the national

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

<sup>10</sup> Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components, ONS

<sup>11</sup> UK Business Counts – Local Units 2022, ONS

<sup>12</sup> Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS

<sup>13</sup> UK Business Counts – Local Units 2022, ONS

<sup>14</sup> Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS



and regional average. However, the ageing population, higher than average job density ratios and record job postings may pose challenges for future growth<sup>15</sup>. The cost of living crisis is also an issue impacting the county and elsewhere, causing future uncertainty particularly for those residents living with a poverty premium.

### Accessibility

The rural nature of the county means accessibility is a challenge for many residents. Around 19% of residents in Gloucestershire live in neighbourhoods in the most deprived 20% nationally in terms of the IMD Domain Barriers to Housing and Services, this increases to over 40% of residents in Cotswold district<sup>16</sup>. Access to superfast broadband and good quality mobile signals can also be a barrier for residents particularly in the more rural parts of the county.

### 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		
<p><b>Governance Model</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>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.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>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 this make of them?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep</i></li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> Business Demography, ONS

<sup>16</sup> Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

		<p><i>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><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>We believe that the reduction in the size of the Council from 63 to 53, which took effect from the council elections in 2013, has impaired the ability of the Council to engage with communities and respond effective to their expectations and needs. Indeed our submission in 2010 argued that the optimum council size to enable convenient and effective local government for Gloucestershire County Council would be 63. We have outlined above new areas of governance created by changed responsibilities and partnerships since the last review. The reduction to 53 has cut the number of members available to serve on committees and, through rules of political balance, has had the effect of excluding minor opposition groups, such as our own, from membership of key committees such as scrutiny committees dealing with the environment and economy. The pressure for more effective representation has since been compounded by further growth in the size of population and electorate. For these reasons we would propose that the size of the Council revert to 63. The Council continues to operate with a Cabinet Model and a range of Scrutiny Committees and well as other committees with defined roles. These would better operate to scrutinise decisions, performance and outcomes if there were more members available to serve. This would also enable Members to better meet rising expectations amongst their electorates that they be engaged and responsive at divisional level in person, in writing and through digital media.</p>
<p><b>Portfolios</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>Earlier this civic year there were 10 Portfolio holders. A report to the Constitution Committee on 16 January 2023 confirmed removal of the role of Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities leaving 9 members currently serving in the Cabinet. Portfolio holders have responsibility for their specific areas and work with senior officers on relevant strategies. They also can take individual Cabinet Member decisions. Increasingly decisions are made through Executive Members with other councillors, in particular those in opposition political groups, having little or no knowledge or influence before these are announced</p>

		publicly. The majority party has determined that all the Chairs of Scrutiny Committees be from that Group and the extent of challenge to Portfolio Holders is limited.
<b>Delegated Responsibilities</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Analysis</b>	There is a Scheme of Delegation in the Constitution which is reviewed and revised when roles change. Decisions are made by Cabinet as a whole or by individual Cabinet members. Whilst published, diligence is required for Members to make themselves aware of forthcoming and recent delegated decisions. In particular this is the case for our Group which, unlike the majority party and the main opposition party, does not qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant.

### 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.**

<b>Topic</b>	
<b>Internal Scrutiny</b>	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.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>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?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>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</i></li> </ul>
<b>Analysis</b>	Scrutiny at Gloucestershire County Council is carried out by themed scrutiny committees and task and finish groups. Each committee is supported by a senior officer and Democratic Services Officer. The relevant Cabinet Member is invited and regularly attends. The total number of places on committees is divided between political groups which has the effect that two minor opposition groups (Labour and Green) do not have

		representation on all committees. It would add value to these committees if they were a larger council and hence a larger number of committee places available which could make these more inclusive. Task and Finish Groups have a majority from the controlling party and restrict membership from Labour Group and Green Group to one member each.
<b>Statutory Function</b>		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?
<b>Planning</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	Please refer to its agendas. There are no area committees. One member of our Group sits on Planning Committee.
<b>Licensing</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	We understand that this has not met for several years.
<b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b>	Key lines of explanation	➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require? Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	We currently have Commons and Rights of Way Committee (which meets regularly) and Traffic Regulatory Committee (which does not). In addition, Appeals Board which is active. We have a member on these committees.
<b>External Partnerships</b>		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.
	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <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</i></li> <li>➤ <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></li> </ul>

	<p>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></p>
Analysis	<p>The leadership of the Council takes decisions on its behalf in accordance with the powers it has under the terms of the Council's constitution. They make decisions and commitments on behalf of the Council. Other members are not decision makers but may be consulted if they are Scrutiny Committee Chairs or if a matter is identified as of particular relevance to their Division. This judgement may, however, be influenced by where an asset is located rather than its relevance and importance to a wider geographic areas across several divisions e.g., a library. There is a schedule of external bodies to which the Council makes appointments which are taken by the controlling political group unless they concern a geographical area where there are no such members. The member so appointed may not be the one who is closest or most relevant to work of the bodies concerned. Other councillors may be invited to join groups in their area as a result of direct contacts that they have rather than as a result of being designed as having a representative role by Council.</p>

### 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	Key lines of explanation	<p>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i></p> <p>➤ <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></p> <p>➤ <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? Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making</i></p>

		<i>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>
	<b>Analysis</b>	Members level of engagement is variable based on a variety of factors, in particular how many town and parish councils there are in their division. Members many run surgeries, use social media, attending town and parish councils, responding to phone calls and emails, asking questions, submitting petitions, proposing motions, scrutinising decisions. They attend to give a report, respond to questions, provide information, consult, take up issues, etc. There are specific participatory structures set up whereby councillors meet younger people, those not on the register or BAME communities.
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <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></li> <li>➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate? In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors</i></li> </ul>
<b>Casework</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	Member involvement in case work varies. When a case has not been raised with an officer previously a member of the public might simply be referred to an officer. Casework management is hampered by the lack of any form or case work management system such as that used by M.P.s. Combined with limitations on IT systems, for example restricting ability to retain and search for correspondence, this is a challenge requiring Members to be proactive, be highly organised and have a degree of technical confidence. Where an issue is not resolved by officers a councillor may need to deal with finding a resolution. The predominance of issues raised by the public are about highways and transport. Formal support is from the Democratic Services Unit, however, only the controlling group and the main opposition group have paid Political Assistants. This weakens the capacity of both the minor opposition groups, namely Labour and Green. We operate paperless using council supplied devices. Majority of interaction outside of town and parish council meetings tends to by email. There are channels for members of the public to seek resolution, however, these are difficult for many to locate, for example where using the search function on the council website, and electors can it easier to locate their councillor whom they often believe have the power to achieve a result to their satisfaction.

## Other Issues

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

## 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.

Gloucestershire has a predominantly rural character with diverse communities. Outside of the urban areas of Gloucester City and Cheltenham Borough there is a comprehensive network of areas which are fully parished with residents having a parish or town council, a district authority and a county authority. Members have to spend considerable time explaining to electors how these authorities inter-act and enabling residents to navigate between them. As stated above we believe that there is a case to consider alternative models of governance including a unitary authority or authorities, together with 'double devolution' to towns and larger parishes. Many residents have their primary identity as relating to their parish, town or district rather than the whole county. It is notable that turnout in County Council elections is often well below those attained in District Council elections. This is despite the fact that the County Council accounts for 75% of the Council Tax bill that households receive. We believe that comparatively the County Council is experienced and seen as more remote and distant and less responsive than lower tier authorities. A reduced size of the County Council since 2013 has exasperated these trends. For the reasons given we believe that the County Council would be a more strategic, accountable and engaged authority if there was an increase in Council size to 63.