Appendix A

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

[Submission on behalf of Surrey County Council]

Council Size Submission: Template

[Surrey County Council]

Contents

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.

1. This submission has been produced by a cross-party Member task group at Surrey County Council (SCC), with support from officers. The report was approved by County Council at its meeting on 13 December 2022 [TBC].

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 if its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

This review has been identified to take place by the Local Government Boundary Commission of England (LGBCE) on account of it being 12 years since the council was last reviewed.

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?

2. Prior to the Local Government Act 2000, SCC had operated a standard committee system with each committee having its own terms of reference and decision-making powers within a particular service area of the council. The 2000 Act changed the way in which local councils were managed politically, separating executive from non-executive functions, with SCC adopting a Leader and Cabinet model. The Localism Act of 2011 enabled councils to once again adopt a committee system of governance, however, SCC has continued to operate a Leader and Cabinet model. Although some changes have been made to the scrutiny model (explained in detail later in the submission), overall, governance arrangements at SCC have remained consistent and stable.

3. One of the reasons for this stability is that governance arrangements at SCC are seen to be fit for purpose. The Governance Panel, chaired by the council's Monitoring Officer, has a responsibility for reporting on the council's governance arrangements and drafting the Annual Governance Statement, evaluating assurances and supporting evidence. Recent Annual Governance Statements have been independently reviewed by the Council's Audit and Governance Committee, who have confirmed that they are satisfied with the governance arrangements at the council.

4. There are several policy trends that will have an impact on how the council (and the role of the councillor) operates in the future. These include local policy drivers, such as the council's strategic objective to empower communities. SCC wants to reinvigorate its relationship with residents, characterised by more people participating, engaging and having a role in how things are done where they live. The council is aiming to be more community led, for example, through increased funding for local projects. There are also legislative expectations for increased citizen involvement (e.g. in health and care) and clear expectations from our residents that we improve our approach to community engagement.

5. To deliver on these ambitions, the council needs new methods and approaches to working with communities. Members will play a key role in this new engagement

model – acting as community connectors and empowering local people. The council believes that this work should be an important consideration when determining future council size. Further details are provided in the *Community Leadership* section of this submission.

6. The council has also made a strong and clear commitment around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This includes ensuring that the council better reflects and understands the communities it represents. Currently, the political make-up of SCC is not as diverse as the county itself. For example, there are more male councillors (63%) than there are female councillors (37%), whilst the average age of a councillor is 58. A Member 'Councillor Diversity and Inclusion' Task Group has looked at this issue and identified the time commitment required to be a councillor as a significant barrier to greater inclusion - particularly at county level where many meetings take place during the daytime. Changes to the size of the council that increases demands on councillors (e.g. a significant reduction in the number of councillors) could have a detrimental impact on the council's ability to make progress in achieving greater diversity in the council's membership.

7. There are also key national policy trends that are likely to have an impact on how the Council operates, such as devolution. Successive governments have made commitments around enabling greater devolution, giving local areas more control of powers and functions. This trend is continuing with the recent Levelling Up White Paper and Devolution Framework that has established a clear model and direction for local areas to pursue devolution deals that make sense for their areas. The government is committed to offering all parts of England a devolution deal by 2030, and the council is seeking to be one of the earlier areas to secure a deal. Given the intention to seek greater levels of powers and functions from Government, this is likely to have an impact on how the council operates in terms of responsibilities and delivery. Although it is not expected to lead to substantial changes in the current expectations of councillors, it could be argued that the general trend towards greater devolution is a reason for not reducing the number of councillors.

8. Alongside devolution, The Health & Care Act and Health Integration White Paper have signalled the government's ambition for greater health integration, and more recently guidance has been published on the preparation of integrated care strategies. The Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) is statutory committee jointly formed between the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) and all upper-tier local authorities that fall within the ICS area. The ICP will bring together a broad alliance of partners concerned with improving the care, health and wellbeing of the population, with membership determined locally but likely to include council Members. Again, the move towards greater health integration and councillor involvement in joint partnerships such as the ICP could be seen as a reason not to reduce the number of councillors.

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:

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- 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?

9. Surrey is considered an attractive place to live and work with a range of natural and cultural assets, including its proximity to London. More than 80% of the county is countryside, and green belt status is applied to around 70%. A quarter of Surrey is classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a further 8% as Areas of Great Landscape Value.

10. The county consists of eleven boroughs and districts ranging from the smallest, Epsom and Ewell borough, covering 3,407 hectares, to Waverley borough, covering 34,527 hectares. The boroughs and districts with the largest population in the county are Guildford and Reigate and Banstead (around 150,000). Most population centres in Surrey are a mix of urban, suburban and rural conurbations. 55% of councillors that responded to a Member survey (August 2022) said that Surrey's geography impacted their workload and increased the time commitment of being a councillor. A range of factors were highlighted, such as urban and rural variances, travel time and natural or manmade boundaries/infrastructure (such as rivers, or major roads A3/M25/M3).

11. Surrey's combination of accessibility and very high-quality natural environment make it a prime location for London professionals wanting a less urban way of life. More than 40% of residents work outside the county with nearly a quarter working in London, although recently there has been a positive net flow of workers due to increased homeworking since the COVID-19 pandemic. Surrey has one of the busiest road networks in the country, carrying double the national average traffic flow and make it the slowest county to drive around.

12. Around 70% of residents believe there is a strong sense of community in their local area. Over 93.5% of people in Surrey recorded that they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. This is reflected in the county's vibrant voluntary, community and faith sector, with approximately 6,000 organisations, and thousands of residents volunteering each year.

13. Surrey has a population of 1.2 million residents, this is a 6.2% increase since the 2011 Census, which is a slightly lower growth rate than England as a whole (6.6%). The population is projected to increase by around 10%, reaching 1.31 million by 2041. Eighty-seven per cent of inhabitants live in urban areas and yet 73% of land in Surrey is green belt. This complex geography is significant as access to services and transport are important concerns in the rural parts of Surrey.

14. More than half of Surrey's population is over 50 years of age, and the number of people over 85 is increasing by 1,000 people a year. Surrey has a lower proportion of people aged 20-34 compared with the national average and is a net exporter of university-aged people. The proportion of the population in all age groups under 65 is projected to fall over the next 20 years, while the number of residents aged over 65 will increase.

15. Social and economic deprivation in Surrey is often masked by proximity to areas of affluence and dispersed communities. There are significant micro-clusters of deprivation where education and skills deprivation are in the top 20% nationally. There is a 10-year delta in life-expectancy in adjoining parts of the county, exposing generational inequalities that exist within parts of Surrey.

16. The impact of deprivation has been noted by councillors in terms of their workload and case work. 54% of respondents to the Member survey said that demographics impacted their workload, and the most common cited factor was areas of deprivation. Conversely, respondents also said that deprived communities were less represented and not as engaged as other more affluent communities in their ward. Councillors in affluent areas fed back that they have highly engaged and motivated residents that have high expectations of their local councillors.

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	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?*
		➢ *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 this make of them?*

	Analysis	17. Prior to the Local Government Act 2000, Surrey County Council operated a standard committee system with each committee having its own terms of reference and decision-making powers within a particular service area of the council. The 2000 Act changed the way in which local councils are managed politically, separating executive from non-executive functions. Since then, the council has operated a strong leader executive model. There are currently ten Cabinet Members and four Deputy Cabinet Members.
		18. Executive decisions are either taken collectively by the full Cabinet, or by individual Cabinet Members as determined by the Leader and set out in the council's Scheme of Delegation. Cabinet meets monthly. Individual Cabinet Member Decision meetings are also held monthly in public. The Cabinet leads the preparation of the council's policies and budget and makes recommendations to the County Council on the major policy plans and the budget at Council Tax.
		19. The County Council as a collective body continues to have an important role in setting the broad budget and policy framework. As of December 2022, the political make up of Surrey County Council is as follows: Conservative – 45, Residents' Associations/Independents – 16; Liberal Democrats – 15; Labour – 2; Green – 2 Independent - 1 There are 81 county councillors in total.
		20. Non-executive decisions are taken either by the County Council, or by the following: Planning & Regulatory Committee; Appeals & Representation Panel; Audit & Governance Committee; People, Performance & Development Committee; Appointments Sub-Committee; Member Conduct Panel; Surrey Pension Fund Committee.
		21. The council's Overview and Scrutiny function is exercised by four Select Committees (Adults & Health; Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture; Communities, Environment & Highways; Resources & Performance). These committees

		influence the development of policy and undertake pre-decision scrutiny.
		22. Member role profiles, including a generic role profile for all county councillors as well as specific role profiles for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members, Chair and Vice-Chair of Council have been developed and form an appendix to the Member-Officer Protocol (part of the Constitution).
		23. Governance processes at SCC generally work well. There are few urgent decisions; call-ins are infrequent due to pre-decision scrutiny, and the general feedback received from Members is good. There are currently no plans for widescale changes to the governance system at SCC.
Portfolios	*Key lines of explanation*	*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	24. There are currently 10 Cabinet Portfolios. The role profiles for the Leader, Cabinet Members and Deputy Cabinet Members are available as part of an annex to the Member-Officer Protocol.
		25. The Cabinet meets as a whole 11 times a year, with meetings lasting approximately 2-3 hours each (although each also involves an agenda planning and callover meeting, which can take an additional 2-3 hours each). To support Cabinet in developing their thinking prior to decisions being made, the Cabinet meets informally once a month.
		26. There are also 11 individual Cabinet Member decision-making days during the year, which include slots for each portfolio holder. Cabinet Members are also expected to contribute to the council's scrutiny process by attending Select Committee meetings on request.
		27. Part 3 – Section 2 – Table 2 in the Constitution sets out the responsibility for executive functions exercised by Cabinet members, as listed by the Leader and outlined in Article 5.02 of the Constitution. Delegations are also made to Cabinet Members as a result of recommendations within Cabinet papers. The majority of decisions are taken collectively by the full Cabinet and it is anticipated that this will continue.

		28. The role of a Cabinet Member at SCC represents a significant time commitment. In the Member Survey conducted during August 2022, the average time commitment for Cabinet Members was 77 hours per month (in addition to their role as a local Member). 29. Overall Executive arrangements at SCC have remained fairly consistent since they were introduced in 2000. The structure is in line with many other County Councils, and it is not anticipated that any widescale changes are likely to be introduced.
Delegated Responsibilities	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?* ➢ *How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?*
	Analysis	30. The council's Scheme of Delegation sets out details of who is responsible for which functions in the Authority and the extent to which any functions have been delegated: 31. <u>Part 3 – Section 2 – Table 2 in the Constitution</u> sets out the responsibility for executive functions exercised by Cabinet members, as listed by the Leader and outlined in Article 5.02 of the Constitution. *Part 3 – Section 3 Part 1 in the Constitution sets out the overall scheme of delegation to officers.* *Part 3 – Section 3 Part 2 sets out the General Delegation to Officers.* *Part 3 – Section 3 Part 3A sets out the Specific Delegation to Officers.* 32. Delegations are also made to officers as a result of recommendations within reports (often in consultation with Members). 33. Councillors sit on a number of decision-making and scrutiny committees at Surrey County Council. | Meeting	Seats	Meetings p.a.
Council	81	6
Cabinet	10	11	

			Adults and Health Select Committee	13	5
			Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee	13	5
			Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee	13	5
			Resources and Performance Select Committee	13	5
			Surrey Police and Crime Panel	1	6
			Strategic Investment Board	4	11
			Health and Wellbeing Board	4	8
			Audit & Governance Committee	6	6
			Joint Trading Standards Committee	2	2
			Local Pension Board	2	4
			Surrey Pension Fund Committee	6	4
			Planning and Regulatory Committee	11	11
			People, Performance and Development Committee	6	5
			Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee	4	2

		Local Firefighter's Pension Board	1	4
		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Board	1	4
		Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen's Group	12	4
		Corporate Parenting Board	10	6
		South West London and Surrey Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2	2
		Member Conduct Panel	10	Adhoc
		Committees in Common	3	5
		TOTAL	**228**	**121**

The table does not take account of any additional meetings that may be organised in-year, nor any task groups or sub committees.

34. With the current council size of 81 Members, excluding Cabinet and County Council meetings, there are 137 committee seats. This translates to an average of 1.9 seats on committees available for non-Cabinet Members.

35. Surrey is a large county, and many councillors spend significant time travelling to and from meetings. For example, Members travelling from Farnham (in the south-east of the county) to the council's HQ in Reigate are likely to face a two hour round trip.

36. During the Covid-pandemic, council meetings took place remotely and Members quickly adapted to using online meeting technology. Now that public health restrictions have lifted, formal council meetings have returned to taking place in person. However, many informal meetings have continued to take place online. A reduction in Member's

		expenses claims suggests that councillors are continuing to travel less for council business than before the pandemic.

Accountability

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

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
Key lines of explanation	➢ *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	37. The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet model of governance which necessitates at least one scrutiny panel. Surrey County Council reviewed and made changes to its scrutiny setup in May 2019 reducing the number of Select Committees (scrutiny committees) at the Council from six to four. This was to simplify the structure and bring the Council in line with similar neighbouring Local Authorities as well as to bring focus to the work of the function as a whole by aligning their remits more closely to the Council's internal service directorates.

Diagram 1: Surrey County Council Scrutiny Structure 2019 onwards.

38. The reduction of Select Committees saw a complementary increase in the size of the membership to compensate for the overall reduction in the number of seats. Each Select Committee, excluding external or co-opted Members, has 12-13 County Councillors in a politically proportionate distribution.

39. A further change saw an increase in leadership capacity as Select Committees now have a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, one of whom would be drawn from one of the opposition groups. The Vice-Chairmen's role was enhanced to give them responsibility for the running of the Committee's task & finish groups.

40. An informal, i.e. non-constituted group, of Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen was created to provide leadership for the function by reviewing work, sharing information and coordinating work programmes.

41. The Council's Constitution defines the role of its Select Committees as – scrutiny; overview, policy review and development; and performance management. Each Select Committee meets a minimum of five times a year in public to conduct committee business. This includes dedicated budget scrutiny sessions in July, October and December on the draft budget each year. Committees aim to keep the number of items on agenda low so that the requisite time and effort can be dedicated to effective scrutiny.

42. Each Select Committee is supported by a Scrutiny Officer and a Democratic Services Assistant augmented by further support when needed from officers drawn across the Council.

43. Task & finish groups are routinely used to investigate topics in more depth and make recommendations to the

		Cabinet as this is considered good practice. Each Select Committee is resourced to run two such groups concurrently at any one time. Since 2019, 10 task & finish groups have been set up and concluded including reviews of SEND provision and the Council's preparations to become carbon net zero. At present, there are three groups underway covering health inequalities, adult learning and the economy and scrutiny of the council's budget performance.
		44. County Council considered the Scrutiny Annual Report in February 2022. During the debate on this item, councillors commented that the current system of scrutiny was working effectively and that the quality of work undertaken by Select Committees had improved in recent years. There are currently no plans to change the scrutiny set up at Surrey.
Statutory Function		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?
Planning	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?* ➢ *Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?* ➢ *Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?* ➢ *Will executive members serve on the planning committees?* ➢ *What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?*
	Analysis	45. The vast majority of planning applications are dealt with by officers under delegated powers. Over the past 12 months (August 2021 to July 2022), 87% of cases were dealt with by officers under delegated powers, and 13% of cases were determined by Members at Planning & Regulatory Committee. 46. The Constitution requires that all applications with five or more objections, or those that are called in by the Local Member or a committee member, are determined by Planning & Regulatory Committee. This arrangement has been in place since 2013 and there are currently no proposals to amend this. 47. No Executive Members sit on Planning & Regulatory Committee; however, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council may attend and speak at meetings of the committee on an ex-officio basis (they have no voting

		rights and may not move or second motions or amendments).
		48. The Planning & Regulatory Committee meets in public once a month, plus monthly site visits. Committee Members are also expected to attend regular training sessions.
Licensing	*Key lines of explanation*	
	Analysis	49. The remit of the Planning & Regulatory Committee (see above) covers Licensing and Registration Functions and Births, Deaths & Marriages; however, many of these decisions are delegated to officers.
Other Regulatory Bodies	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *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?*
	Analysis	50. In addition to the Planning and Regulatory Committee, the council appoints to the following regulatory committees: • Audit and Governance Committee (6 Members, meets 6 times a year) • Member Conduct Panel (10 Members, meets on an ad-hoc basis) • People, Performance and Development Committee (6 Members, 5 meetings a year) • Surrey Pension Fund Committee (6 meetings, 4 meetings a year) 51. In terms of the regulatory functions, the council is not aware of any proposed changes in legislation which might affect these responsibilities and therefore it considers that there is no need to review the regulatory committee structure at this time.
External Partnerships		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		➢ *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?* ➢ *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?*

Analysis	52. Councillors serve on a number of decision-making partnerships at a county-wide level: • Surrey Health & Wellbeing Board – this is a partnership between the NHS, public health, social care, SCC, borough/district councils and user representatives. The Leader of the Council chairs the Board, and the Cabinet portfolio holders for Adults & Health, Children & Families, Communities, and Community Protection are also Members. The Board is responsible for producing the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Surrey. The Board meets on a monthly basis. • Surrey Policy and Crime Panel – the Panel holds to account the performance of the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner and consists of one councillor from SCC (not a member of the Cabinet) and one councillor from each of the 11 borough/district councils (plus two co-opted independent members). The Panel meets six times a year. 53. Work is ongoing to establish the Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board and Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership and it is anticipated that elected Members will be involved in these bodies. 54. The Leader of the Council also chairs the following partnership boards, although these do not have decision making powers: • Workforce & Culture Board • Surrey Growth Board • Strategic Investment Board • Transformation Board • Major Projects Board 55. Councillors are appointed to a range of Outside Bodies across the county. These are categorised as either local or Surrey-wide/strategic bodies. A full list can be viewed on the council's website. The council currently appoints to 62 vacancies on 54 outside bodies. The workload of Outside Bodies varies but the Member survey indicates that councillors spend an average of 7 hours per month on these duties. 56. Alongside formal Outside Bodies appointments made by the council, many Members hold positions with other external bodies - for example, community groups or

		charities in their areas. 47 of the current councillor cohort are 'twin-hatted', meaning that they sit on both the County and their District or Borough Council [Update following by-election]. Several Members are also school governors.

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*	➢ *In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?* ➢ *Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?* ➢ *How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?* ➢ *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?* ➢ *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 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?*
	Analysis	57. The role of the county councillor is not restricted to formal committee meetings and representation on other public, voluntary, community or faith sector bodies. As outlined in the council's role profile for the Surrey County Councillor, Members are first and foremost community leaders, elected to represent the needs and interests of the division for which the councillor was elected.

58. According to the Member survey, councillors in Surrey spend on average 27 hours per month on their local division work. Every Member approaches this differently but it may include:

- dealing with enquiries and casework on behalf of residents
- representing residents' interests or enabling them to take action themselves as appropriate
- liaising with council officers and partner organisations to ensure that the needs of the local communities are identified, understood and supported, and agreed local actions are carried out.
- being actively involved with local organisations in order to keep up-to-date with local concerns.
- holding surgeries or similar public meetings to gather views of residents (either virtually or face-to-face)
- meeting residents 'on site' in order to engage with the issues facing residents.

59. The geographical size of the county and disparities in physical size between divisions can impact on the amount of time some county councillors spend on travelling, either to and from the council's main headquarters, which is based at Reigate, or travelling to meetings or events within their own division. The disparity in travel distances also impacts on some residents' ability to access representation. In a compact area, one surgery could be accessible to several geographically close communities. However, in a larger area, one Member may have to arrange a greater number of surgeries to be accessible to their residents.

60. Surrey has 85 parish & town councils, 81 of which are paying members of the Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC). About half of Surrey is parished. Political representation for the other half is through district and county councillors, residents' associations and community groups. Most parish councils meet monthly.

61. The extent to which the workload of Members is affected by the presence of town or parish councils in their division will vary depending on the number of such councils. However, there is an expectation from many parish councils that their county councillor will regularly attend their meetings. In some cases, county councillors are asked to make a report to each

meeting on matters that may concern the parish. As most of the larger parishes meet every month, this can impose a significant time commitment on individual county councillors.

62. In the more urban parts of the county, Members do not have this additional parish commitment, although there are a large number of residents' associations that can draw on Members' time. An average county division would include approximately two ward/village residents' association and the level of commitment expected from the county councillor in attending their meetings and working with them is similar to liaising with a parish council. Of course, the number of residents' associations varies from area to area.

63. Local Committees ('area committees') were introduced in Surrey's Districts and Boroughs from 2002 to promote the involvement of local people in the democratic process and to bring decision making closer to local people.

64. In February 2022, the Cabinet agreed to move the Highways Executive Functions away from Local and Joint Committees, instead delegating them to officers in consultation with Divisional members. In October 2022, Council agreed to remove the remaining executive, non-executive and advisory functions of Local and Joint Committees. In their place an enhanced engagement model is being developed. This new model recognises that the way residents communicate and interact with the County Council, and the way in which they wish to be involved in local initiatives, has changed. In this model, SCC is moving away from its traditional approach of 'doing to' and is embracing a more accessible and inclusive 'doing with' approach. The objective is to ensure that residents' voices are heard and the Council acts as an enabler, helping local individuals, groups and stakeholders identify and prioritise their key issues and access appropriate support and funding to address them.

65. As part of this new approach, the council has restructured its Community Partnership and Engagement Team, including the introduction of a new Community Link Officer (CLO) role. The CLO will work closely with Members, supporting them to proactively engage with residents, seeking their views and better engaging communities in the council's decision making.

66. The council recognises the important role that the internet and social media can play in connecting communities and is aiming to make it easier for residents to engage with the council via digital tools. As part of this drive, the council is offering training to Members in online platforms such as Facebook and NextDoor – enabling councillors to develop their presence in places where the community converses.

67. Each county councillor has funding to help residents, voluntary and community organisations deliver activities that benefit local people in their neighbourhoods. This funding is known as Members' Community Allocation (MCA). This is a small member-led funding stream where each councillor has £5,000 to support local projects. Applicants contact and speak to their local county councillor about their project. If the Member is happy to support a project they will send the applicant the link to the application form.

68. Your Fund Surrey (YFS) is a £100m capital fund that launched in March 2021 and will run for five years. Local communities are able to apply to the fund to support projects in their areas.

69. Members have a large role in the YFS process. For example, applicants are asked to speak about their project idea with their local County Councillor before submitting an application form. Members are also asked for specific comments about projects within their divisions, which are then included in a report that is taken to the advisory panel meeting. The panel is made up of nine cross-party County Councillors who look at YFS full submission applications and decide on whether they should be recommended to fund. The local Member is also invited to attend the panel meeting to provide a supporting statement about the project. #

70. In October 2022, it was announced that all Members would receive £50,000 from YFS to allocate to projects in their area.

71. Overall, although Members no longer sit on a Local Committee, it is not anticipated that this will reduce the time councillors spend working on matters relating to their local community. The council's new approach to community engagement requires Members to work differently and engage with residents proactively in a number of different ways. It is important that the future

		council size continues to enable Members to engage with their residents in this way.
Casework	*Key lines of explanation*	➢ *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?* ➢ *What support do members receive?* ➢ *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?*
	Analysis	72. The approach taken to casework varies between councillors, however, the council is keen to encourage Members to adopt a signposting post approach to online self-serve options for first time reports wherever possible (and appropriate). Where casework is more complex and residents have asked councillors to advocate on their behalf, the council has a number of dedicated e-mail addresses which Members can use to assist them in getting a response. 73. The council provides a detailed induction programme, weekly member seminars and regular skills training opportunities, in order to support Members to understand the services that the council provides and feel able to respond to casework effectively. 74. Throughout 2022, Democratic Services conducted 1-1 conversations with 42 Members. During these conversations, handling casework was cited as the top issue that councillors wanted further support for. This points to the scale and complexity of casework that councillors receive. Enhanced guidance and training is being arranged for Members in response. 75. Members rely heavily on technology to communicate with their residents, with 94% of respondents to the Member survey saying that technology influenced the way that they worked and that it increased avenues for communicating with residents through social media, e-newsletters, virtual meetings and emails. It also supported casework, specifically through the Councillors@ email address and being able to video call officers, rather than travel for physical meetings. Although many respondents acknowledged the positive contribution that technology offered to their roles, it was also said that it contributes to increasing resident caseload and raises expectations for faster response times.

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

Electorate Number

76. The electorate in Surrey is estimated to increase by just over 100,000 in the next 10 years. The table below considers how increasing or decreasing the number of Members would impact the numbers of residents per councillor.

	2022	2029	2029 % change against current
Overall electorate	874,932	975,970	11.5%
Current Electorate per Member (81)	10,802	12,049	11.5%
Electorate per Member (78)		12,512	15.8%
Electorate per Member (84)		11,619	7.6%

77. It could be argued that, given the projected increase in the electorate, that the number of councillors at SCC *should not* be reduced in order to mitigate this increase and continue to enable effective democratic representation.

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.

78. To conclude, the council has considered the following council size options:

Increase number of councillors

79. The task group noted that compared to the council's CIPFA 'nearest neighbours' comparable local authorities, SCC has one of the smaller councillor per population ratios. This, combined with the recent trend towards reducing numbers of councillors at other councils and the financial implications of increasing the number of Members, meant that the council did not explore this option in detail.

County	Population size	Councillors	Population ratio	Percentage of population
Cambridgeshire	678,600	61	11,125	1.64%
East Sussex	562,750	50	11,255	2%
Essex (not including Southend and Thurrock)	1,500,000	75	20,000	1.33%

				1.28%
Hampshire (not including Portsmouth and Southampton)	1,400,000	78	17,949	
Hertfordshire	1,200,000	78	15,385	1.28%
Kent	1,600,000	81	19,753	1.23%
Oxfordshire	725,300	63	11,513	1.59%
Surrey	**1,200,000**	**81**	**14,815**	**1.23%**
West Sussex	858,852	70	12,269	1.43%

Reduce number of councillors

80. Reducing the number of councillors at a time when the electorate is projected to grow would result in a much larger councillor to resident ratio, which could have a detrimental impact on effective democratic representation. It would also increase the workload of councillors, potentially making it more difficult to attract people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election.

81. It is also felt that reducing the number of councillors is not in line with the council's strategic objective to empower communities. Councillors are integral to the delivery of this ambition, and the council is working with Members to strengthen their roles as community connectors and facilitators.

82. The council also recognises the national trend towards devolution to local authorities. Reducing the number of councillors could impact effective governance at SCC if Members did not have the capacity to take on potentially complex new responsibilities.

Number of councillors stays the same

83. The council therefore recommends to the LGBCE that the council size should be maintained at 81 councillors. This enables the current model of local governance to function effectively while allowing Members enough time to fulfil the range of representational and community leadership roles. It also helps mitigate against the impact of electorate growth whilst ensuring that the council is sufficiently resourced to take on additional responsibilities that could be secured through future devolution opportunities.