GLOUCESTER ELECTORAL REVIEW

GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL – COUNCIL SIZE PROPOSAL

Welcome to Gloucester

Gloucester is located in the south west and is one of the six districts within the County of Gloucestershire. It is a predominantly urban area and covers approximately 15.7 square miles. In 2001 the population figure was 109,947 and the population has grown by an average of around 1,000 people per year since the 2011 census. The current population is 126,251 and is set to grow to 154,300 by 2033. Gloucester residents account for 20.4% of the population of Gloucestershire.

There are around 55,081 dwellings in Gloucester. Gloucester has a young population with 23% of residents aged 17 or under (higher than the County average), and indications are that this trend will continue. Educational attainment in the City is slightly lower than the County average for achievement of Level 4 Key Stage English and Maths and 5 GCSEs A*C grades, although progress has been made in improving the proportion of pupils achieving these levels in the last 5 years.

The area suffers from multiple deprivation and is ranked as 125th in the 2011 deprivation index of 326 local authorities nationally. This includes 4 areas in the top 10% most deprived wards in the country (Podsmead, Matson and Robinswood 1, Westgate 1 and 3 and Kingsholm and Wotton). Wages in the City ……..

A significant proportion of residents in the City (10.9%) are from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and the proportion has been growing.

Gloucester has a number of challenges as a district that the Council is working proactively with its partners to overcome. These challenges include:

- Regenerating the City Centre, including Kings Square and the bus station and providing a City that's an attractive destination for residents and visitors alike;
- Tackling high levels of deprivation in the 4 areas in the bottom 10% of the most deprived wards nationally;
- Improving the condition of private sector housing stock;
- Improving educational attainment of pupils in the City;
- Maintaining services whilst sustaining reductions in funding from national government and staff levels;
- Delivering services to a growing proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic Groups;
- Improving health and life expectancy of residents of the City.

Section 1 : Welcome to Gloucester City Council

Gloucester City Council (GCC) has 36 Councillors, representing 15 wards, with 3 political groups. The Council has 18 Conservatives, 9Labour and 9Liberal Democrats. The Council has adopted a Leader and Cabinet structure, with an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and an Audit and Governance Committee.

The Council's corporate priorities were developed, following comprehensive consultation with local people, to address the key demographic issues in the district. These priorities are reviewed every year as a part of the corporate planning process. Gloucester's four Corporate Priorities are:

Growing Gloucester's Economy: Continuing the progress made in regenerating the heart of the City and ensuring that local people benefit from the investment brought to Gloucester.

Working with our communities: To ensure that everyone ahs the opportunity to make a positive contribution. Building resilience in communities, equipping them to help themselves to become safer and healthier.

Creating pride in our City and improving our environment: Developing the cultural offer and maximizing the use of assets in the City to grow the tourism economy and generate pride in the City.

Maintaining the Council's financial viability: departmental performance and delivery of our 5 year Money Plan.

Examples of notable achievements include:

- Receipt of a number of national awards recognising excellent service delivery, including several for the Council's Tourist Information Centre;
- Continuing to achieve regeneration of significant parts of the City (for example, Gloucester Quays and The Docks area, the Railway Triangle) despite the recession
- Having a 3* arms length housing management company (Gloucester City Homes), which has achieved numerous accreditations and won many awards

Section 2 : Introduction to Gloucester's Electoral Review

This submission sets out the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) request for us to submit a proposal regarding future Council size. This was the result of the Council triggering LGBCE criteria in relation to electoral equality. The issue of Council size is the key factor in determining the type and scale of the review to be undertaken by LGBCE.

The Council's submission has been developed by a cross-party Member Working Group. The Council size proposal was also endorsed through a Full Council meeting on 9 June 2014.

The Member Working Group provided for a robust consultation process to ensure the views of all Members from across political groups were sought and taken into consideration within this submission.

Members were also mindful of the LGBCE criteria in relation to Council Size to ensure appropriate and robust justification was provided within the proposal for the future size of the Council.

The Member Working Group also considered the current and projected electorate figures for Gloucester.

Section 3 : Council Size submission and rationale

This section sets out the Council's recommendation for the future size of the Council and a summary for the justification for this proposal.

The Council welcomed the opportunity to examine its Council size and considered the following issues in its considerations:

- Demands on Councillor time including committees, outside meetings, and representative duties.
- Changes in demography
- Changes in political composition
- Future growth in the District
- Needs of the Gloucester population
- LGBCE criteria

The Table below summarises the evidence available against LGBCE Council Size criteria which helped to formulate the proposed figure for future Council size:

Part One : Leadership		
1.1	What kind of governance arrangements are in place for your authority? Does the council operate an executive mayoral, Cabinet/Executive or committee system?	The Council comprises 36 elected Members. For a number of years, approximately a third of all Members have elected each year, with no elections in every fourth year. However, with the boundary review in mind, on 27 March 2014, the Council resolved to change its electoral arrangements to whole Council elections with effect from 2016. Full Council meets 7 times a year and is responsible for setting the budget and approving the plans and strategies that form the Policy Framework. The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet model of governance. The Leader of the Council has been appointed each year at Annual Council and subsequently appoints his/her Cabinet. Following the Council resolution on 27 March 2014 to move to whole Council elections, it is proposed that, from 2016, the Leader will be appointed for a 4 year period.
1.2	How many portfolios are there?	The Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Council and four Cabinet Members. There are five portfolios: - Regeneration and Culture - Communities and Neighbourhoods - Housing, Health and Leisure - Performance and Resources - Environment The Leader and Cabinet Members each hold a portfolio.

			Cabinet Members meet regularly with their relevant Corporate Director and the Leader and Deputy Leader meet with the Head of Paid Service on a weekly basis.
1.3		To what extent are decisions delegated to portfolio holders or are most decisions taken by the full Executive and/or Mayor?	The vast majority of decisions are taken collectively by the Cabinet at monthly Cabinet meetings. All formal decisions to be taken by the Cabinet, Key Decisions or otherwise, are published in the Forward Plan, which is updated at least monthly. On the rare occasion that a decision is made by a Cabinet Member acting alone, the decisions are documented and published in line with the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules.
1.4		Do Executive (or other) members serve on other decision making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies?	Executive and other Members serve on a variety of other decision-making bodies whose powers vary. These bodies form the Council's list of approved outside bodies, of which there are a total of 36. Notable bodies include: - The boards of three outside organisations that provide services on behalf of the Council in relation to housing, leisure and culture. - The board of an airport, jointly owned with another local authority - A number of joint committees within the county of Gloucestershire - The Local Economic Partnership – The County Council and the 6 district Councils in Gloucestershire (which includes the City Council), have submitted proposals to Government for the formation of a Strategic Economic Partnership and it is likely that this will develop over the coming months; - Leadership Gloucestershire, which consists of representatives from the County Council and district Councils within Gloucestershire. - South West Councils, which draws together local authority Leaders from the county, unitary and district councils in the South West, police, fire & rescue services and parish and town councils. It supports its member authorities in a number of ways, including supporting authorities in having a voice, built on consensus, of issues on national policy and funding working with national Local Government Group, when this is deemed appropriate by Members. South West Councils provides delegates from amongst its' members to the Local Government Association. - Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel which oversees the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
1.5		In general, are leadership and/or portfolio roles	The Leader and Cabinet Members spend considerable amounts of time on their portfolio functions including meeting with officers to discuss forthcoming business for Cabinet,

	considered to be full time roles?	providing a steer on policy development, requesting information in relation to any current issues and receiving briefings and updates. They have a significant role in promoting the Council and overseeing the business of the Council.
		Most Cabinet Members have paid employment elsewhere, but the time commitment required to perform the role means that holding full time employment elsewhere would be difficult, and this is certainly the case for the position of Leader of the Council.
		All 3 political Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders meet once per month to discuss Council-wide issues. Most are required to have a significant time commitment to the role, but do hold roles elsewhere as well
		As the Council is finely balanced politically and is in no overall political control, a significant amount of Group Leader time is spent in negotiations with other Group Leaders and with their own political groups to seek support for the policies and decisions they wish the Council to agree. A significant task for Group Leaders involves ensuring that both they and their Group members are aware of what's going on within the Council and its various Committees.
		In addition to these roles, the Council places considerable importance on its civic roles of Mayor and Sheriff in promoting the City and the Council. The Mayor chairs Council meetings, assisted by the Sheriff, and there are a number of annual events that each successive Mayor and Sheriff are expected to attend, as well as numerous other events organised within and outside the City. For example, the Mayor would usually attend the Three Choirs Festival which rotates annually between the Cathedral cities of Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester and the Remembrance Sunday event in Gloucester.
		The Mayor and Sheriff roles, much like Cabinet Member roles, require a significant time commitment, making it difficult for the Members holding these positions to hold full time employment elsewhere.
Regulatory:		
1.6	In relation to licensing, planning and other regulatory responsibilities, to what extent are decisions delegated to	The Council's Scheme of Delegation is attached for information at Appendix 1. **Planning Committee** In 2012/13, approximately 13% of decisions were taken by Planning Committee, meaning that approximately 87% were

		taken by officers.
	officers?	**Licensing and Enforcement Committee**
		In 2013, there were 1965 licence applications, 6 of which were determined by Licensing and Enforcement Sub-Committee. Generally, the Committee deals with contentious matters, such as revocation of licences or licensing applications where relevant representations are made.
		Audit and Governance Committee
		The Monitoring Officer has delegated powers to determine some dispensation requests and to resolve some standards matters informally. All other matters are for decision by the Audit and Governance Committee.
1.7	How many members are involved in committees?	**Planning Committee** consists of 13 Members allocated according to political proportionality, but may not include Members of the Cabinet. The Committee appoints a Planning Policy Sub-Committee comprising five Members nominated from its membership to make recommendations to Council on matters relating to planning policy. The Committee meets once per month.
		Licensing and Enforcement Committee consists of 13 Members allocated according to political proportionality, but may not include Members of the Cabinet. Members of the Committee are appointed to two Sub-Committees; 3 Members are drawn from the membership of the main committee to sit on Licensing and Enforcement Sub-Committees relating to licensing and gambling applications, and 7 Members are drawn to sit on Licensing and Enforcement Sub-Committees to consider enforcement matters relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing and street trading consents. The Committee meets 4 times per annum.
		The Audit and Governance Committee consists of 7 Members allocated according to political proportionality, but may not include Members of the Cabinet. Members of the Committee are appointed a Sub-Committee (Hearings Panel) and three Members are drawn from the membership of the main committee to sit on the Audit and Governance Hearings Panel to consider standards investigation reports and to conduct standards hearings. The Committee has met 4 times per annum but is due to start meeting 5 times per annum from June 2014 due to the level of business for the Committee.
		Organisational Development Committee consists of 5 Members allocated according to political proportionality. The Committee meets as and when required.
		Other Working Groups

		In addition to the Committees referred to above, the Council has a number of Member Working Groups:
		Constitutional and Electoral Working Group consists of 6 Members (2 representatives from each political party on the Council). The Working Group meets 4 times per annum; **Equality Champions Group** consists of 3 Members (1representative from each political party on the Council. The Group meets twice per annum. **ICT Working Group** consists of 3 Members made up of the three political Group Leaders or their representative. The Group meets 4 times per annum. **Employee Forum** consists of 3 Members allocated according to political proportionality**.** The Forum meets no less than 4 times per annum. - Grants and Community Services Forum consists of 6 non-Cabinet Members allocated according to political proportionality (as well as 6 representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector). The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods has a right to attend the Forum but not to vote. The Forum meets twice per annum.
1.8	Is committee membership standing or rotating?	Members of the Planning Committee, Planning Policy Sub-Committee, Licensing and Enforcement Committee, Audit and Governance Committee and Organisational Development Committee are appointed annually. Members of the Planning and Licensing and Enforcement Committees must receive training at least every three years and are expected to keep abreast of changes in legislation and policy throughout their term. Any non-executive Member may attend as a substitute for these Committees providing they have received appropriate training in advance. Members of Licensing and Enforcement Sub-Committees are drawn from the existing membership of the main Licensing and Enforcement Committee based on availability, with the aim of achieving cross-party representation where possible. Members of the Audit and Governance Committee are obliged to receive regular and appropriate training.
1.9	Are meetings *ad hoc*, frequent and/or area	Planning Committee meets monthly and the Planning Policy Sub-Committee meets four times a year.

	based?	Licensing and Enforcement Committee meets four times a year. The Licensing and Enforcement Sub-Committees meet on an ad hoc basis as and when required, with variable levels of demand. Typically, Sub Committees are convened approximately 8 times per annum.
		Audit and Governance Committee has met four times a year until now. With effect from the AGM in 2014, it will be meeting 5 times per annum, due to the level of business it receives.
		Organisational Development Committee meets as and when required, with variable levels of demand. In 2013/14, the Committee met 5 times.
		Constitutional and Electoral Working Group meets 4 times per annum;
		Equality Champions Group meets twice per annum.
		ICT Working Group meets 4 times per annum.
		Employee Forum meets no less than 4 times per annum and is a daytime meeting.
		In addition to the standing committees, at any one time, the Council has a number of Member working groups for significant projects or issues which generate a requirement for Members to attend ad hoc meetings or briefings. For example, the Council is developing a Joint Core Strategy for development purposes with Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils. This involves a significant Member time commitment in attending briefings and Sub-Committee meetings. There are a number of projects underway at present including Housing Stock Transfer, Rugby World Cup 2015, Regeneration Advisory Board and, of course, Boundary Review.
		It is likely that there will be additional working groups in 2014/15, including groups looking at toilet provision within the city, the Guildhall (a Council owned arts and entertainment venue), seeking World Heritage site status for Gloucester Cathedral and future funding/income generation. In future years, similar topic specific working groups may well be required.
1.10	What level of attendance is achieved? Are meetings always	Levels of attendance for regulatory and other meetings are high, with substitutes generally provided where standing Members are unable to attend. For the preceding 12 months, attendance for the:

	quorate?	• Planning Committee is 88%
		• Planning Policy Sub-Committee is 85%
		• Licensing and Enforcement Committee is 85%
		• Audit and Governance Committee is 80%;
		• Organisational Development Committee is 96%.
		Quorum has never been an issue with the main Committees and officers consult with Members on their availability to ensure that Licensing and Enforcement Sub-Committees and Audit and Governance Hearings Panels also meet the quorum requirements. However, finding the requisite number of Members for Licensing Sub Committee meetings in order to meet the legislative timescales, can be challenging.
1.11	Does the council believe that changes to legislation, national or local policy will influence the workload of committees and their Members which would have an impact on Council size?	Legislation and national policy are changing the way in which local services are delivered, and this in turn has led to more public awareness of and involvement in the local decision-making process. There are now greater demands for transparency, public engagement, consultation and accountable decision-making, as well as new community rights, which impact on the Council's decision-making functions (thinking Localism Act and planning powers; community right to challenge etc.)

There is an increased role for Members for engagement with communities in areas like policy development and ways of service delivery, as well as consulting with communities on issues such as budget setting.

The matters that have to be taken into account by Members when they're making decisions are becoming more complex. This requires more time from Members to ensure they understand what they're being asked to make decisions on. |
Demands on time:		
1.12	Is there a formal role description for councillors in your authority?	On 19 July 2012 the Council formally adopted Member Role Profiles. The Role Profiles are intended to be advisory notes for elected Members only and do not form part of the Council's Constitution. The Role Profiles outline the key duties of all Councillors and separately the duties associated with individual roles including the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Political Group Leaders, Cabinet Members, the Mayor, Committee Chairs and Committee Members.
1.13	Do councillors receive formal training for all or any roles at the council?	An induction programme of training is offered to all Members, new and existing, following each round of elections. The training is largely aimed at new Members, but also acts as refresher training on the general duties and responsibilities of Members. In addition to this, topic specific sessions on

| | | emerging changes or issues of local interest are also arranged.

Any new Cabinet Members spend significant time with the relevant officers to learn about their portfolio in detail as well as attending external training sessions on their areas of responsibility (e.g. through the LGA). Cabinet Members are also expected to keep abreast of forthcoming legislation and emerging policy.

Members of the Planning Committee and the Licensing and Enforcement Committee must receive training at least every three years and are expected to keep abreast of changes in legislation and policy throughout their term. Attendance at annual refresher training is recommended and encouraged.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are offered training, usually as part of the induction programme. There is refresher training provided to the Committee, usually at the start of the municipal year.

Members of Audit and Governance Committee are required to receive regular training and updates.

Any new Chairs of Committees would also be offered training on their new role.

As well as the internal training programme offered to Members, each political group has a small training budget which they can use to provide training to their members. Some groups have used their budget to allow members of their group to attend LGA or other external training courses or conferences to develop leadership skills. There is also regular attendance by Members across the political groups at the LGA annual conference and political party conferences and meetings. |
|---|---|---|
| **1.14** | Do councillors generally find that the time they spend on council business is what they expected? | There is a general view that Members spend more time on Council business than they thought they would before they were elected. However, it is also acknowledged that this is dependent on the amount of time and effort the individual Member is prepared to commit.

The view of both Members and Officers is that the demands on Members' time are going up – they spend more time in meetings than they used to and Ward work has increased in recent times. Members also feel that, with the Council's staff numbers reducing as savings are made, it can take longer for them to receive responses to their queries and they therefore spend more time following up queries, chasing actions and trying to resolve issues. |

		Many Members attend community meetings and events in their Wards and elsewhere in the City, in addition to their formal attendance at Council meetings and meetings of outside bodies to which they have been appointed by the Council. It is not unusual for Members to have to decline invitations to some meetings or events because of other commitments.
1.15	How much time do members generally spend on the business of your council?	There amount of time Members spend on Council business is variable and depends on the individual Member and their position on the Council. As part of the current consideration of Members' Allowances by our Independent Remuneration Panel, Members have been asked to indicate how much time they spend on Council business. Of the two thirds of Councillors who responded: • 22% spend **less** than 22 hours per week on Council business; • 22% spend **about** 22 hours per week on Council business; and • 56% spend **more** than 22 hours per week on Council business. Members have highlighted that the time they spend on Council business is generally increasing and the nature of the work can be 'bitty' (for example, an individual Member may be contacted by a member of the public or an officer at any time) and that they find it hard to achieve a work/life balance with this constant state of availability. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this submission the Council is finely balanced politically and any Member who wishes to give themselves the best chance of being re-elected needs to commit a significant amount of time to their Ward, as well as Council business.
1.16	Does the council appoint members to outside bodies? If so, how many councillors are involved in this activity and what is their expected workload?	The Council currently appoints to 36 outside bodies and there are a total of 80 appointments. On average each Member has 2.22 appointments; however, the appointments are not spread equally across all Members with some Members having an increased number of appointments. In addition, non-Members are currently appointed to some positions. The frequency of meetings varies across the outside bodies, with some meeting monthly and others only meeting annually or bi-annually. Because of the varied nature of the outside bodies, the nature of the workload also varies considerably. Further information on this aspect of Members' work is contained in Appendix 2.

		There is a considerable time commitment required for some of the outside bodies – for example, the Eviction Appeals Panel, which is part of the Council's relationship with its housing management organisation, Gloucester City Homes, is meeting increasingly frequently, and there can be difficulties in finding sufficient Members to attend. In the case of some of the outside bodies, there is a contractual requirement for a Member to be in attendance (for example, Gloucester City Homes Board). At the Gloucester City Homes Board, there is also a requirement to for Councillors to be a member of and attend a sub-committee. The Board and sub-committees meet monthly. Members also attend Gloucester City Homes Customer Forum.
1.17	Does the council attract and retain members?	The Council always has more candidates than seats available in each Ward at local elections, but each political group can find it difficult to find candidates willing and able to stand. The time commitment required can be off-putting to some prospective candidates and it can be a struggle to attract women to stand for election. Most Council meetings are held in the evenings and this can affect whether or not individuals would be able to carry out functions as a Councillor.

A number of Members on the Council have held their seat for more than one term and a large proportion of Members seek re-election when their term of office ends. There have been no recent cases where Members have stood down during their term of office so retention of Members once elected doesn't seem to be a particular concern. |
1.18	Have there been any instances where the council has been unable to discharge its duties due to a lack of councillors?	This hasn't been a particular issue for the Council although, as mentioned earlier in this submission, it can sometimes be difficult to arrange ad hoc meetings to fit within legislative requirements and Member availability.
1.19	Do councillors have an individual or ward budget for allocation in their area? If so, how is such a system administered?	Councillors do not currently have ward budgets, but proposals for these to be in place are currently being worked on. However, it is anticipated that the introduction of ward budgets will increase Members' workload.
Part Two : Scrutiny functions		
2.1	How do scrutiny arrangements operate	The Council operates one Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising 15 Members, but may not include Members of the

	in the authority? How many committees are there and what is their membership?	Cabinet. The Committee is chaired by a Member of the opposition. Task and Finish Groups are appointed by the Committee to consider specific topics and comprise three or more Members, one from each political Group. A maximum of two Task and Finish Groups are in operation at any one time. In addition to the Council's Scrutiny Committees, there are also a number of inter-authority Scrutiny Committees which the Council's Members attend. These include the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Joint Airport Scrutiny Working Group and the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel. The Gloucestershire authorities, including Gloucester City Council, are in the process of setting up a Strategic Economic Partnership, to take effect on 1 July 2014, and this will involve an additional joint scrutiny Committee on which City Members will sit.
2.2	What is the general workload of scrutiny committees? Has the council ever found that it has had too many active projects for the scrutiny process to function effectively?	The main Committee manages the scrutiny work programme, and focuses largely on pre and post scrutiny of Cabinet decisions, as well as receiving presentations from the Council's partner organisations. Generally the agenda for Committee meetings is limited to a maximum of four items in order for Members to be able to spend sufficient time on each item and this has ensured that the Committee's workload is prioritised effectively. However, meetings frequently have to be extended beyond the time limit set by the Committee to deal with all the business for the meeting. Task and Finish Group workload is managed by ensuring that no more than two Groups are operating at any one time.
2.3	How is the work of scrutiny committee programmed? Is the work strictly timetabled?	The agenda for each meeting is set by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Spokesperson using the Scrutiny Work Programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan as the basis for agenda planning. There is also a rolling scrutiny programme which covers items which are considered at a certain time of the year. All Members are able to suggest items for the Committee to consider. The Committee is occasionally asked to take ad-hoc items which are not timetabled and such requests are usually agreed. Call-Ins are dealt with as and when they occur in addition to the ordinary business and occur approximately once per annum and usually by special meeting. As stated above, agenda are usually limited to a maximum of four items per meeting.
2.4	What activities are scrutiny committee members expected to carry out between formal meetings?	Members are expected to familiarise themselves with matters on the agenda and do any further research that they deem necessary. Members are also expected to consider and identify matters for future scrutiny. Members of Task and Finish Groups are also expected to do further research into

		the subject matter, make visits, meet with experts on the subject matter of the Task and Finish Group and analyse evidence provided to them. In 2013/14, there were two Task and Finish Groups; one was on Recycling and met 7 times; the other was on the Evening Economy and met 6 times.
Part Three: Representational Role of councillors		
3.1	In general terms, how do councillors carry out their representational roles with electors? Do members mainly respond to casework from constituents or do they have a more active role in the community?	Members carry out their representational role in a variety of ways, but they generally take an active role in their communities because they feel it's important to speak to people in their communities to find out what their views so that these can be taken into account in decision-making within the Council and elsewhere. Some Members hold surgeries in their Wards, whereas in other Wards, street surgeries, community meetings or newsletters have been found to meet community needs better.
3.2	How do councillors generally deal with casework? Do they pass on issues directly to staff or do they take a more in depth approach to resolving issues?	Obviously, this varies depending on the person and the issue, but Members generally try to signpost individuals to help them resolve issues. For some parts of the community, Members will be more directly involved – for example, parts of the elderly community may not have access to Internet/email facilities and Members take a more in depth approach in these cases to help with access to relevant officers or providing printed information. Members tend to take a more active role where there may be a number of agencies involved in resolving the issue or where the issue is complicated.
3.3	What support do councillors receive in discharging their duties in relation to casework and representational role in their ward?	Officers are available to provide information and guidance to Members where the casework relates to Council functions or services. Members don't receive any direct support for casework and do not have access to any administrative services.
3.4	How do councillors engage with constituents? Do they hold surgeries, distribute newsletters, hold public meetings, write blogs etc?	Members have a variety of methods for engaging with their constituents, and this varies with the Member and the Ward. Some Members hold formal surgeries or street surgeries, but others have found that these aren't right for their Wards. Many Members find that, where there is a specific issue of concern to the public, public meetings on that issue are generally well attended and enable the Member(s) to hear and understand local views.

		Some Members issue newsletters and many Members have engaged with social media to keep in touch with their constituents. In areas where there are residents meetings, Members attend when they can, but there can often be formal Council meetings occurring at the same time which makes it difficult for Members to attend meetings in their Wards. There is one Parish Council within the City, so most local meetings tend to be neighbourhood or resident-type meetings.
3.5	How has the role of councillors changed since the council last considered how many elected members it should have?	Since the last review in 2002, the workload of Members and the level of public scrutiny of Council business and the activities of Members, have increased. There is also a much greater level of engagement by all Members with the local press. Gloucester has a daily newspaper and a local radio station, and there is an expectation that Members, particularly Cabinet Members, Group Leaders and relevant spokepersons, will comment on local and/or national issues on an almost daily basis. As has been mentioned earlier, Members are easily contactable and, with technological changes, such as the growth in social media and easy internet access, Members are expected to respond on issues more quickly than perhaps was the case in the past. There is also higher expectation on the part of the public that their concerns will be listened to by Members and the advocacy role of local Members in representing their communities is more widely used where communities feel strongly about particular issues. In Gloucester, there have been specific incidents where Members have needed to perform their community leadership role. For example, Gloucester experienced severe flooding in 2007 and Members acted as contacts for emergency planning purposes. Although much investment has been made to alleviate the risk of flooding, it remains a real potential issue in the future and community leadership by Members plays an important part of the Council's emergency response. Community leadership by Members was also an important part of the Council's response to the rioting experienced in Gloucester in 2011.
3.6	Has the council put in place any mechanisms for councillors to interact with young people, those not on the electoral register or	As part of Local Democracy Week, the Council engages with local educational establishments to hold events, such as a 'Question Time' type of event, which are generally well received. The Mayor attends events at schools, colleges and the University within the City to speak to young people about democracy and the civic role in particular. In the past, Members have had greater opportunities to engage with

	minority groups or their representative bodies?	young people, but most connections between Members and young people now occurs at Ward level.
3.7	Are councillors expected to attend meetings of community bodies such as parish councils or residents associations? If so, what is the level of their involvement and what role are they expected to play?	Members are generally expected to attend community meetings within their Wards. There is only 1 Parish Council within the City Council's administrative area and most community meetings are therefore either Neighbourhood Partnerships, which the Council took a role in helping to set up several years ago, residents' meetings or public meetings arranged to address specific community issues. The very nature of residents' groups means that they are local to a particular community and this means that there can be several such groups in a single ward. When Members attend these meetings, they have the role of both providing information to the group and for feeding back into the Council the views of the community.

Part Four: the future

Localism and policy development

4.1	What impact do you think the localism agenda might have on the scope and conduct of council business and how do you think this might affect the role of councillors?	The Localism Act has emphasized the importance of, and facilitated more involvement of, local communities in the decision-making processes of the Council. There is likely to be a greater need to involve communities in development of Council policy and consult communities on decisions the Council is proposing to take. The role of Members will further develop to help communities engage with the Council's policy and decision-making processes and there will be a greater need for Members to be fully aware of all that is going on within the Council where it could affect their communities. There are likely to be more occasions where Members will have to choose whether or not they can best represent their Wards by taking an advocacy role for their constituents or by being part of the decision-making by the Council, particularly where issues divide communities.
4.2	Does the council have any plans to devolve responsibilities and/or assets to community organisations? Or does the council expect to take on more responsibilities in the medium to long term?	The Council is currently reviewing its policy regarding the devolution of responsibilities and/or assets to community organizations and developing an ABCD approach (Asset Based Community Development) to its communities. The Council has no medium or long term plans to take on more responsibilities, but this may change if opportunities to take on broader responsibilities at a local level are provided by national government.

Service delivery		
4.3	Have changes to the arrangements for local delivery of services led to significant changes to councillors' workloads? (For example, control of housing stock or sharing services with neighbouring authorities).	The Council is in the process of transferring its housing stock to Gloucester City Homes, the Arms Length Management Organisation that currently manages the Council's housing stock. If the proposed transfer is supported by tenants, the housing stock will transfer by 31 March 2015 to Gloucester City Homes. Although the Council will no longer be the Landlord, it will still have a role on the Board of Gloucester City Homes and Member involvement in this Board is still expected to be at a significant level. The Council will also retain its duties in respect of homelessness and the scrutiny and development of housing provision, as well as the Gloucester City Homes Customer Forum..
4.4	Are there any developments in policy ongoing that might significantly affect the role of elected members in the future?	The Chief Executive post is currently vacant and the Council has decided to review its senior management structure after a 6 month trial period of sharing the Head of Paid Service role between 2 Corporate Directors. The review will be undertaken in autumn 2014. Since the trial period started, one of the Corporate Directors has decided to leave the Council. This departure is likely to have a considerable impact on the role of the Council's political leadership in the short term. No political consensus on the way forward currently exists.
Finance		
4.5	What has been the impact of recent financial constraints on the council's activities? Would a reduction in the scope and/or scale of council business warrant a reduction in the number of councillors?	As has been identified earlier in this submission, reduction in staffing levels has meant that officers may not be able to respond to Members' requests for information as needed and this can lead to Members being contacted more frequently by individuals wanting to know what is happening. As officer capacity within the organisation has reduced, this has impacted on scheduling of work, such as play area projects, meaning that the work may be planned to start further in the future than desirable. Members are often the first point of contact for constituents who want to know when particular work will be carried out and Members often have to deal with complaints from the public where things aren't seen to be happening. The financial constraints have meant that Members have a greater role in engaging with their communities to discuss options for delivery of Council services and activities in the future and for explaining what financial and other decisions the Council has taken and why.

4.6	If you are proposing a reduction in the number of councillors for your authority, to what extent is this a reflection of reduced activity of the council overall, an anticipation of efficiency plans or a statement to local people? Or none of these things?	The Council is not proposing a reduction in the number of Councillors. The population of the City has increased by more than 10% since the last review and there has been a commensurate increase in the electorate, suggesting a need for an extra 3 Councillors.

Draft Final Submission – 05.06.14

Section 4 : Summary of Council Size proposal

Following consideration of the LGBCE criteria and evidence above against this criterion, the Member Working Group considered the issues which would impact upon future Council size. The Member Working Group considered a range of Council Size figures and concluded that anything below the current number of 36 Councillors would be damaging to the effective future operation of the Council because of the various roles the Council and Councillors are expected to perform.

The Member Working Group considered the implications of an increase in Council size, a decrease in Council size or maintaining the current Council size number.

Reducing Council Size

The Member Working Group considered that a reduction would compromise the effective running of the Council and effective representation of the community in the following ways:

1. Effective representation would be reduced thereby disenfranchising electors from Council decisions.

2. Due to the significant levels of need, a reduction in the level of capacity and support Members provide to these communities will lead to an even greater reduction in engagement and a higher level of disenfranchisement, amongst communities who find it difficult to engage to begin with.

3. A smaller pool of Members to conduct the scrutiny of the Council would be detrimental to the Council as it would reduce the pool of skills, attributes and experiences available to effectively analyse and review the decisions of the executive, thereby potentially affecting the quality of the decision making of the Council.

4. There would not be sufficient Councillor capacity to service the different committees and outside bodies appropriately due to the significant workload ascribed to each committee/outside body.

5. It would be a significant barrier to the recruitment of new Councillors as the workload ascribed to each individual Councillor would need to increase to accommodate the reduction. This would exclude potential Councillors from different backgrounds and situations due to the level of commitment required to complete the role effectively.

6. GCC is an ambitious District Council with a high level of aspiration for the area and its residents against a backdrop of multiple deprivation. The Council, with its partners, has been and continues to be proactive in tackling the multiple issues which affect Gloucester residents. This ambition requires a substantial amount of

input from Members from working with partner agencies, policy setting and assisting residents directly within their wards who have a high level of need. Reducing Council size would negatively impact on the ability of the Council to implement its ambitious policies to improve the City as set out in the Council Plan and meet the challenges it has identified.

7. GCC is keen to meet the aspirations of all its residents and make the City more vibrant and one that its residents are proud to live in and spend their leisure time in. A reduction in Councillor numbers would negatively impact on the Council's ability to meet these aspirations.

8. The Council is in the process of adopting a Joint Core Strategy (with Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council) as part of its development plan, to meet its future housing needs. Between now and 2020, approximately 2,706 homes are expected to be built. An increase in house building will attract more electors to the area therefore any reduction in Council Size will be damaging to effective representation in the future.

Maintaining current Council Size

The Member Working Group considered that a Council size the same as the current Council (i.e. 36) was inappropriate because:

1. Electorate numbers have increased since the last boundary review and, in fact, one of the reasons for the review is that there is significant electoral equality in one of the Council Wards (Quedgeley Fieldcourt) presently.

2. The Council's projected electorate shows the number of electors will increase by around 4873 by 2020. This is a conservative and prudent estimate based on previous trends, planning permissions granted and the current economic climate. The Gloucester average number of electors per Councillor in 2014 is 2618 and the current number of Councillors is not sufficient to support any further increase in electorate effectively.

3. The role of Councillors has evolved since last review was carried out, in ways that couldn't have been anticipated as identified in paragraph 3.5 of the table in Section 3 above.

Increasing Council Size

The Member Working group considered that an **increase to 39** was appropriate because:

1. As population grows within the District, the number of electors increases proportionately. The Gloucester average number of electors per Councillor in

2014 is 2618 and the current number of Councillors will not be sufficient to support the projected increase in electorate effectively.

2. The Council considers that 39 Councillors are required to effective complete the governance, scrutiny and representational role of the Council, including roles on outside bodies and external partnerships the Council has identified as being necessary to achievement of its aspirations for the City.

3. Gloucester will experience population growth in the coming years which will impact on how Members can effectively represent their electors. This is characterised by population growth of about 1,000 per annum, an increasing proportion of which are from BME Groups.

4. The Council is in the process of adopting a Joint Core Strategy (with Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council) as part of its development plan, to meet its future housing needs. Between now and 2020, approximately 2,706 homes are expected to be built. An increase in house building will attract more electors to the area and an increase in Council Size will be necessary to ensure effective representation in the future.

5. A further impact of changes to Councillor role is the requirement for greater knowledge and expertise in all areas of the Council and partner organisations' business to effectively fulfill the role. This has also increased due to a greater level of legislative change and an increased expectation on the part of the electorate that Councillors will have knowledge on any given subject.

6. The accessibility of Councillors by the electorate has increased substantially in recent years, particularly with the advent of social media, and this has had a knock-on impact on the responsiveness the electorate expect from their Councillors.

7. Councillors are well known within their communities and as a result there is a high level of demand from different community groups for Councillors to become involved in the various different aspects of community interest, which is a significant element of a Councillor's workload within their ward.

8. Although the LGBCE is focussed on the electorate, the Council asks that the Boundary Commission bears in mind that Councillors can be contacted by any person in Gloucester, whether they are on the electoral register or not. Councillors are still expected to respond to queries and assist such persons, notwithstanding that they do not form part of the electorate.

Conclusion

The Council's conclusion, in light of the information contained in this submission, is that the Council Size should be 39, an increase of 3 from the present Council size.