

## **Cornwall Council First Draft Submission on Council size**

### Introduction

The Council is subject to an electoral review as the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has identified the need to address issues of electoral inequality that have arisen since the last electoral review.

The Commission confirmed in January 2016 that the outcome of the review will take effect at the unitary elections in May 2021, unless the Council opts to seek permission for an out-of-turn election. This concession was a direct result of the representations made to the Commission by the Leader. These included that the Council would take the opportunity of a more relaxed timescale to ask some deep and fundamental questions about how local government for Cornwall should operate in the future, especially the number of Councillors required to run the Council. The initial stage of that review has been undertaken and is referred to further below. The Council's final submission on Council size must be submitted by 3 March 2017, with the opportunity to submit first and second draft submissions by 14 October 2016 and 16 December 2016 respectively.

This is the Council's first draft submission and the Council anticipates making changes to its submission as it gives further consideration to the available evidence between this submission and 3 March 2017, including the Governance Review Report. Necessarily, the Council needs to make clear that as its submissions are refined, culminating in the final submission in March, it may prove necessary to move away from the approach set out in this submission, according to where the available evidence leads us.

The Council has been careful to ensure that this initial submission on Council size has been evidence-led and not a retrospective justification of a pre-determined Council size.

In preparing this submission the Council has had regard to the evidence so far available, including the findings of the parallel Governance Review. Consideration has also been given to the Commission's obligation to have regard to:

- the need to secure equality of representation;
- the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- the need to secure effective and convenient local government

There has been a careful examination of the decision-making, local and representational roles of a Councillor in the context of the principle that overall the role should not preclude a candidate from standing because they are in full-time employment. This submission and the accompanying evidence demonstrate that these issues have been appropriately considered.

We have looked at how many Members we believe are needed to manage the business of the Council as a provider of services committed to commerciality, commissioning, devolution and empowerment. The starting point has been the current 123 Members and this first draft submission reflects our views on the appropriateness of the current number in the context of how the Council sees the role of a Cornwall Councillor from the 2021 unitary elections and the years immediately thereafter.

Regard has been had to the inevitable tension between the prioritisation of efficiency and transaction of the Council's business and the prioritisation of community engagement and oversight. Whatever Council size is determined, the correct balance must be struck between the different influencing factors including the need for effective representation and effective debate.

In preparing this submission the Council has recognised the importance of not dehumanising the role of Councillors, particularly in the context of the role they play in the communities they represent and the good they do in supporting individuals and groups, whether through simply being someone to talk to through to intervening in the resolution of complex issues. However, the Council also recognises that there are opportunities to realise efficiencies in the way Councillors discharge the different aspects of their roles. In relation to this latter point the Electoral Review Panel and the wider Council are keen to properly review and understand the recommendations of the Governance Review Report and the implications those will have if and when implemented. The Council will therefore address these impacts further in its subsequent submissions.

This submission has been approved by a majority decision at the Council's meeting on 6 October 2016 following recommendation by the Council's Electoral Review Panel.

### Proposed Council size

The evidence that has been gathered during the electoral review process leads us to conclude that the present number of 123 Councillors is not too large for the organisation as it is currently constituted. The electorate to Councillor ratio is broadly in line with comparative councils. If anything, it demonstrates that Cornwall is currently under-represented versus many other authorities. Evidence from time surveys shows that Councillors have a generally very full workload.

The Governance Review Report has been published (Appendix 1). One of the key recommendations from the Review is that the Council should retain the Strong Leader and Cabinet model, albeit with some reconfiguration of advisory and scrutiny functions. It is anticipated that the Council will make some changes in its governance arrangements and we would expect these changes and improvements in ways of working to lead to some reduction in the quantum of County Hall activity for most Members.

Although some of the Council's services will be progressively devolved to other parties, including in particular local councils, we would expect that the overall level of Councillors' casework will not diminish and, in fact, there is an argument that it could increase because of the devolution process. However, we would expect Members to find efficiency savings in the way that they carry out casework with improved IT processes and infrastructure.

At this stage, and assuming the retention of the Strong Leader and Cabinet model but with other changes to the Council's governance arrangements, the Council proposes that the Council size needed for Cornwall Council from the unitary elections in 2021 should be in the range 105 to 115.

## The rationale for this submission

### **Background**

#### Geography

Set on the most south westerly tip of the South West peninsula, the County covers an area of 1,376 square miles (3,559 square kilometres). It is the second largest local authority area in the South West region and has the longest coastline of all English counties at 422 miles (697 km). The sea forms the northern, southern and western boundaries, with the River Tamar forming much of the eastern border with Devon, its only neighbouring County.

Apart from its developed areas, Cornwall has a mix of moorland, woodland, pastureland, arable farmland and, particularly along the south coast, lowland stretches.

Cornwall Council is responsible for over 7272 kilometres (4545 miles) of road from major principal roads to narrow country lanes. Even with this extensive highways network, journey times from one end of the County to the other are between 1 hour and 45 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the start and finish points.

The size and geography of Cornwall result in many Councillors having to travel large distances to attend New County Hall in Truro for meetings. At the time of writing, the available data relating to Councillors' home to County Hall journeys suggests the following:

- Shortest journey (round trip): 2 miles
- Longest journey (round trip): 112 miles
- Mean average (round trip): 49 miles
- 11.5% of Councillors live 50 miles + from County Hall
- 42.6% of Councillors live 25 miles + from County Hall

#### Environment

Cornwall's landscape, seascape, coastline, moors and history shape people's

sense of belonging and are at the heart of our perception of place.

26% of Cornwall has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – a designated landscape considered most valuable in England and Wales – including Bodmin Moor, the Camel Estuary and the Tamar Valley. There are also 144 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 16 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and three National Nature Reserves covering 2000 hectares, including 450 miles of coastline. In addition, there are about 400 wildlife sites of county value covering approximately 10% of Cornwall's land area, all of which contribute to environmental quality and our sense of place.

The County has UNESCO World Heritage Site Status in recognition of Cornwall's Mining Heritage and includes landscapes representing former mining districts, ancillary industrial concentrations and associated settlements.

### Economy

Average earnings continue to remain low compared to the UK average. In 2015, at £17,340, Cornish earnings were 77% of the UK average.

Employment in Cornwall is mainly in distribution, hotels and restaurants (31%) and public administration, education and health (29%), with Cornwall being more dependent on these two sectors (60%) than the regional (54%) and national (50%) averages. Manufacturing accounts for less than one-tenth (9%) of employment locally. Agriculture and fishing account for a larger share of employment in Cornwall (3%) than the regional (2%) or national (1%) average. Many residents work in low paid, low skilled seasonal jobs.

The number of people in work fell during the recession and its aftermath but has recently seen an upturn. The latest figure is 244,800 people in work with 3,000 more people in employment than last year.

Cornwall's economy is more dependent on the self-employed than is the general case for UK regions. 22.7% of those in employment are self-employed compared to the UK average of 13.9%. With self-employed earnings falling more than those of employees, Cornwall's dependence on self-employment has severely impacted on output levels. In addition, Cornwall has a higher percentage of part-time workers at 29% than the national average of 25.4%.

Total Gross Value Added (GVA) increased in 2014 compared to 2013 but with the lowest percentage rise of any NUTS (Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics) region. In 2014 it was at £9.462m compared to £9.405m in 2013. GVA per head declined in 2014 by 0.1%. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly was the only region to experience negative growth. This is against the backdrop of a steadily rising population.

In Cornwall, productivity per hour not only remains low but has declined relative to the UK average, although the latest figure for 2013 showed a slight recovery.

A number of factors contribute to this – the lack of large employment units, a high level of part-time workers, a low proportion with NVQ4 + skills, Cornwall's capital stock, industrial structure and productivity across sectors. Removing London from the figures gives a more positive picture but still indicates low and declining levels of productivity. As a percentage of the UK minus London, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly fell back from 81.4% in 2004 to 76.7% in 2013 (77.2% to 72% including London figures).

The Council has received significant financial support, including through EU funding, to address some of the issues facing the County. Although the Council has received some assurance from the Government about the continuation of financial support following the referendum result supporting a withdrawal from the EU, there remains a degree of uncertainty around future funding.

### Rural and urban mix, diversity, wealth and poverty

Cornwall is an area of many contrasts, with varied landscapes and remote, rural, coastal and environmentally sensitive areas, interspersed with villages and historic market towns.

Cornwall has a dispersed settlement pattern and over 60% of the population live in settlements of over 3,000 population. While Cornwall's larger towns are small in a national context, they are no less urban. The larger settlements and conurbations are Camborne, Redruth, Pool and Illogan with 56,600 people, St Austell 34,500, Falmouth and Penryn 32,500, Truro and Threemilestone 23,600, Penzance 21,500 and Newquay 20,600. These larger towns contain about 35% of the population. Cornwall's settlement pattern fundamentally influences most of the challenges and opportunities that Cornwall faces.

Cornwall has concentrations of both visible wealth as well as significant visible and hidden poverty. Around 52,000 people (10% of the population of Cornwall) live in 'deprived' communities according to the national Index of Multiple Deprivation. Many people living in these areas will experience issues associated with lower incomes, higher unemployment rates, ill health, child poverty, low qualifications, poorer housing conditions and higher crime rates. A significant number of these deprived communities are in town areas, however not all deprived people live in deprived areas. There are likely to be a number of people experiencing issues associated with deprivation in rural areas who are not identified through national measures, as the rural nature of Cornwall along with its dispersed population make areas of need and 'hot-spots' difficult to identify.

People living in a deprived area have a life expectancy of up to 8 years shorter than affluent areas in Cornwall. People living in deprived areas are also more likely to suffer from illnesses like chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder or heart disease and suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Cornwall as a whole is not particularly deprived; ranking 110 out of 326 local

authorities. However, there are wide geographic variations between areas; Pengegon in Camborne is within the 2% most deprived areas in England and Latchbrook South is at the other end of the spectrum at 94%.

Child poverty in Cornwall overall is low, but this masks significant geographic variation – child poverty is likely to rise further given the welfare reforms and austerity measures; some areas are already twice the England average at 58% of children in poverty (Camborne Pengegon area).

### Population

The usual resident population of Cornwall at census day 2011 was 532,300, an increase of 6.7% since 2001. 523,400 (98.3%) live in households, giving an average household size of 2.27, with a further 8,800 living in communal establishments (1.7%). There are 230,400 households in Cornwall, an increase of 6.8% since 2001. The changes in Cornwall's age structure are as would be expected. Numbers of residents in the 5-14, 30-39 and 50-59 age groups have decreased over the last decade. Due to younger migration and more births the numbers of residents in the 0-4 and 15-29 age groups have increased, along with those aged 40-49. As with the rest of the UK, Cornwall's population continues to grow older with increases in the 60-74, 75-84 and 85+ age groups.

Despite overall growth, population growth isn't consistent across all areas of Cornwall. Many coastal communities have shown a population decline, linked, although not exclusively, with holiday homes.

### Housing

72% of households in Cornwall own their homes, however, the cost of housing for sale and what residents can afford to buy is a major issue in Cornwall – particularly for new households. Despite the recent economic downturn house prices in Cornwall have remained strong as demand for housing has remained high. Since 2002 average house prices in Cornwall have exceeded the national average; in April 2012 the average house price in Cornwall was £184,311 compared to £160,417 across England and Wales. In 2010 the value of the lower quartile houses (cheapest 25%) was 9.3 times greater than the lower quartile earnings (lowest 25%) in Cornwall. A contributing factor to high demand in Cornwall is the second home market. The 2001 Census identified that 5% of dwellings in Cornwall were second homes and Council tax figures suggest that this remained the case in 2012. However, this is not consistent and there is a significant proportion of areas which have a higher proportion of second homes than the average. The highest is Polzeath which has nearly 50% and areas such as St Ives, Padstow, Rock, St Mawes, Rame and Port Issac all have over 25% of dwelling stock which are second homes.

### Cornwall Council Group of Companies

Cornwall Council has put in place a group of companies through which it delivers

some of its services, such as aspects of economic development, highways maintenance and the housing landlord function. Although there is some Member involvement in the boards of these companies, the day to day functioning is a step removed from the Council's operational core, resulting in the principal focus for Members in relation to the services being delivered in this way being at a strategic level.

This does not detract from the local representative role Members still have to undertake assisting their communities and constituents in addressing issues of communication that arise through this approach to arms-length service delivery. Members report that the relationship with the companies is not always straightforward as they are separate entities, albeit they are wholly owned by the Council and the perception is that it now takes longer for Members to find the appropriate officer to deal with a query and then to track it through to a satisfactory resolution for constituents.

### Transition to Unitary

The last electoral review was undertaken in the context of local government reorganisation in Cornwall, which led to Cornwall Council becoming the single principal unitary authority in Cornwall on 1 April 2009, with the May 2009 unitary elections delivering 123 elected Members; the current complement. This was a significant reduction from the combined total of 331 Councillors at the previous county and district tiers.

The removal of a tier of local government in Cornwall has, of course, seen the unitary Council absorbing the functions of the former County Council and those of the five District and single Borough Councils. That has meant that those who were Councillors at only one tier have had to learn about and deal with representations from constituents on the areas previously covered by the other tier. This has, in effect, meant an expanded role and a significant increase in workload.

The last electoral review was completed before Cornwall Council was established and was therefore speculative about how the Council would operate. Those Cornwall Councillors who were previously County Councillors report that it was envisaged the workload would involve approximately 25 hours per week on average, with a great deal of administrative support and professional assistance. However, the consensus is that the reality is very different.

Members report that constituents have expressed the view that Cornwall Council is focussed on the centre, Truro, and that they feel remote from the Council. The number of Cornwall Councillors in and accessible to the community is fundamental to addressing this perception.

### First Rural Devolution Deal in the Country

The Devolution Deal for Cornwall gives Cornwall greater powers over public

sector funding and is the first stage of a longer journey towards delivering the full Case for Cornwall. The Deal was signed in July 2015.

The Council is already working with partners to develop an integrated health and social care system, and deliver significant economic growth, with enhanced business support, greater access to employment and training opportunities, together with a much improved public transport network and more efficient use of public sector buildings.

The Deal covers a range of key areas including integrated health and social care, transport, employment and skills, EU funding, business support, energy, the public estate and heritage and culture.

### Democratic representation

There are 122 electoral divisions, one of which is a two Member division. The area of the electoral divisions ranges from 0.7 square kilometres to 137.6 square kilometres. The extremes of the range, and everything in between, are an indication of how geographically diverse communities are in Cornwall and why it is important that this spread and the differing demands on Members are properly understood. Appendix 2 lists the areas of each of the current electoral divisions.

### The Council's Strategy

The eight strategic themes in the Council's Strategy and the rationale behind them help illustrate the challenges facing the Council:

*Ambitious Cornwall – The scale of the challenges facing public services is without precedent; they will prove fatal if organisations turn their back on each other. The public, private and community sectors in Cornwall need to stand tall and united, working as one to agree a new relationship with the Government that can remove the barriers. The Council has to make £196m of savings by 2020, but over the same period Cornwall will see an economic investment of £1bn. This can reverse Cornwall's fortunes if we have the freedom and collective drive and ambition. An Ambitious Cornwall needs an ambitious Council at its core, providing clear leadership and strategic direction; otherwise this significant investment opportunity will be missed.*

*Engaging with our communities – Cornwall's many towns and villages are all different and therefore need different approaches from services providers – a 'one size fits all' approach doesn't work. A positive and productive relationship between Cornwall Council and the town and parish councils is vital to the successful local governance of Cornwall. Irrespective of the financial situation facing the public sector, it is entirely appropriate to see the voluntary and local business sectors playing an increasingly important role in the delivery of services to the people of Cornwall. We can draw on the social capital that comes from engagement and uniqueness in our communities.*

*Partners working together – The time is now right to revisit the issue of public sector integration with renewed vigour. All parts of the public sector continue to be squeezed financially and public expectations and demand for services continue to rise. In the past we have considered our services and organisations in isolation from each other but for Cornwall to respond effectively to the challenges ahead – this has to change. People routinely get passed between organisations as they try to access advice and support – we can simplify this process, remove the duplication, reduce costs and improve the quality of the service provided.*

*Greater access to essentials for living – Cornwall’s geography and dispersed settlement pattern, along with the high cost of living and growing inequalities, are making it increasingly difficult for some households to access the essentials that enable a decent standard of living. If left unchecked this is likely to mean demand on public services increases as more households and individuals become isolated and vulnerable. People need safe and supportive communities with strong social cohesion, good quality housing, affordable heating, healthy food, public transport, digital access and a thriving local economy. A radical rethink of the way the Council and partners work together is essential.*

*Driving the economy – Despite 20 years of EU investment Cornwall’s economy is still beset by low pay due to low skilled jobs and low productivity – Cornwall’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stands at 64% of the EU average (2011 figures). Despite impressive growth rates and a significant pre-recession improvement, the fundamental challenge lies in the long term rebalancing of Cornwall’s economy. Investment in higher and further education has seen improvements in infrastructure and high level qualifications, but Cornwall stills has some way to close the gap with the rest of the UK. While there has been a clear sign and evidence of growth – new buildings, facilities, successful companies and a strong brand – there has been little change in earning and benefit dependencies, with continued concentrations of deprivation on former public sector housing estates and dispersed rural deprivation.*

*Stewardship of Cornwall’s assets – Cornwall’s natural, cultural and heritage assets are an essential part of its economy and quality of life. All of Cornwall’s landscapes matter, not just the unprecedented number of international and national designations including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, World Heritage status, the Cornwall and Tamar Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, world class beaches and a rich cultural heritage of mining and arts. However, there is pressure on our natural, cultural and heritage assets due to population growth, increased development pressure and the impacts of climate change. Handled sensitively, there is potential to create excellence in our farming and food production, high value tourism and renewable energy.*

*Healthier and safe communities – Good health and wellbeing is at the heart of*

*happy, vibrant and prosperous communities. It provides the foundation for our ability to learn and develop, helps us to achieve our personal and family ambitions, and can sustain a good quality of life in later years. People in poorer communities live shorter lives and also have longer periods of ill health. Inequalities start before birth and are reinforced by factors like poor housing and not being prepared for school. These in turn lead to unemployment or lower paid jobs. Unhealthy environments and lifestyles create a higher risk of developing physical and mental health conditions and a dependency on health and social care services into older age.*

*Being efficient, effective and innovative – About £170m of savings have been made since 2009 through better processes, pay bill reductions, reducing waste and bureaucracy whilst, for the most part, protecting front line services. The Council has been innovative and adopted new ways of working including setting up arm's length companies to trade and generate income. However, grant funding from the Government is expected to be phased out completely by 2020 which, coupled with rising demand and costs, intensifies the financial challenge. An effective response to this challenge will mean increasing diversity in the way we provide public services and support for communities to play a bigger role in shaping and providing services.*

### **Comparison authorities**

The Council is cognisant of the Commission's desire to consider the Council's proposal on Council size in context and by reference to the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours model and the fifteen nearest neighbours, being statistically similar neighbours rather than geographically close. The Commission's guidance acknowledges that this is only a statistical comparison and the Council urges the Commission to have proper regard to the totality of the evidence presented and accept that the Council has put forward a sufficiently strong case that a simplistic statistical approach is not appropriate.

The Council has undertaken an analysis of authorities both including and beyond those identified using the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours model.

Part of that analysis is based on the Local Government Act 1972 ceremonial county areas. That data is presented at Appendix 3 with further local authority comparison data presented at Appendix 4. The table at Appendix 3 takes the electorate for every ceremonial council as it stood at the last annual canvass on 1 December 2015 and divides it by the number of councillors in each ceremonial county as of 5 May 2016, including any implemented boundary reviews up to this year's local elections, resulting in a ratio of electors to councillors for each ceremonial county area. Of the forty-five ceremonial county areas, this data places Cornwall sixth in terms of the number of electors per councillor with a ratio of 3215. The range is from West Yorkshire at 4162 to Cumbria at 1025 with the mean average giving a ratio of 1:2225 and the median average being 1895 (Buckinghamshire). The number of Councillors per 1,000 electorate is also

shown. Acknowledging that the electorate ratio is only one element of the overall consideration, this information demonstrates that since Cornwall became a unitary authority the democratic representation is low compared to the majority of other ceremonial county areas. Prior to that the total number of Councillors for Cornwall, based on the 1 December 2015 electorate, would have given an electorate average of 1,194 and 0.837 Councillors per 1,000 electorate. Some of the information from Appendix 3 is represented in the following table.

Ceremonial County Area	Total electorate at 1/12/15	Councillors at 5/5/16	Ratio
West Yorkshire	1548407	372	4162
West Midlands	1915144	489	3916
South Yorkshire	969435	265	3658
Northumberland	233292	67	3482
Wiltshire	507028	155	3271
Cornwall (excluding Isles of Scilly)	395421	123	3215
Humberside	676367	211	3206
Avon	807697	255	3167
Bedfordshire	461666	147	3141
Greater London(excluding City of London)	5638377	1851	3046
Greater Manchester	1948315	645	3021
Mersyside	989806	333	2972
Cheshire	784787	270	2907
Shropshire	353837	126	2808
Durham	456201	176	2592
Tyne and Wyre	800888	333	2405
Berkshire	615262	293	2100
Hampshire	1410063	684	2061
Cleveland	398971	194	2057
East Sussex	582239	296	1967
Leicestershire	762294	389	1960
Nottinghamshire	790674	409	1933
Buckinghamshire	555118	293	1895
Essex	1299775	712	1826
Herefordshire and Worcestershire	573147	318	1802
Kent	1254652	698	1797
Devon	863635	482	1792
Staffordshire	826454	467	1770
Cambridgeshire	591293	337	1755
Dorset	570203	330	1728
Oxfordshire	478380	282	1696
West Sussex	614246	374	1642
Derbyshire	767060	474	1618
Warwickshire	411539	255	1614
Northamptonshire	517062	321	1611
Norfolk	662965	414	1601

North Yorkshire	597504	376	1589
Hertfordshire	831139	530	1568
Gloucestershire	469947	301	1561
Surrey	844305	557	1516
Lincolnshire	537858	364	1478
Suffolk	536693	368	1458
Lancashire	1066343	763	1398
Somerset	395388	294	1345
Cumbria	377378	368	1025

The data provided at Appendix 4 further supports the above point, including through confirmation of the governance models, geography and density of electors per hectare. If we apply the electorate ratios in Appendix 4 for each of the fifteen CIPFA nearest neighbours to the June 2016 electorate for Cornwall (425,514) we arrive at the following illustrative Council sizes for Cornwall. The determination of nearest neighbours and what this analysis suggests should only be a starting point as the particular characteristics of Cornwall and the other supporting evidence need to be taken into account in arriving at the correct Council size. The nearest neighbours are set out in descending order with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council the statistically closest neighbour and Central Bedfordshire statistically the furthest, of these fifteen.

Council	Their electorate to Councillor ratio	The relative Council size for Cornwall
East Riding of Yorkshire	3930	108
Northumberland	3770	113
Shropshire	3321	128
Cheshire West and Chester	3418	124
Cheshire East	3562	119
Wiltshire	3695	115
North Somerset	3403	125
Isle of Wight	2844	150
Herefordshire	2793	152
Durham	3268	130
Bath & North East Somerset	1973	216
Poole	2876	148
South Gloucestershire	2925	145
York	3509	121
Central Bedfordshire	3559	120

The average of these illustrative numbers is a Council size of 134. If we disregard Bath & North East Somerset as the comparator that is significantly different to the other authorities we still arrive at an average Council size of 128. It is suggested that this comparison, although simplistic, emphasises the importance of the CIPFA comparison authorities not being determinative of the appropriate Council size for Cornwall, or indeed any other Council area, particularly as there is such disparity between local authority areas. Clearly

there is no demonstrable national benchmark or norm for the Councillor to elector ratio.

### **Time spent by Cornwall Councillors fulfilling their role and key factors**

The submissions made at the time of the last electoral review, in anticipation of the unification of the first and second tiers of local government in Cornwall, were necessarily based on a number of assumptions given that the restructure was moving to a new model. This included an assumption about the number of hours a week a Cornwall Councillor might be expected to spend on Council business as 19 for Councillors not in senior roles and 25.5 for those in senior roles. This included time spent in Council meetings, time spent engaging with electors and time spent in other meetings. The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel presented to the Council in July 2016 confirmed that the Panel had satisfied itself that on average the role took 31.5 hours per week, based on an online survey undertaken of the Membership. A time survey has been undertaken and weekly hours committed to being a Cornwall Councillor commonly exceeded 45. This is a demonstrable increase in the weekly commitment estimated in 2008, albeit the possibility of efficiencies is acknowledged.

The issues facing Councillors in Cornwall include:

- (i) the travel time and distance associated with attending New County Hall;
- (ii) for those with rural divisions the travel distance to attend to issues in their electoral division (with the area of the largest electoral division being 137.6 square kilometres); and
- (iii) the increasing constituency caseload as a result of the direct impacts of austerity measures and a number of the Council's functions being delivered by arm's length companies.

### **Projected electorate**

The electorate forecasts and the methodology upon which they are based have been provided separately to the Commission. Those forecasts indicate that the overall electorate for Cornwall in 2023 will be 447,919. The resulting average electorate per Councillor based on the current Council size of 123 would be 3,641. Based on the mid-June 2016 actual electorate the corresponding ration is 3,459. Whilst the 2023 forecast might be considered to be a modest increase on current numbers, at circa 5.26%, it is nevertheless an increase and an increased electorate reflects an increased population. Acknowledging that the key driver is electoral equality, Councillors are called upon to assist both those entitled to vote and those who are not. As an obvious example, Members are sometimes asked to provide assistance to families in their communities in relation to schools admission or transport issues, including appeals. The children who stand to benefit from such interventions are not eligible to vote.

Putting aside roles with special responsibilities, the evidence set out in Appendix

5 and which is referenced in this submission demonstrates that the Councillor role, based on current electorate and population levels, is effectively a full-time role. An increase in population, and with it electorate, will increase the burden of the role, unless we take steps to realise the efficiencies that we believe are achievable and which are referenced, at least in part, in the Governance Review Report.

### **The findings and recommendations of the governance review**

The Governance Review Report (Appendix 1) articulates the strong case for change which those giving evidence to the Review clearly put across. However, that case for change does not immediately or demonstrably translate to a case for a change in Council size. The work of the Governance Review may make a more specific contribution to the determination of Council size as it progresses. However, the underlying messages throughout the Governance Review Report are about “how” not “how many”, with an emphasis on cultural change.

The recommendations flowing from the Governance Review demonstrate that the Council has taken seriously the challenge to undertake a fundamental review of its governance. The Report also demonstrates that there were no pre-conceived ideas as to what the future governance recommendations should be. This is demonstrated through the recognition of the appropriateness of the Strong Leader and Cabinet model for Cornwall, the core strengths of the Councillor commitment, the Council’s financial grip and its relationships with partners, albeit recognising that there is some work to do to rebuild relationships with some parts of the communities we serve.

Although the abolition of the Policy Advisory Committees with enhanced scrutiny arrangements in their place is a suggested outcome of the Governance Review, this does not provide any demonstrable justification for a change in Council size, at least not in isolation.

It is helpful that the Governance Review Report recognises the need to take steps to relieve Councillors of the burden of outmoded working patterns and the resultant substantial time commitments, including through improved IT infrastructure. It is recognised that this will not only help ease the overall burden but that it might also contribute to an increase in the proportion of young and working people standing for and being elected as Councillors.

Overall, none of the recommendations arising from the Governance Review directly impact upon or demonstrate any rationale for a change in the number of Cornwall Councillors. Although the Governance Review Report suggests that a significant reduction in the number of Councillors should be achievable there is a lack of evidence to support that proposition and, indeed, the Report acknowledges that recommending a number of Councillors is outside the scope of the Review. However, as the electoral review progresses through to the Council’s final submission on Council size regard will be had to the ongoing work

arising from the Governance Review and how that might more directly influence the Council size question and the Council's further submissions.

### **Governance and decision making, scrutiny functions, the representational role of Councillors and the future**

The Electoral Review has used the thirty six questions set out in the Commission's Guidance on Council size to help build the information and evidence base needed to inform a proper analysis of the relevant issues and determination of a Council size recommendation. The detailed responses to those questions are set out in Appendix 5, which is an important part of this submission. Rather than duplicate or try to summarise those responses here, the reader is urged to undertake a thorough review of Appendix 5 and to explore the further information available through the embedded links.

However, it is important to reiterate that the Governance Review has recommended the retention of the Strong Leader and Cabinet model the Council currently has, albeit with changes to its Policy Advisory Committee and Scrutiny functions.

### **Conclusion**

This submission and the supporting evidence to which it refers demonstrate that the Council has given serious consideration to not only its governance arrangements for the future, through the Governance Review, but also to what the right number of Councillors will be for 2021 and why. The electorate forecasts that have been submitted separately are also robust and provide a credible basis upon which to base the review. The proposed Council size set out earlier in this document is a starting point – this is the first draft submission. As we progress further we will refine our submission according to what the evidence tells us. We have been very careful to ensure that our submission is evidence-based and that we have approached our proposal incrementally rather than thinking of a number and trying to fit the evidence and arguments around it.

### **Appendices**

- 1 Governance Review Report
- 2 Division areas
- 3 Cornwall Council ceremonial county comparison data
- 4 Cornwall Council further comparison authority data
- 5 Council size questions responses