

CBMDC Member Review

City of Bradford MDC Elected Member Review 2016



Executive Summary

Background & Approach. The Council's budget resolution of February 2015 committed it to undertaking a review of the role of elected members including the numbers required by Bradford MDC. The review included desk research and surveys of the public and of elected members. Independent scrutiny of the review has been carried out by Sir Rodney Brooke.

Bradford is not currently on the timetable for review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England nor do any of its wards currently meet the criteria that would trigger a review.

Context. The number of Councillors per elector is 3,705 in Bradford – higher than national averages; the local electorate is growing and demographic growth will continue to increase it. Bradford District is diverse and includes areas of high deprivation.

Public Survey. Surveys were completed by 1349 members of the local electorate.

- Locally accountable representation is highly valued – 93% of respondents agreed that it is important to have locally elected Councillors who are directly accountable to people in the ward.
- Respondents were asked, given what they know about the role of Councillors, whether they think that three Councillors is the right number for their ward, not enough or too many. In response, 80% of people said three Councillors was about right or not enough with 20% saying that it was too many.

Elected Member Survey. 65 Councillors completed an online survey.

- More than 80% of Councillors surveyed spent at least 16 hours a week on Council activity with 59% indicating that they spent over 20 hours a week. Dealing with constituency issues tends to form the largest proportion of the workload for most Councillors. Workloads are broadly consistent with national profiles.
- 93% of respondents expected their workload to increase over the next two years and most believe that partnership working, influencing and negotiation will become increasingly important skills for ward Councillors. Almost half of respondents agreed that they would need more support to undertake their ward role in future.

Elected member interviews. Interviews were undertaken with several Councillors holding senior positions on the Council.

- Views on the appropriate numbers of Councillors were mixed – some advocated a reduction in numbers while others urged caution given the changing nature of the role, increasing workloads and uncertainty around devolution.
- Most interviewees believed that Councillors' workloads will increase and there was general consensus that Councillors would increasingly need to be skilled in brokerage, influencing, partnership and advocacy and “future proofing” communities against budget reductions through bringing different groups, resources and opportunities together.
- There was some support for moving to four yearly elections although this was not universal.
- Views on support from the Council were mixed and Councillors understand that staff are often stretched. Political awareness was seen by some as an area for improvement.

Councillor Profile. The average age of Bradford Councillors at 52 is lower than national averages nevertheless the age profile of local Councillors is older than that of the 18+ population. Bradford has relatively high proportions of female Councillors but women are still under-represented. The proportion of Councillors from non-white ethnic groups is higher than in the 18+ population.

Conclusions.

- Bradford is a place where people attach high levels of importance to local democratic accountability and expect elected representatives to work closely with local communities.
- Very high proportions of electors believe that 3 Councillors is either about right or not enough for their local ward.
- Councillor workloads are in line with national averages and are expected to increase. Councillors anticipate that the “community leadership” aspects of the role will assume increasing importance; some members question whether the Council provides sufficient support for the development of the related skills.
- A growing population and electorate will increase demands on Councillors; high levels of deprivation in some parts of the District also impact on workloads.
- The District is diverse and reduced numbers of Councillors could affect the Council's ability to represent properly all its different communities.
- As a growing and ambitious District Bradford needs Councillors who can work at a strategic and regional level as well as within their wards.
- Comparisons with other local authorities suggest that Councillors' numbers in Bradford are not unusually high given the size and nature of the District.

City of Bradford MDC

Elected Member Review 2016



1 Background

- 1.1 The 2015-16 Budget Recommendation approved by Full Council on 24 February 2015 committed the Council to undertaking a politically independent review of the role of elected members including consideration of the numbers required by the Council.
- 1.2 The commitment to a review was made in response to the changing local government environment and in particular to the impact of national austerity measures on the scope of Council activity and on the need to reduce costs. In making this commitment the Council was also responding to the fact that for several years public consultation on budget proposals had included suggestions from some people that savings should be made by reducing the numbers of Councillors.
- 1.3 In particular the brief from the Council's leadership was to focus on the ward role of Councillors and on the appropriate numbers of Councillors at ward level.
- 1.4 Changes to key Council personnel have led to delays in the analysis and publication of the review findings.

2 Approach

- 2.1 The review was undertaken in-house by Council officers and comprised a number of elements:
 - **Public Survey** – 1349 electors completed a questionnaire.
 - **Survey of Elected Members.** A questionnaire was circulated to all 90 Members of the Council via email and they were requested to respond online. In total 65 (72%) questionnaires were returned.
 - **Interviews with elected members.** Semi structured interviews were undertaken with leaders of the Council's political groups and with Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
 - **Desk research.** Analysis of comparative statistics and local electorate; review of relevant literature.
- 2.2 Sir Rodney Brooke, Chair of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel has provided independent scrutiny and input and produced a commentary making recommendations based on the review findings.

3 Context

- 3.1 **Councillor Numbers and Electorate.** Bradford Council has 90 elected members representing 30 electoral wards with three members per ward. Councillors are elected in thirds with elections in every three years out of four.

Bradford's electorate is growing and rose by over 1,200 between December 2014 and December 2015 from 333,475 to 334,590 with the number of electors per Councillor increasing from 3,705 to 3,718.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) last reviewed Bradford's arrangements in 2002 recommending that it should retain 90 elected members. The Commission undertakes electoral reviews for two reasons:

1. At the request of the local authority
2. If the local authority meets the Commission's intervention criteria
 - a. If one ward has an electorate of +/-30% from the average electorate for the authority
 - b. If 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.

The latest available figures demonstrate that Bradford does not currently meet either of these criteria – no wards deviate by +/-30% from the average electorate and just 5 wards (17%) have an electorate that is +/-10% from the average.

Bradford is not currently on the Commission's timetable for review so any review would have to be undertaken at the Council's request.

- 3.2 **Comparative Figures.** The most recently available comparative data published on the web site of the LGBCE provides figures on local electorates at 1/12/2014. These figures show that of 91 English upper tier authorities Bradford's growing electorate was the 8th largest and, along with Liverpool, it had the 9th highest number of Councillors.

The number of Bradford electors per Councillor was 3,705 - significantly higher (23%) than the national average for upper tier councils of 3,004. Of the ten Upper tier authorities with the largest electorates Bradford had the 6th highest number of electors to Councillors. Overall, the ratios of electors to councillors range from 1,219 in Rutland to 6,073 in Birmingham.

Looking only at Metropolitan Districts, Bradford had the 5th biggest electorate and the joint 5th highest number of Councillors. The District's number of electors per Councillor was 9th highest of 36 authorities and 12.5% higher than the average of 3,292.

Of the Metropolitan Districts with the ten largest electorates, Bradford had lower numbers of electors per Councillor than Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Kirklees, Wakefield and Manchester and a higher number than Wirral, Liverpool and Dudley.

Across West Yorkshire, Bradford had a relatively low number of electors per Councillor with only Calderdale having a lower ratio.

Table 1. Average Numbers of Electors per Councillor – 1/12/2014

	Number of Electors per Councillor
All Upper Tier Councils	3,004
Metropolitan Districts	3,292
West Yorkshire Met Districts	4,063
Bradford	3,705

Table 2 provides comparative data between Bradford and selected other authorities sorted by the number of electors per councillor and demonstrating the spectrum of Council size and the local democratic representation.

- 3.3 **External Bodies.** In addition to Council Committees the Council makes appointments to outside bodies. In total there are 119 Council appointments to external bodies involving 62 (69%) different Councillors. The frequency with which external bodies meet varies between one and twelve times a year.
- 3.4 **Demographic Growth.** Bradford District is big and growing; it is the fourth most populous Metropolitan Authority in England with a population of 528,200 that is expected to increase by 32,000 by 2025. In particular, rapid growth is anticipated among younger and older age groups. Bradford is the youngest city in the UK with nearly a quarter of its population aged under 16.

Table 2 Comparative Electoral Data.

Authority Name	Electorate 1/12/2014	No. Councillors	Electors per Councillor	Authority Type
Birmingham	728,732	120	6,073	Metropolitan District
Leeds	533,384	99	5,388	Metropolitan District
Sheffield	392,741	84	4,675	Metropolitan District
Bristol	318,957	70	4,557	Unitary District
Kirklees	300,519	69	4,355	Metropolitan District
Stoke-on-Trent	185,994	44	4,227	Unitary District
Coventry	225,689	54	4,179	Metropolitan District
Leicester	223,534	54	4,140	Unitary District
Wakefield	253,659	63	4,026	Metropolitan District
Manchester	368,265	96	3,836	Metropolitan District
Doncaster	210,826	55	3,833	Metropolitan District
Bradford	333,475	90	3,705	Metropolitan District
Nottingham	190,852	55	3,470	Unitary District
Southampton	164,907	48	3,436	Unitary District
Derby	173,518	51	3,402	Unitary District
Liverpool	305,705	90	3,397	Metropolitan District
Dudley	239,233	72	3,323	Metropolitan District
Bolton	199,134	60	3,319	Metropolitan District
Rotherham	197,888	63	3,141	Metropolitan District
York	146,322	47	3,113	Unitary District
Kingston upon Hull	180,740	59	3,063	Unitary District
Wolverhampton	178,640	60	2,977	Metropolitan District
Barnsley	178,948	63	2,840	Metropolitan District
Calderdale	144,775	51	2,839	Metropolitan District
Sunderland	209,689	75	2,796	Metropolitan District
Oldham	157,997	60	2,633	Metropolitan District
Trafford	161,766	63	2,568	Metropolitan District
Newcastle Upon Tyne	184,401	78	2,364	Metropolitan District
Blackburn with Darwen	104,166	64	1,628	Unitary District

3.5 Financial Pressures. Since 2016 a combination of national reductions in public spending, increasing demand for services, particularly in social care, and rising costs have led the Council to set budgets requiring total savings and increased income, including increases in Council tax, of almost £270m. Current forecasts estimate that by 2020 the Council's revenue budget will have reduced from £400m in 2016-17 to £300m.

The financial challenges facing the Council have meant some difficult decisions about service provision, activity and investment having to be made and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

When consulting on its budget proposals over recent years the Council has consistently received comments from some individuals calling for the numbers of Councillors to be cut in order to make savings. While cuts in the number of Councillors would lead only to very modest savings relative to the scale of what is required some people have suggested that this would indicate that Councillors are prepared to share the burden of cost reductions along with other Council services.

As part of its cost reduction measures the Council has taken action to cut costs associated with Elected Members and local democracy but has maintained the number of Councillors at 90.

In December 2011 the Independent Remuneration Panel recommended, and Full Council approved, the removal of the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chair of the Miscellaneous Licenses Panel resulting in a saving of £12,564 pa.

A further recommendation from that report saw Members motor car rates for travelling expenses being brought in line with the HMRC travelling allowances bringing a reduction to the previous allowance of up to 20p a mile.

The number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees were consolidated from seven to five and the Keighley and Shipley Area Planning Panels were merged following a meeting of Full Council in May 2012. This resulted in savings with regard to three SRAs, of which the cumulative total in 2011 was £44,872.84.

The Council has also reduced the SRA of Chairs on a number of Committees, including Overview and Scrutiny Committees following recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel. Overall there has been a reduction of £50,000 in SRA's paid to Overview and Scrutiny Chairs between 2011 and 2016.

- 3.4 **Sub-regional Devolution.** The substantive work on the review was undertaken before the 2016 referendum on UK membership of the EU and the subsequent change in Prime Minister and key ministerial appointments and against a backdrop of devolution deals to City Regions and other sub-regional geographies. During this period Yorkshire local authorities were in negotiation with HM Treasury and with each other over the details and geography of a potential devolution deal in which powers and resources would be devolved from Westminster. The Government's approach at the time was to require the majority of sub-regions to elect a mayor in return for devolved powers. A devolution deal that incorporated Bradford District had not been achieved.

Proposals for sub-regional devolution and governance implying greater working and decision making across local authority boundaries and mayoral models of governance could see some decisions that are currently within the remit of District Councils moving up to sub-regional level and within the remit of the mayor. This possibility has led some people to take the view that fewer District responsibilities and decision making will mean that fewer District Councillors will be needed.

Under the new Prime Minister, the Government has indicated that devolution remains a key policy to drive regional economic growth and arrangements for Bradford and West Yorkshire remain subject to negotiation. Recent Ministerial statements have made clear the Government's view that devolution deals with urban areas will be dependent upon those areas agreeing to have an elected mayor. The 2016 Autumn Statement is expected to indicate any revisions to the Government's position on devolution.

- 3.5 **Diversity.** Bradford is home to diverse communities and settlements. While the largest ethnic group is made up of people who identify themselves as being White British, two thirds of people are from ethnic minorities including the largest proportion of people of Pakistani ethnic origin (20.3%) in England. Over 150 languages are spoken in the District.

In addition to the city of Bradford itself the District includes the towns of Keighley, Shipley, Bingley and Ilkley, each with their own identities and histories, and many smaller villages and settlements; large parts of the District are rural or semi-rural.

- 3.6 **Deprivation.** The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 places Bradford as the 19th most deprived of 326 local authorities in England and 2nd most deprived in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Over a third (34%) of the District's population live in the most deprived 10% of small areas in England. The District wide economy is worth £9.2 billion but economic participation rates are lower than in other parts of the country. There are wide inequalities in health with life expectancy for a boy born in the poorest parts of the District being ten years less than that in the most affluent, for a girl this gap in life expectancy is seven years.

- 3.7 **Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries.** The Boundary Commission for England is undertaking a review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries that is due to report to Government in September 2018 recommending any changes to the size, shape, name or designation of constituencies. The review is intended to lead to a reduction in the numbers of Parliamentary Constituencies and therefore

to a reduction in the numbers of MP's. The initial proposals for Bradford District would see its number of Parliamentary Constituencies reduce from five to four.

- 3.8 **National Trends & Developments.** Recent research by the Local Government Chronicle indicates that since 2010, the numbers of Councillors nationally has reduced by almost 500 as a result of 111 boundary reviews undertaken by the LGBCE, 41 of which were requested by local authorities. On average, the reviews have led to a 9% reduction in Councillors, some have led to reductions of up to 30% while others, for example, in Sheffield, have made no changes to the number of Councillors.

Looking beyond England, the Scottish Parliament voted on the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's (LGBCS) 5th Electoral Review of all Local Authority Boundaries in September 2016. Councillor's numbers increased in key Local Authorities including the principal cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The LGBCS concluded that Edinburgh with an electorate of 345,401 in 2013 and forecast to grow should ideally be represented by 91 Councillors which would increase numbers by 33. Similarly the Commission's formula would increase Councillor's numbers' in Glasgow from 79 to 166 serving an electorate of 464,193. The Commission however, imposed a 10% limit on change and Councillor's numbers therefore increased by just 5 in Edinburgh and 6 in Glasgow providing ratios of electors to Councillors of 5,482 and 5,461 respectively.

The roles, powers, contribution and relevance of Councillors are currently subject to a national review being carried out by a Councillor Commission launched by the Local Government Research Unit at De Montfort University with the objective of providing policy makers with a better understanding of the work of Councillors and the support they receive from their Councils. It will complete its final report in December 2016 which it will submit to the Chair of the Commons Communities and Local Government Committee.

4 Public Survey

- 4.1 A questionnaire was posted to a total of 6,000 local electors - 200 per ward - selected at random from the electoral register. A covering letter gave a brief summary of what Councillors do and how many there are.

1349 people returned questionnaires – a response rate of 22.48% which is in line with expectation for a postal survey.

Response rates ranged from 28% across Shipley Constituency to 18.6% in Bradford West. The highest response rate in any ward was 32% in Ilkley and in Wharfedale; the lowest was 12% in Bradford Moor and in Manningham.

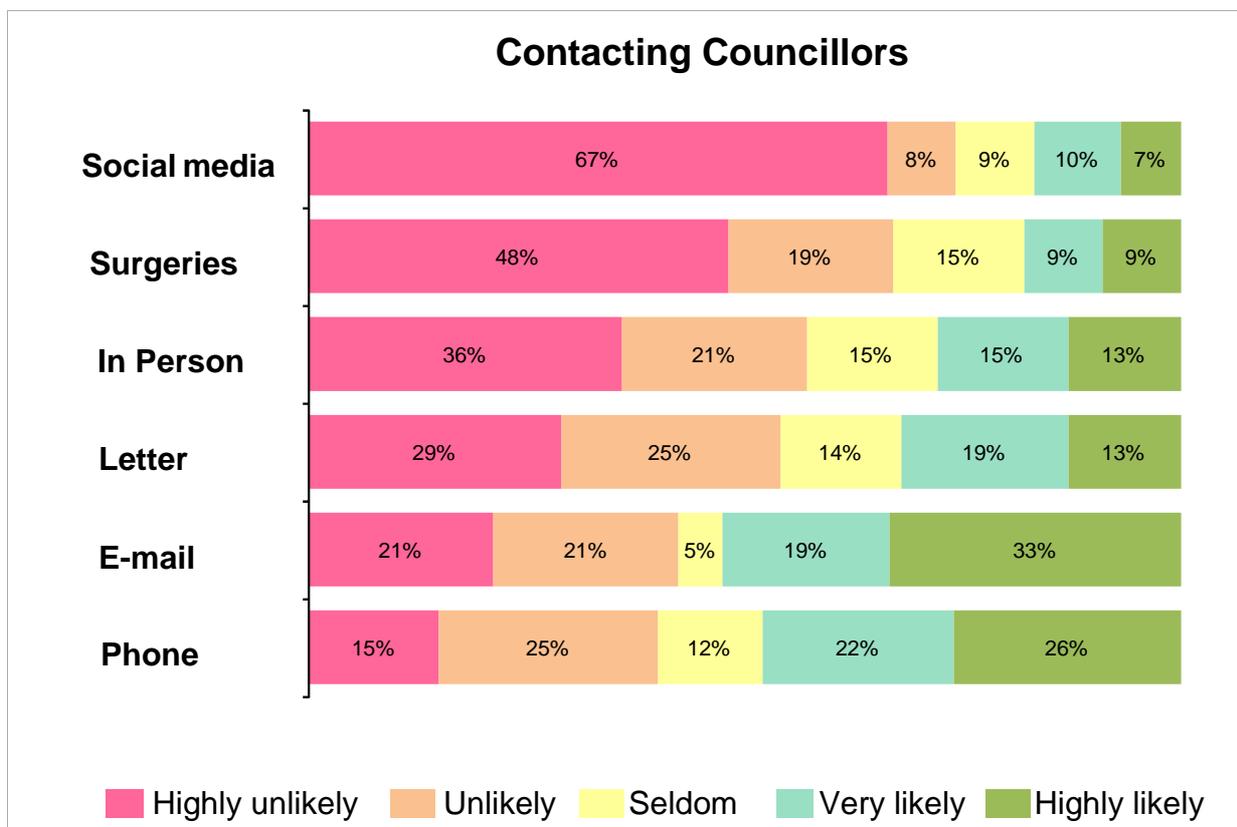
Participants were provided with the option of completing and returning the survey online or by post.

- 4.2 The sample of electors were asked a range of questions about their contact with CBMDC Councillors, the importance that they attach to local representation, their expectations of Councillors and the jobs that they do and their views on how many Councillors there should be to represent their ward. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix 1 and a summary analysis of the results at Appendix 2.

The analysis in this report rounds all percentages to the nearest whole number.

- 4.3 **Contact with Councillors.** Only 28% of respondents had contacted a Bradford Councillor over the previous 5 years and of these just over half had contacted a Councillor only 1-2 times. The prevalence of contact with Councillors was greatest among older age groups with about a third of over 65's and 35-54 year olds having contacted a Councillor in the last five years compared to 18% of under 35's and just 10% of 18-24 year olds.
- 4.4 The most commonly cited reasons for having contacted a Councillor were issues related to highways, waste collection, planning, anti-social behaviour and parking. Relatively few people indicated that they had contacted their Councillor(s) about developing local projects and activities.
- 4.5 People were asked if they were to contact a councillor to indicate how likely they would be to use a range of different methods. The most popular method of contact was via email with 52% of people answering the question saying they would be very or highly likely to use it. Nearly half of respondents said that they would be likely to contact a Councillor by phone. People were least likely to contact a Councillor by using social media or by attending a surgery. These responses were mirrored among people who had previously contacted a Councillor.
- 4.6 Analysis of responses by the age of respondents shows that the top preferences for contacting Councillors were fairly uniform across all age groups and were via email, phone or letter. While social media ranked fourth preference among people under 35 it was the least likely method

of contact for every other age group but one. Although older age groups were more likely to contact Councillors through local surgeries this option had a relatively low ranking across all age groups.



4.7 Alternative methods of contact suggested included:

- At a Council Office
- Council website
- Home visit
- Local meeting
- Local supermarket
- Newsletter
- Text message

4.8 **Local Accountability.** Locally accountable representation is highly valued – 93% of respondents agreed that it is important to have locally elected Councillors who are directly accountable to people in the ward. Similarly high levels of agreement were found across all age and ethnic groups and across different parts of the District.

4.9 **Communications and staying in touch.** Fairly traditional approaches to communications were regarded as being more important for Councillors to maintain than for example, the use of social media or web sites. Organising and attending public meetings were seen as very or extremely important by 80% or more of respondents; regular newsletters

by 79%, local surveys 76%.

Digital approaches to staying in touch scored less highly but nevertheless a significant majority of people thought it very or extremely important that Councillors run a web site (63%). Greater importance was attached to web based communications by younger people with 80% of under 35's saying it was very or extremely important compared to 48% of over 65's. Proportionately more people from BME groups thought running a web site was very or extremely important compared to white groups.

Only 37% of respondents attached a high level of importance to the use of social media although among under 35's the proportion was far higher at 63%. Some 28% of respondents said that social media wasn't important at all rising to 82% among the over 65's. Higher proportions of under 35's also attached greater importance to producing newsletters (83%) and undertaking surveys (83%) than other age groups.

BME groups attached higher than average importance to the use of social media with 51% of Asian and British Asian respondents, 46% of black people and 69% of other ethnic groups saying its use by Councillors is very or extremely important.

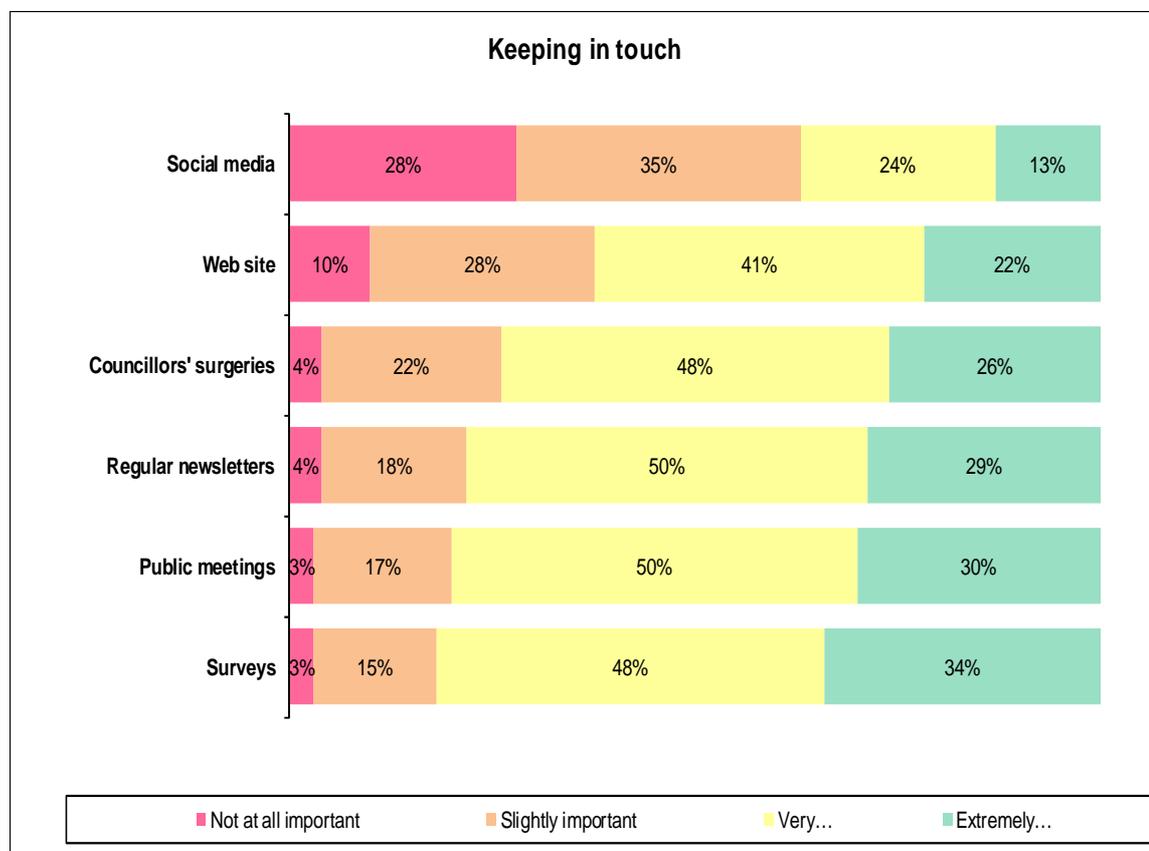
4.10 Although two thirds of people said they were unlikely to use a surgery 75% who answered the question believed that it is a very or extremely important way of Councillors staying in touch with their community.

4.11 Analysis by Parliamentary Constituency shows a consistent pattern in which respondents from Bradford East attached greater importance to almost all forms of keeping in touch identified by the survey than other constituencies. In particular, respondents in Bradford East attached far higher importance to holding surgeries, running web sites, organising and attending public meetings and undertaking surveys than in other constituencies.

People in Bradford South tended to have the lowest proportions of people to regard any of the methods identified as being very or extremely important.

Along with Bradford West, Bradford East had the highest percentage of respondents who said that using social media and running web sites were very or extremely important ways of Councillors keeping in touch with local people. In all constituencies the use of social media was the method most likely to be regarded as not important at all with the proportion holding this view reaching 34% in Shipley.

Respondents in Bradford South attached relatively low importance to organising and attending meetings, social media, web sites and surgeries. Newsletters and local surveys were the methods of communication regarded as having the highest levels of importance.



4.12 Other methods of keeping in touch suggested by respondents included:

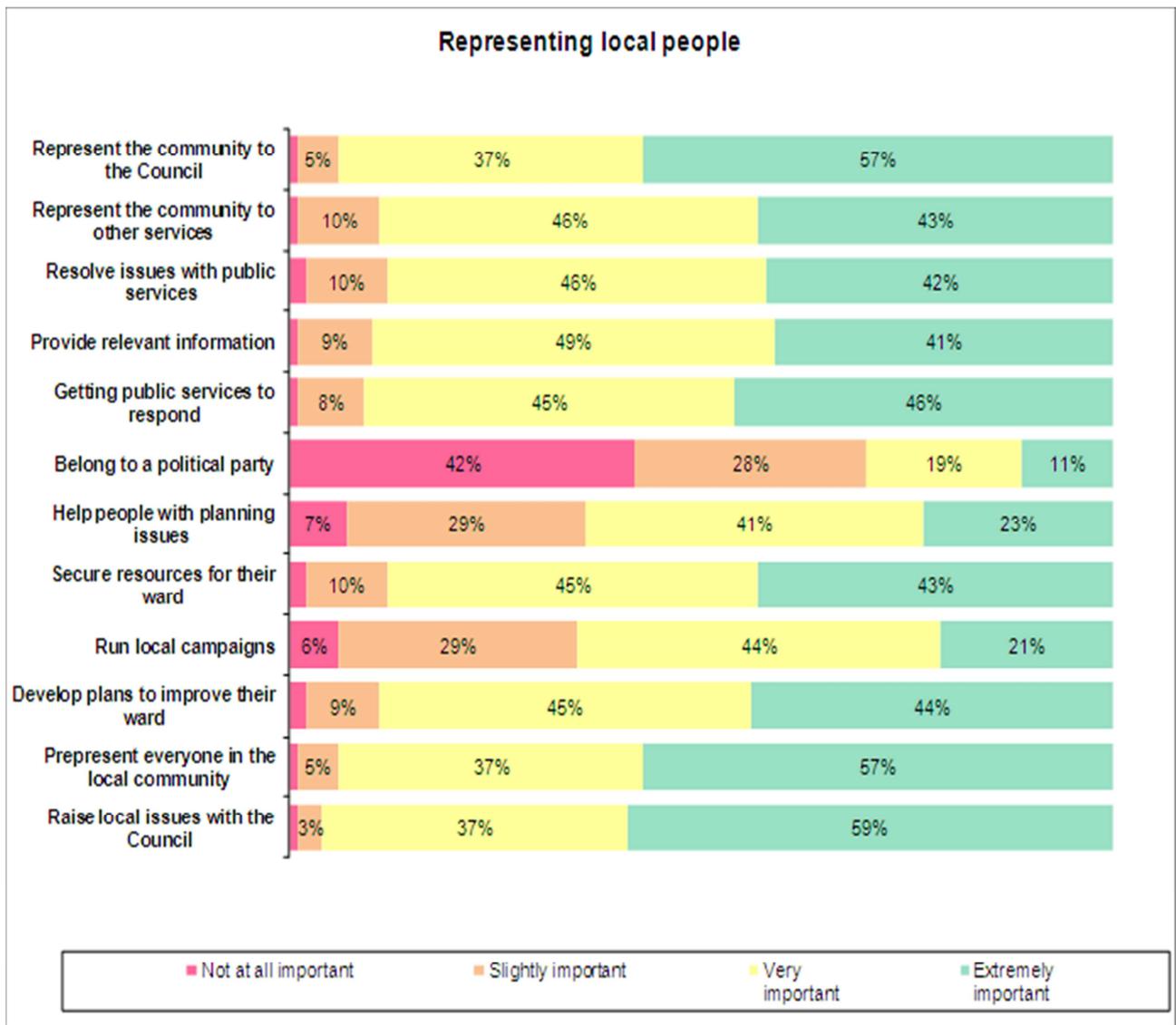
- Canvassing
- Local newspaper
- Making home or community centre visits
- Meeting at the Keighley campus
- Neighbourhood forums
- Skype / Facetime
- Telephone
- Text message

4.13 **Representing local people.** The survey asked people to express their views on how important they feel different activities are to the Councillors representational role at the local ward level.

4.14 Raising local issues with the Council (96% said it was very or extremely important), working on plans to improve the whole ward (89%), securing resources for the ward (89%) and representing everyone in the community (93%) were key elements of the Councillors job regarded as being among the most important.

The emphasis on Councillors working on behalf of everyone irrespective of the community the Councillor is from or their political party overrides by far the importance attached to being a member of a political party. Only 30% of people believed it to be important for Councillors to be members of political parties – 70% felt this to be unimportant. Several people who gave reasons for their answers said that people should work together regardless of political persuasion. The importance attached to membership of a political party was highest in Bradford West (46% very or extremely important) and lowest in Shipley (20%) and Keighley (22%). People aged under 35 attached more importance to party membership than any other age group with 43% saying it was very or extremely important. Analysis by ethnic group shows that the proportion of Asian and British Asians who think being in a political party is very or extremely important (56% is more than twice that of white British people (25%).

- 4.15 The role that Councillors play in holding non Council services to account was also recognised as being important by a very high proportion of people (88% very or extremely important), this view was particularly pronounced among people under 35 (94%) and even higher among people aged 18-24 (97%) compared to other age groups. Getting public services to respond to local issues (90%) and helping people to resolve individual issues with public services (88%) also ranked highly in importance.
- 4.16 Dealing with planning issues and running local campaigns were regarded as less important activities but nonetheless over two thirds of respondents saw them as being very or extremely important. The proportions of people who believed dealing with planning to be very or extremely important varied from 74% in Bradford South to 59% in Shipley.
- 4.17 Alternative methods suggested on how to represent local people in their wards:
- Be accountable
 - Communicate
 - Create local charities
 - Have a free vote - no ties to a political party
 - Have creative solutions to problems
 - Invite the community to Council meetings
 - Liaise with the Police
 - Listen to the community
 - Live in the ward they represent
 - Walkabouts



4.18 **Working with local people.** A series of questions were asked that were designed to explore views on how Councillors should work together with local people. The highest ranking activity was to ensure that local people are consulted before decisions are taken that affect the local area (95% very or extremely important).

4.19 Working with local people to help find solutions to local issues also ranked highly so, while talking regularly and directly to residents was seen as being very or extremely important by over 90% of respondents an even higher proportion (93%) recognised the importance of local people sharing responsibility with Councillors for securing solutions to local issues, among people aged 18-24 the proportion rose to 98%.

4.20 Although lower importance was attached to Councillors challenging individuals and communities to change their behaviour, more than three quarters of respondents believed that this was a very or extremely important aspect of the role including 88% of 18-24 year olds.

Higher proportions of respondents from Bradford East (87%), South (81%) and West (84%) said that Councillors' challenging people to change their behaviour was very or extremely important than in Keighley (67%) and Shipley (68%).

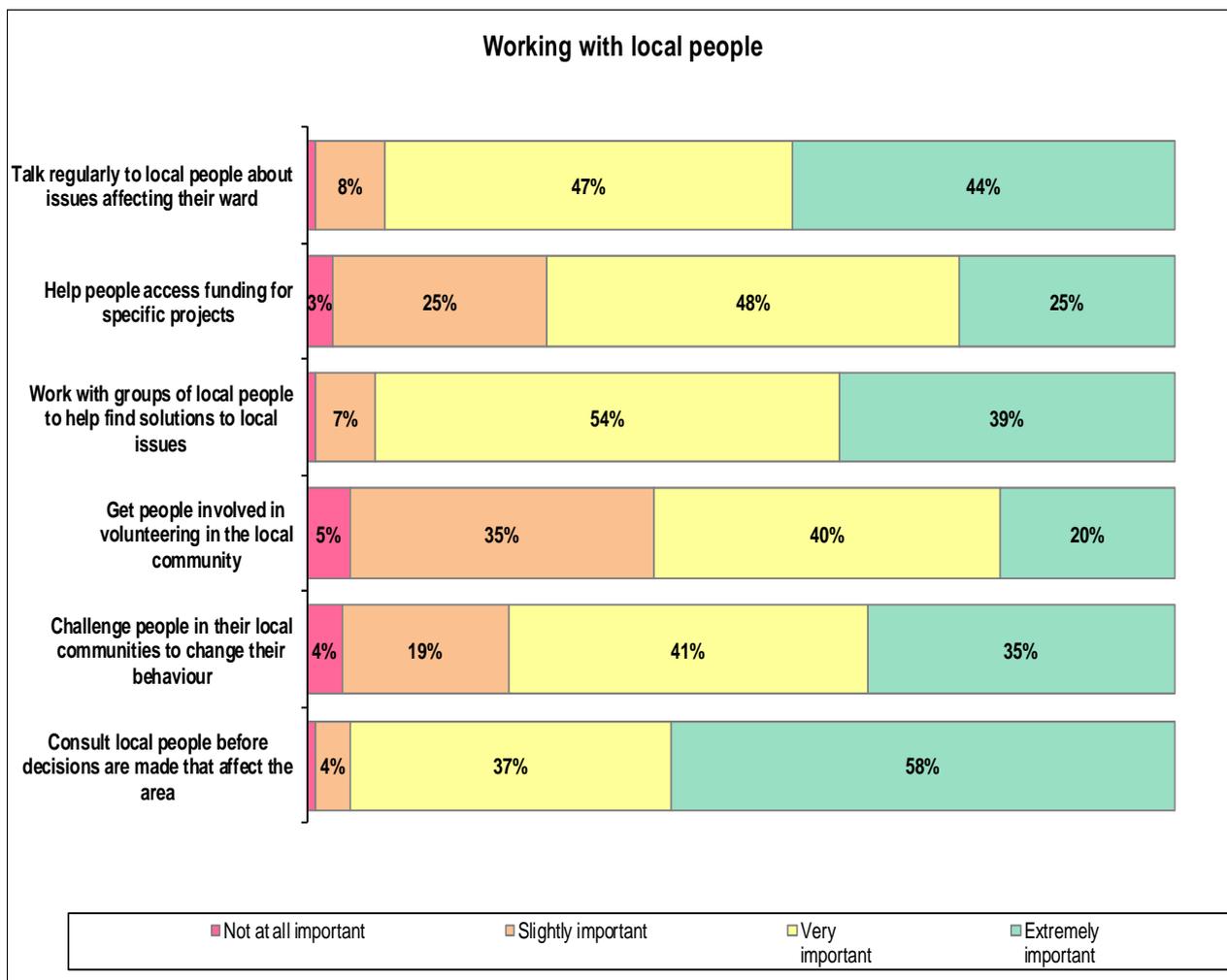
Among British Asian and Asian respondents 89% believed challenging behaviour to be very or extremely important compared to 73% of white British people.

- 4.21 Promoting volunteering was seen as less important than other activities but was nevertheless regarded as being important by 60% of people responding although in Keighley and Shipley this figure dropped to 51% and 55% respectively. Women were more likely to regard this activity as important or very important (65%) than men (54%). Younger people were also more likely to regard this as a very or extremely important part of the job, 79% of under 35's expressed this view and 86% of 18-24 year olds.

Higher than average proportions of Asian and British Asian people (82%) thought that encouraging volunteers was very or extremely important, only 56% of white British people agreed.

- 4.22 Other methods suggested of how to work with local people:

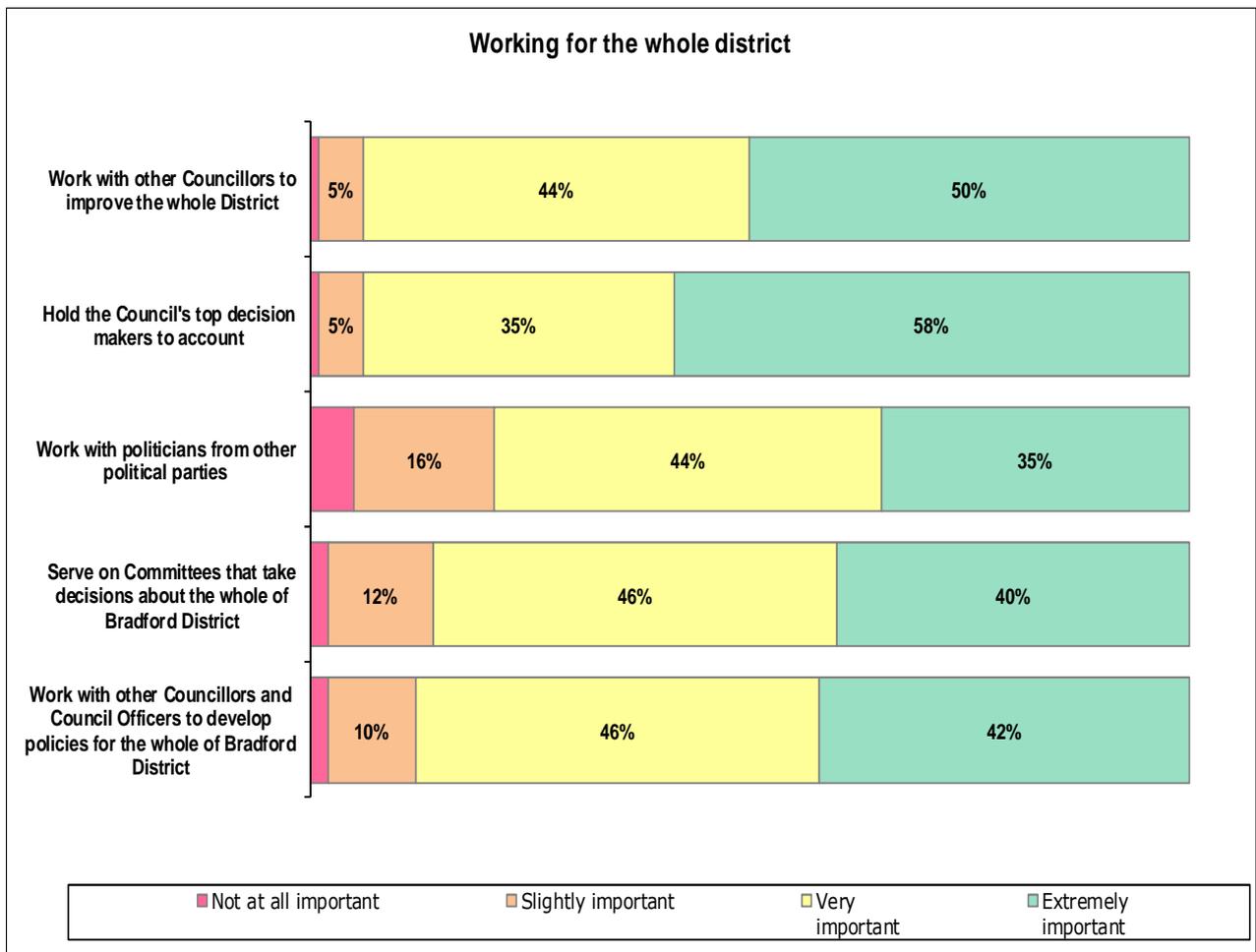
- Attract investment
- Be capable of doing the job
- Be creative and have innovative solutions
- Be local
- Be multi lingual
- Engage with Partners
- Engage with the public
- Involve community with decision making
- Keep expenses to a minimum
- Promote good values and traditions
- Put constituents first
- Respond to queries / problems
- Tackle anti-social behaviour
- Use social media
- Whistle blow on malpractice
- Work with Parish Councils



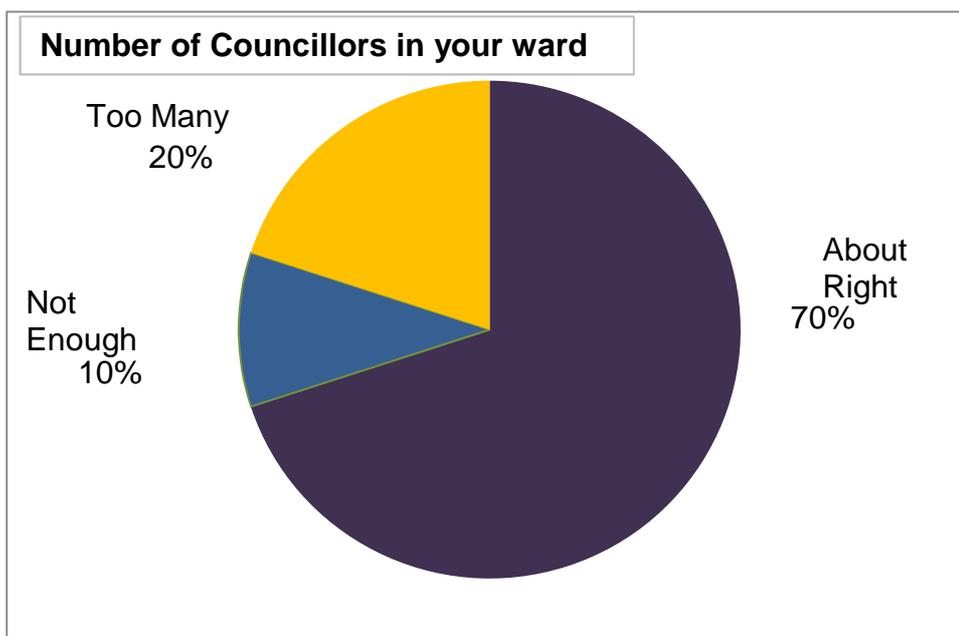
4.23 **Working for the whole District.** People recognise the work that Councillors need to do to hold Council decision makers to account (93% see this as very or extremely important) and in working with other Councillors to improve the whole District (94%). These figures were fairly uniform across all Parliamentary Constituencies.

4.24 District wide activities such as serving on committees taking decisions about the whole District (86% very or extremely important) and working with others to develop District wide policies (86%) were seen as being more important aspects of the job than some of the local ward activities that people were asked about although the proportions expressing this view were lower in Keighley and Shipley than in the Bradford constituencies.

4.25 People clearly expect Councillors to work with politicians from other political parties to get things done with 79% of people believing this to be very or extremely important.



4.26 **Councillor Numbers.** Respondents were asked, given what they know about the role of Councillors, whether they think that three Councillors is the right number for their ward, not enough or too many. In response, 80% of people said three Councillors was about right or not enough with 20% saying that it was too many.



4.27 Views on Councillors' numbers were broadly uniform across the District with between 78% and 84% of respondents in each Parliamentary Constituency indicating that Councillor numbers were either about right or not enough in their local ward. The proportions of respondents in different Parliamentary Constituencies who thought that there were too many Councillors for their ward were within one or two percentage points of each other at just over 20% with the exception of Keighley where only 16% thought there were too many.

**Table 3 – Is three Councillors the right number for your ward?
Analysis by Constituency**

Constituency	About Right	Not Enough	Too Many
Bradford East	64%	13%	23%
Bradford South	69%	10%	21%
Bradford West	63%	16%	21%
Keighley	78%	7%	16%
Shipley	71%	7%	22%
Bradford District	70%	10%	20%

4.28 Across all age groups two thirds or more of people thought that three Councillors was the right number for their ward - the highest proportion holding this view were among people aged 65 or over. The 18-34 age group had the lowest proportion of people who thought three Councillors was the right number but by far the highest percentage of people who believed it wasn't enough (20%). Younger people were less likely to believe that three Councillors were too many.

**Table 4 - Is three Councillors the right number for your ward?
Analysis by age**

Age Group	About Right	Not Enough	Too Many
18-34	66%	20%	14%
35-54	67%	12%	21%
55-64	70%	10%	20%
65+	74%	5%	21%

4.29 Women were more likely than men to believe that three Councillors was about right with 72% holding this view compared to 67% of men. Over a quarter (26%) of men believed that three Councillors were too many with 26% holding this view compared to 16% of female respondents. Nevertheless almost three-quarters of men (74%) thought three Councillors were either about right or not enough.

4.30 Respondents from Asian and British Asian ethnic groups were less likely to believe that three Councillors in their ward was the right number than other ethnic groups with just 60% holding this view compared for example, to 72% of white British respondents. This is accounted for in part by the fact that Asian and British Asian people were also more likely to believe that three is too many Councillors (24%) and, conversely, that it is not enough (16%).

**Table 5 - Is three Councillors the right number for your ward?
Analysis by ethnic group**

Ethnic Group	About Right	Not Enough	Too Many
White British (n=949)	72%	8%	20%
Other White (n=28)	75%	11%	14%
Asian & British Asian (n=185)	60%	16.0%	24%
Black (n=16)	75%	13%	13%
Other (n=15)	67%	20%	13%

4.31 A small number of people (5) provided written comments on their views about the number of Councillors all of which supported a reduction. It was suggested that numbers and associated costs could be reduced by having fewer wards and elections every four years instead of every year.

4.32 **Written Comments.** Several questions attracted written comments from respondents. Common themes included references to visibility and the need for Councillors to represent all parts of their ward and all communities and all parts of the District. Some people expressed the belief that certain areas or communities are treated preferentially by Councillors while others are overlooked or that Councillors only act in party political interests representing the Party more than the community. Others perceived a bias towards the city of Bradford compared to outer towns and villages.

While it was generally understood that Councillors have District wide responsibilities and that each ward is part of a greater whole a number of comments referred to the need to ensure that local areas and neighbourhoods are not lost in the bigger picture.

A number of respondents held the view that Councillors are not sufficiently visible and active and that they are only seen at election time. Suggestions for raising awareness of Councillors and their activities

included publication and circulation of annual reports detailing the issues elected representatives are working on and the actions they are taking to deal with them.

Responses about communications and keeping in touch reflected a need for Councillors to maintain a variety of techniques and media; several people referred to not having access to the internet or electronic forms of communication.

Some people said that it should be a given that all the roles and activities asked about in the survey are part and parcel of all elected members' jobs.

Important issues that people said Councillors should be working on included anti-social behaviour, promoting education and the idea of "community", lobbying government for resources, highways issues, gritting, planning and housing. Other comments referred to specific issues relating to Council services including some complaints. A number of comments were made that were positive and complimentary about the work of District Councillors.

Written comments are published in full in Appendix 2.

5 Elected Member Survey

- 5.1 All 90 of the Council's elected members were invited to complete an online questionnaire between December 2015 and January 2016. The questionnaire sought to gather information on the time devoted to working as a Councillor and views on the future role and its support needs. A copy of the questionnaire is provided at Appendix 3.
- 5.2 In total 65 Councillors completed the questionnaire representing a response rate of 72%.
- 5.3 **Length of service.** Of the Councillors responding to the survey over a third (34%) had been in the job for ten years or more while over a quarter had been Councillors for two years or less.
- 5.4 **Positions held.** About two thirds of responding Councillors (62%) held a position at the time as a member of the Executive or an Executive Assistant, opposition leader, deputy leader or shadow cabinet member or as a committee chair or deputy chair. 61% represented the Council on external bodies.

5.5 **Time spent on Council activities.** Councillors were asked to estimate how much time in a typical week they spend on Council activities and duties. All Councillors spent at least 6 hours a week on Council work with 80% spending over 16 hours on it and 59% indicating that they spent in excess of 20 hours a week on Council activities. This is broadly consistent with Local Government Association research indicating that nationally Councillors spend an average of 25 hours a week on Council related business.

All members of the Executive who responded said they worked 20 hours or more on Council activities and 75% of opposition leaders, deputies and members holding shadow portfolios. Just under half (48%) of the Councillors who didn't hold any Executive, shadow, or committee chair/deputy chair positions said that they spent over 20 hours a week on Council activities with 43% spending between 11 and 20 hours a week.

Members were asked to estimate the percentage of the total time they spent on Council related activities that they spend on constituency business, internal council business and external Council business. Constituency business accounted for 50% or more of the time of 70% of councillors answering the question. On average the proportion of time spent on constituency business was 57%.

In contrast only 17% of respondents spent half their time or more on internal Council activities although 36% spend 30% or more of their time on this aspect of their work.

Just 5% of Councillors spent 50% or more of their time on external business just over a third of Councillors (36%) spent 10% or more of their time on external activities.

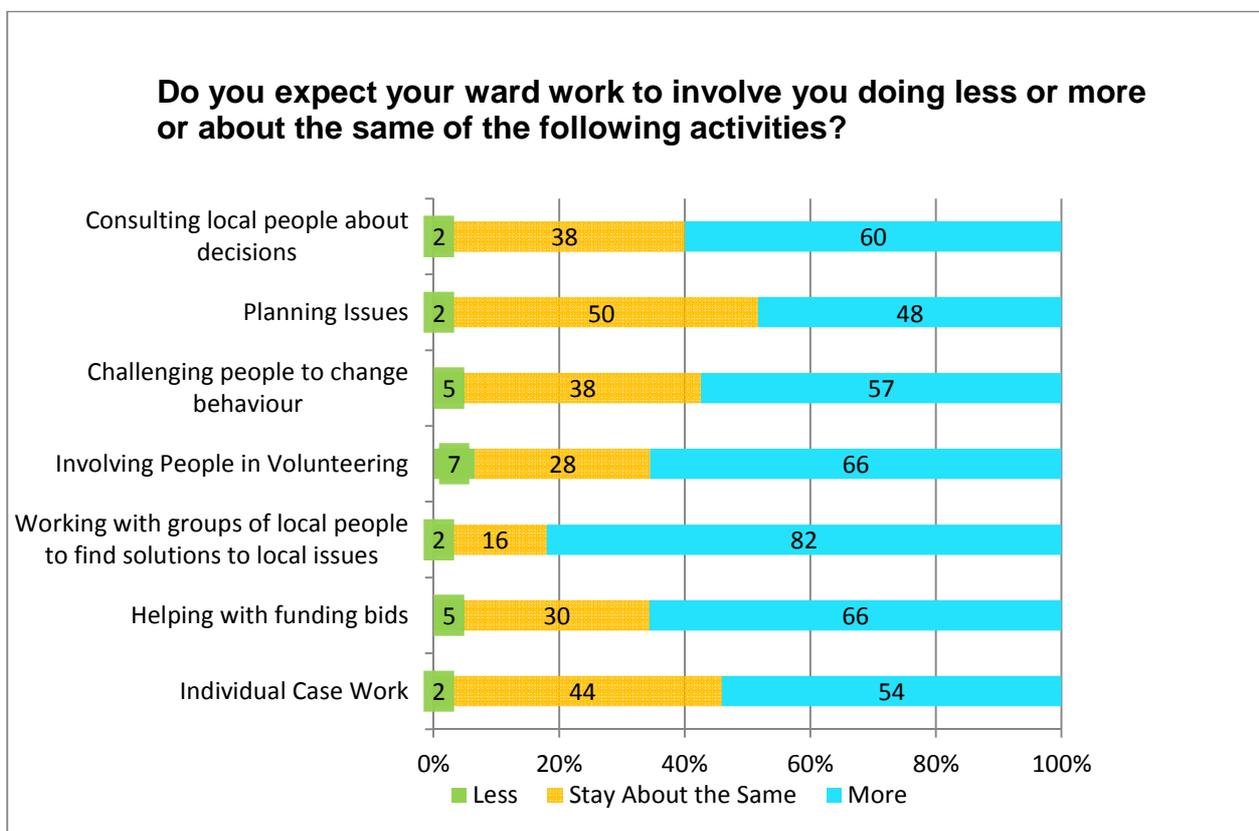
5.6 Looking at ward based work Councillors were asked to estimate the percentage of time spent on Council business that was spent on particular activities such as dealing with case work or attending meeting over a typical month. More than half (55%) of respondents said that they spent up to 30% of their time on individual casework with 8% indicating that they spent more than half the time spent on ward activity dealing with case work. Proportionately less time was spent on meetings and working with local groups

5.7 Councillors were asked about various activities associated with their work and whether or not they expected to be doing more, less or about the same over the next two years.

On all but one of the activities identified in the question a majority of councillors responding believed that they would be doing more over the next two years. Working with groups of local people to develop local solutions to issues was the area in which the highest proportion (82%) of Councillors anticipated a growing workload. Two thirds (66%) of Councillors expected to be doing more work to help local people develop funding bids and to promote volunteering. Consultation with local people was expected to increase by 60% of Councillors answering the question and challenging people to change behaviours by 57%. Few Councillors anticipated workloads reducing in any of the areas identified by the questionnaire although it was suggested that “challenging people to change their behaviours” was none of Councillors’ business.

Some Councillors quoted mounting case loads and several said that reductions in Council budgets would increase the amount of time they spend on working with local people to develop solutions without recourse to Council services or budgets, assisting with funding bids and connecting local people to volunteering opportunities.

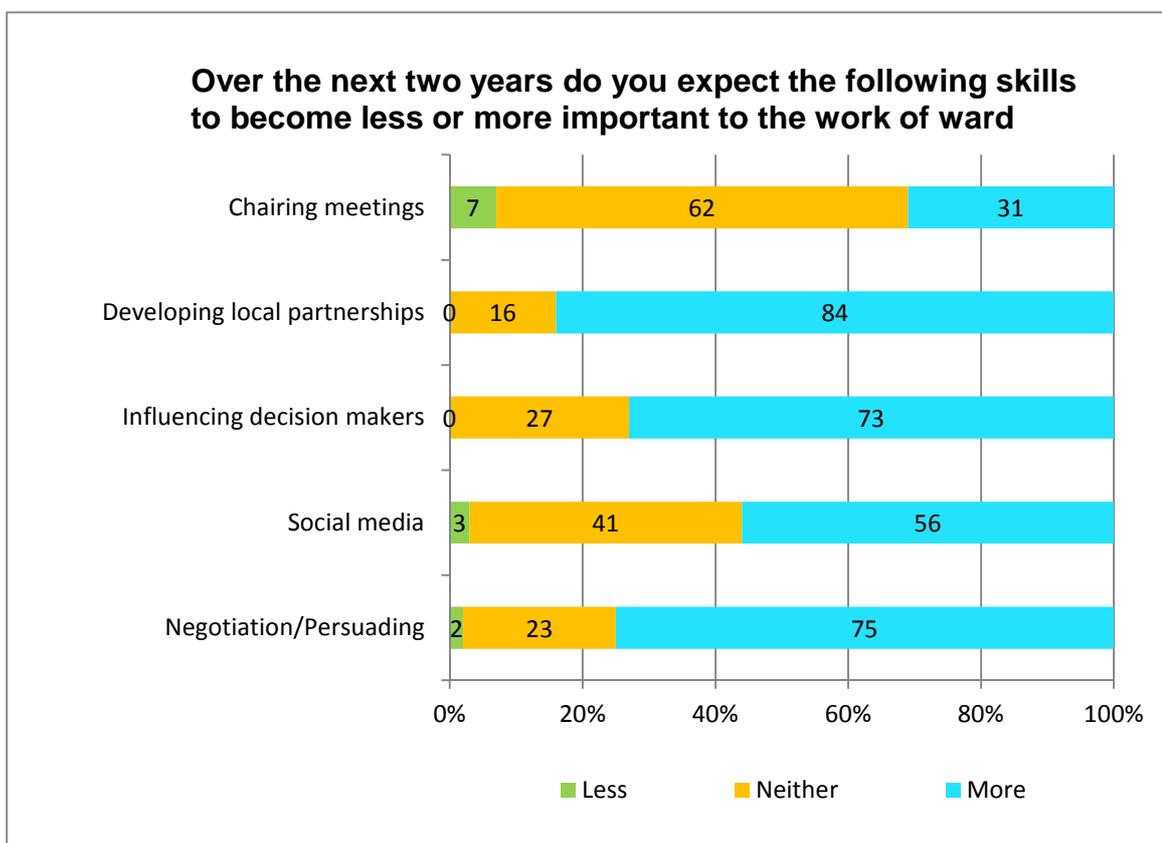
Some Councillors identified other areas in which they expected workloads to increase – these included communications with residents, commuting to meetings and specific issues around the Strategic Housing Land Assessment and local plan.



5.8 Asked more generally about their overall workload 93% of Councillors who answered the question agreed with the statement “I expect my overall Council workload to increase over the next two years” with 22% agreeing strongly that this would be the case. These views were uniformly spread irrespective of length of service, position on the council or the numbers of hours currently devoted to Council activities.

I expect my overall Council workload to increase over the next two years	
Strongly Agree	41%
Agree	52%
Disagree	5%
Strongly Disagree	2%

5.9 The survey asked whether Councillors believed certain skills would become more or less important to their work in their wards over the next two years. Developing local partnerships was considered to be an area in which skills would be increasingly important by 84% of Councillors who answered the question. Three quarters thought that negotiation and persuasion would be more important and 73% said the same of the ability to influence decision makers. Just over half (55%) of respondents anticipated social media skills becoming more important in ward work.



Other skills identified by Councillors as being necessary and likely to increase in importance were problem solving, mediation, and community development. Some Councillors said that they had found it difficult to answer the question because multiple skills are required to be an effective ward Councillor.

- 5.10 Councillors were asked how they thought that the role or ward councillors might change over the next two years. In response many comments anticipated an increasing community development focus and advocacy element to the role including support to help people find different ways of addressing local issues *and* take greater responsibility for their areas.

“The role of a councillor has moved on from someone who just oversees replacing street lights and gritting. More emphasis will be on partnerships working and influencing decisions.”

Councillors foresaw increased engagement with the voluntary sector and other organisations such as parish councils and the need to become skilled at identifying and securing resources from sources beyond council budgets.

Some Councillors expected significantly more case work including work of greater complexity as a result of funding cuts and expressed concern about how to communicate the changing nature of Council services to a sceptical public with high expectations of their local representatives.

- 5.11 Councillors were asked whether they thought they would need more or less support from the Council over the next two years to perform their role as ward councillors. Almost half (48%) of Councillors responding said that they would need more Council support to carry out their ward work with 39% saying they thought support needs would remain the same. Well over half (56%) of Councillors with two years' experience or less said that they would need more support and the same was true of Councillors with ten years or more experience (57%). A lower proportion of Councillors with three to five years (31%) and six to ten years' experience (37%) said that they would need more support.

Of Councillors with an executive or executive assistants' position six out of nine said that they anticipated the need for more support to perform their ward work and just under half of Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs shared this view. Among senior members of opposition groups most (62%) believed that they would need around the same level of support although several written comments suggested that the Council should try to increase the support it provides to opposition groups. Over

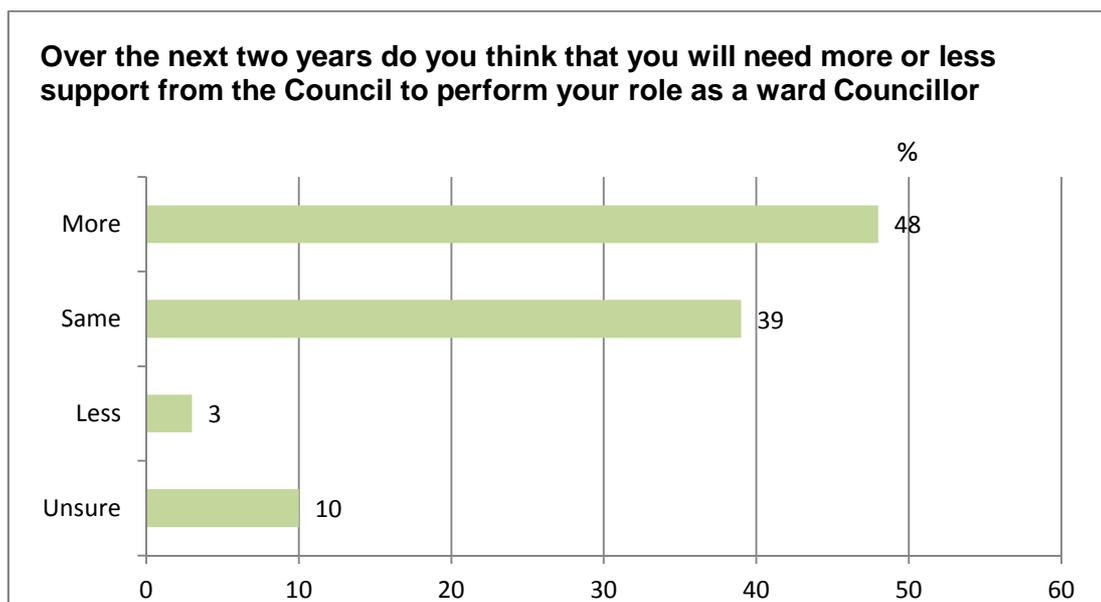
40% of members who did not hold a senior position on Council committees or within their group (excluding party whips) said that they would require more support.

A significant number of written comments were provided in relation to future support needs. Many of them referred to the need to adopt new approaches to service delivery and to the relationship with their local communities because of budget reductions as a driver of the need for increased support. However these views were generally balanced with a recognition that with all services under financial pressure increasing resources to support members would be difficult to justify.

There were however, comments that suggested a shift in culture and emphasis could deliver enhanced support without the need for extra resources. Some indicated that they believed that some Council departments regard elected members as an obstruction and do not value their democratic role or share information properly with Councillors. Others, the neighbourhoods service was quoted several times, were highly regarded and could act as exemplars for other parts of the organisation.

It was also suggested that other organisations for example in the health sector would benefit from a better understanding of Councillors roles and that this would support better local working.

Better quality and more timely information, better understanding of the role among public sector staff and support to develop partnership working with local people were recurrent themes.



- 5.12 A summary of the survey findings and details of all written comments can be found at Appendix 4.

6 Elected Member Interviews

- 6.1 Between January and March 2016 a series of semi-structured interviews were undertaken with senior Councillors including the former leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of Council, the leader of the opposition and leaders of the Liberal Democrat and Green groups and a member of the Executive. Since the change in the Council's leadership in May the new Council leader has also been interviewed.

Interviews were also undertaken in May 2016 with the then Chairs of Scrutiny Committees. The interviews were designed to explore views on the role of Councillors in a changing environment including the numbers required to represent the District. The interviews were undertaken on the understanding that the views expressed would be unattributed to individuals. The interview questionnaire is provided at Appendix 5.

- 6.2 Elected members were asked about the key challenges facing the Council and their impact on the role of elected members.
- 6.3 **Budget.** All Councillors who were interviewed placed meeting significant budget pressures at the top of the challenges facing the Council. There was general consensus among the responses that the Councillors role was changing as a result of budget reductions and changes to the Council's traditional role as a service provider.

The Councillor's role at strategic and at ward level was viewed as being increasingly about advocacy, brokerage and influence. It was suggested that Councillors were spending significant amounts of their time scrutinising budgets and budget cuts and then trying to manage their implementation or explain them to a sceptical public.

Elected members recognised that things have to change and be done differently and that there are fundamental questions about the future role and purpose of the Council. Some saw services inevitably being scaled back to statutory duties and expressed concern about finding the balance between delivering statutory responsibilities while finding the resources to do other things that are needed to change the District for the better. A question was raised about the balance between universal and high cost targeted services that are provided to relatively few people. One member suggested that within 5-10 years the District Councillor model won't exist and will have been replaced by governance models based on West Yorkshire or wider geographic level.

Although change is inevitable the Council is constrained by previous decisions that mean it has a low tax base and while Councillors have tried to resist a slash and burn approach to implementing budget cuts to date, supporting communities to run facilities and services themselves takes time.

As the Council reduces services providing face to face contact with the public Councillors are increasingly becoming its public face and there are issues around addressing public expectations and raising awareness of the need for change and of the services that the Council is responsible for. Several Councillors said that people want someone to blame and that Councillors are often left to carry the can for decisions that are often beyond their control for example in housing or in terms of services provided by other agencies. Getting communities to buy in to change is difficult and a strong narrative is required around reductions in resources and the need to focus on self-sufficiency where this is possible. There is existing antipathy in some quarters to being part of Bradford District that causes issues particularly as budgets reduce.

- 6.4 **Devolution.** Devolution of powers, resources and responsibilities from Westminster to sub-regional levels featured prominently in the thoughts of all the interviewees.

Councillors thought that devolution could lead to the movement of some strategic functions currently performed locally up to the sub-regional level thus shrinking Bradford Council in size and scope. The job of Bradford Council will be to ensure that we have a significant voice in the region and that devolution works for the District as opposed to trying to get ministers to listen to our case for Bradford. The role of senior Councillors will become more strategic and externally focussed on working through relationships and getting the best deal and this is likely to place more pressure on their colleagues in their local wards.

Generally devolution was seen as an opportunity but there was concern that much uncertainty over the nature of any devolution deal remains. People were also worried that Bradford could lose out to other areas and that the role of core cities was being over emphasised.

Concern was expressed about democratic accountability with a mayoral model potentially placing too much power in one person's hands, potential dominance by one political party, confusion about who is responsible for what and a lack of clarity about scrutiny arrangements particularly where services are likely to leave local control. Some Councillors said that the devolution agenda would reduce local power

and resources and undermine local democracy at a time when our communities need more advocates not fewer.

- 6.5 **Demand and demography.** Increasing demand for services was a common theme linked to challenges around balancing budgets and sustaining services and good outcomes. Budget reductions are compounded by rising numbers of older and younger people and people with disabilities leading to increasing pressure in terms of meeting statutory duties with less money, one member felt that demand pressures were transitional and would come back into balance over time. Another said that budget cuts were increasing demand for crisis services and they were seeing increasing levels of need and complexity in their case loads. It was suggested that Councillors are often at the end of the line for people in crisis which raises a question about the potential for Councillors to be more proactive in terms of facilitating early action to assist people before they find themselves in crisis.
- 6.6 **Education & Skills.** Improving education and skills were identified as key areas of challenge but Members across the board expressed frustration at having limited powers to address them, “No role without control” summed up this sentiment. The Council itself cannot be held directly responsible for educational attainment without having power and the Education Covenant is promoting shared responsibility. Questions were raised about the Council’s ability to deliver on its ambitions for education and good schools and there are issues about public awareness of the diminishing part that Councils’ play in education. It was acknowledged however that while Council influence is eroded there is still a need to represent the interests of children and families.
- 6.7 **Health / Public sector reform.** The health and social care system was identified as another example of an issue in which the Council has responsibility for knitting together partnerships of service commissioners and providers but little or no power or resources to make them work effectively. Health structures are complex and poorly understood by the public and partnership working within the sector was felt by some to be relatively immature.
- 6.8 **Housing.** Trying to balance the need for new homes while at the same time protecting green spaces was seen by some as a key issue by some members.

Relationships with Parish Councils, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and business.

- 6.9 Elected Members were asked about their perceptions of Parish Councils and the VCS and how the changing nature of local government might impact on them.
- 6.10 **Parish Councils.** Parish Councils were perceived as key stakeholders with whom productive relationships need to be established and maintained although they are seen to be of variable quality.

The power to place a precept on Council tax gives people living in places with Parish Councils the opportunity to exert more control over the area's destiny. However several concerns were expressed about the degree of expectation being placed on them in terms of their ability to take on responsibilities for services and facilities. It was suggested that the Council could do more to support parishes in this regard for example, through bridging loans or dowries accompanying asset transfers.

Concerns were expressed about the potential for postcode lotteries to result from transferring responsibilities to parish Councils with the richest communities getting the best deal.

- 6.11 **VCS.** Generally relationships with the VCS were perceived to be strong but there are issues about how the Council works with the sector given the severe budget constraints it faces and several members said that elements of the VCS need to change as well as the Council. It was suggested that some bigger organisations actively compete with others that they are there to support and that there are organisations that focus largely on running buildings rather than on people or outcomes.

Most members sought to make a distinction between what they perceive to be a "professional" element of the VCS and "grassroots" organisations. There were perceptions that the latter group are more representative of local communities with the former having a degree of disconnection from them yet having greater influence over Council policy via formal structures dominated by relatively small numbers of larger organisations that have vested interests.

- 6.12 **Business.** Most members called for greater engagement with/from business in particular in terms of skills and apprenticeships. It was suggested that the Council needs to develop an "ask" of the private sector around skills and community engagement and that the Council should seek to influence the deployment of revenue from the apprenticeships levy. Good relationships with business are important to promote "reputation of place" and the Council should do more to engage

with entrepreneurs especially those outside the city centre. Where the Council lacks skills for example in commercialism, it was suggested that it should work more closely with the private sector providing opportunities for business to do the things it does badly itself.

- 6.13 **Councillor Numbers and Elections.** Interviewees were asked about their views on whether the number of Councillors should be cut and on the frequency with which local elections should be held. As might be anticipated views were mixed with no definitive consensus emerging on either issue.

Some Councillors agreed that the overall numbers of Councillors should be cut but several said that there was too much uncertainty especially around devolution, for it to be the right time to make such a move. It was felt by some that without clarity around the powers and responsibilities that would be left with Bradford Council that there could be no informed judgement made on the on-going nature of the role and therefore on the numbers needed. It was suggested that if powers were to reduce then this would be a more appropriate time to look at reducing the numbers of elected representatives but even then while case work might reduce the need for community leaders and advocates would increase.

Others believed that if numbers were to be cut then the position should be made a full-time job with appropriate remuneration which would be likely to negate or limit and cost reductions that could be made through numerical reductions. It was argued that as things stand Councillors are relatively low cost representatives.

Mixed feelings were expressed about the possibility of fewer Councillors especially given a growing role for Councillors as community champions and advocates and the very high levels of demand for Councillors services in some parts of the District. According to some members the role itself is unlikely to diminish and workloads have already increased. It was argued that budget cuts are increasing pressures on Councillors and that they are critical helping people understand and participate in change so that the Council needs to maintain its numbers for now with another look when we arrive at the “end game”.

- 6.14 Some interviewees believed that 90 is the right number of Councillors. Among those who thought that a reduced number was feasible if not necessarily desirable, the suggestions for the appropriate number of Councillors ranged from 30 one member wards to 60 (30 wards with two members) and 75 (25 wards with three members). It was suggested that while the Council probably needs 30-60 “strategic place makers” this would not provide the numbers needed to fulfil all its regulatory functions.

Another idea was for the Council to consider moving to 90 “mini” wards each with its own Councillor.

- 6.15 The suggestion that different wards could have different numbers of members led to concerns about unfair and unequal levels of representation and division between communities. In general, members appeared to prefer a consistent level of representation in each ward be that through one, two or three councillors although some suggested that some parts of the District could manage with fewer. It was argued by some that three works well and should continue to be the standard however many wards the District has.
- 6.16 Asked whether the Council should request a formal boundary review few members rejected the idea but there were several concerns expressed that this is not the appropriate time and that the Council should wait until there is greater certainty around budgets, devolution and the role.
- 6.17 There was some support for holding elections every four years in which all Council seats would be contested. Four yearly terms it was argued would enable better planning and reduce costs although there would be risks attached to potentially significant numbers of new members all at once which could threaten continuity of leadership and undermine collective experience and expertise. Others argued to stay with elections in thirds – it was said that this provides rhythm and greater accountability – keeping members sharp and in touch with communities.

Councillor Roles, Skills and Support

- 6.18 The interviews asked about views on how changes to the role and functions of the Council were translated into changes in the workload of District councillors and the skills they require, how this would affect workloads and the type of support they need. As senior roles become more strategic and externally focussed “frontline” councillors will have to backfill the gaps.
- 6.19 Most of those interviewed believed that workloads would increase in the future; some said it would remain at current levels but none thought it would decrease although the focus may alter. If numbers of Councillors were to reduce then this would lead to increased pressure on workloads
- 6.20 In terms of changes in skills there was a general consensus around the idea that Councillors would increasingly need to be skilled in brokerage, influencing, partnership and advocacy and “future proofing” communities against budget reductions through bringing different groups, resources and opportunities together.

While responsibilities in some areas will decline – for example direct involvement in schools, members felt that at all levels of activity the need for place making, influence, persuasion, mediation and engaging with others will increase and the emphasis of ward work could shift from case work and dealing with service delivery to a community development focused approach – although some took the view that case work particularly with people in crisis remains the most important part of the job.

The Council can't be relied on to provide all the answers and Councillors need to work with local people to build "self- support" with people most "empowered" when they are involved. This could mean for example, Councillors needing to lead active community organisation in order to take over services or assets that the Council can no longer sustain. It was suggested though that relatively few Councillors were currently working in this way or had the requisite skills to do so.

There may be a case for looking at the role Councillors can play in terms of early intervention and prevention.

Skills were regarded by some as being less important than having access to the "tools" to do the job.

Devolution will require different skills to advocate for Bradford and understand the wider issues and in general there was a view that we are going to need more Councillors who understand policy and strategy as well as community councillors.

It was suggested that political parties could do more to develop skills and help encourage skilled and resourceful people to become Councillors – at the moment many people ask themselves why they should bother given the challenges to be faced and the perceptions that some members of the public hold of Councillors.

- 6.21 Views on how well the Council supports ward Councillors depended largely on the quality of individual officers or the experience of elected members who know who to ask. Where support is good officers are nevertheless often stretched and unable to respond rapidly to constituent issues.

It was said that political awareness among council officers is poor but that so is the understanding of many elected members of officer imperatives. Councillors also have a responsibility to take advantage of training and support opportunities and more needs to be done to give people the tools to help them-selves.

The Council was criticised for not supporting councillors to be community leaders and only offering the support it thinks they need.

- 6.22 **Social Media.** Members were asked for views on the impact of social media on local democracy and how the Council should respond. Social media was accepted as having become part and parcel of the democratic landscape and was adding to workloads, one member described how young mums would contact them with issues on Facebook. An easy way to reach lots of people it is playing a significant role in mobilising people although it was suggested that it may be approaching its peak capacity.

However numerous concerns were expressed including receiving abuse, the use of social media to disseminate disinformation and myths that then require rebuttals and the risk of being dragged into online rows.

Councillors felt that social media should continue to be regarded as just one strand in the Council's overall communications and consultation strategies and that it should be cautious about overemphasising its importance and reacting instantaneously to its content. It could play a part in gathering data and intelligence and area officers need to interact with social media around neighbourhood forums etc.

7 Councillor Profile

- 7.1 The Council's Democratic Services section gathers information on the age and ethnic profile of Councillors.
- 7.2 Women are under represented on the Council comprising 37.8% of Councillors despite females accounting for more than half the District's population (50.7%) and 51.2% of its over 18 population. The proportion of female Councillors is slightly higher than the national average (2013) of 32.7%.
- 7.3 The proportion of Councillors from non-White ethnic groups at 31.1% is close to that of the overall population and exceeds that of the 18+ population (23%). Nationally the figure for non-white Councillors is 4%.
- 7.3 The average age of Bradford Councillors at 52, is relatively young compared to national figures compiled by the Local Government Association in 2013 placing the average age of Councillors at 62.

Table 5 illustrates the fact that despite having being younger than the national average the age profile of Bradford Councillors is significantly older than the voting age population of the District. No Councillors are

younger than 30 and the proportions aged 40-49, 50-59 and 60-69 are all significantly higher than among the wider 18+ population.

Table 5 - Age Profile of Bradford Councillors.

Age Group	Bradford District 18+ population	Bradford Councillors	Councillors National Average*
	%	%	%
18-29	21.2	0	2.3
30-39	18.7	17.8	5.4
40-49	17.9	25.6	10.5
50-59	16.1	26.7	38.1
60-69	12.8	21.1	38.6
70+	13.3	8.9	22.2

*National Census of Councillors 2013, LGA

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 Bradford District is a place where people attach high value to democratically accountable local representation irrespective of age, gender, ethnic group or location. People understand that locally accountable Councillors also play a role in taking decisions on behalf of the whole District and holding key decision makers to account and they attach very high levels of importance to those responsibilities.
- 8.2 Constituents attach high importance to many aspects of ward Councillors' work and in particular they expect their elected representatives to consult and work with constituents on local issues as part and parcel of the job.
- 8.3 Very high proportions of people believe that three Councillors is the right number for the ward in which they live or that more are needed. This view is most strongly held among women and people aged 18-34.
- 8.4 Most councillors spend over 20 hours a week on council duties and activities with 70% of Councillors devoting 50% of their time on Council business to constituency matters. Over 90% of councillors anticipated an increase in their workload over the next two years and interviews with senior members of the Council suggested that for many members workloads are already increasing and will continue to do so.

The figures on workloads are broadly consistent with national data from the LGA census of Councillors 2013 which also shows increases in the average time Councillors spend on Council business from 20.7 hours a week in 2010 to 25.1 in 2013. This is a continuation of a long standing

trend – the Report of the 2007 Commission on Councillors, “Representing the Future” identified that the average amount of time Councillors spent on their duties had increased from 52 hours a month in 1964 to just under 95 hours in 2006. The Institute of Local Government Report to the Electoral Commission 2005 on Council size concluded that the average hours Councillors spent on Council duties per month was highest among the authorities with the highest ratios of electors to Councillors.

- 8.5 A growing electorate is likely to have an impact on workloads. Some councillors expect to see significant increases in case work and many take the view that their role as community leaders and advocates will expand as the scope and scale of Council services and budgets contract and the relationship with local communities and community organisations changes.
- 8.6 Councillors and constituents attach a high degree of importance to the community leadership aspects of the elected members’ role and expect these elements to increase in scope in future however there is concern that many Councillors need additional support to perform these roles effectively.
- 8.7 Bradford is an ambitious District with an entrepreneurial and growing economy and a leading role to play in Leeds City Region, the pan-northern economy and in any sub-regional devolution arrangements that affect the District.

Interviews with senior elected members indicate the need to maintain elected representatives who can work strategically and at a high level regionally and nationally to ensure that Bradford District gets the best possible outcomes at a time of great uncertainty. The importance attached to the strategic place making role of senior Councillors reflects the views of Sir Michael Lyons’ Inquiry into Local Government 2007 which asserted that:

“Good leadership for prosperity, as part of economic place-shaping is particularly challenging and complex, since it requires work with partners and independent organisations including private businesses at a regional, national or even international level. The council has to have the leadership and influencing skills to assert the interests of its residents, while having the credibility to be taken seriously as a negotiating partner.”

Successfully performing this high level leadership requires senior Councillors to devote significant time to their duties and to have a wide range of skills and experience along with the support of ward colleagues

who can deal with increasing levels of case work and support their communities to develop higher levels of self-support.

In addition to the strategic and community leadership roles the Council requires members to fulfil regulatory functions.

- 8.8 Bradford is a big, diverse and growing District where people expect their Councillors and their council to be able to ensure that everyone is properly represented.

The national Councillors Commission in 2007 argued that Councillors are most effective as locally elected representatives when they have similar life experiences to those of their constituents and that:

“councils benefit from having a range of age, background and human experience among their elected membership which reasonably reflects their population, on two broad counts: symbolically, for notions of fairness, the importance of role models of resemblance, and enhancing trust and legitimacy in the political process; and substantively, different core interests and concerns can be fed directly into the democratic process.”

It is important in this context that where possible Councillors reflect the diversity of the communities that they represent and that people from all communities have the opportunity to become councillors - the likelihood of this being the case is less with fewer numbers of councillors.

As it stands, the age profile of Bradford Councillors is younger than national averages but older than the population; women are under-represented and in terms of ethnicity the proportion from non-white BME groups is broadly consistent with the general population. Fewer Councillors could be detrimental to progress in achieving a Council that is more representative of the people that it serves.

LGBCE guidance requires the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities when assessing Councillor's numbers.

Again, given the social and geographic diversity of the District, a reduction in the number of elected members could reduce the Council's ability to properly reflect community identity and interest at risk.

- 8.9 Relatively high levels of deprivation have implications for Councillor workloads and pressure on public services.

Among the criteria that the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland used to determine appropriate ratios of Councillors to electors

was the proportion of people living in areas of high deprivation. Where over 30% of the population lived in areas within the 15% most deprived nationally for example, in Glasgow, the Commission recommended that the optimum Councillor to elector ratio should be 2,800. If equivalent criteria were applied to Bradford then Councillor's numbers would increase in order to reflect the additional demands associated with levels of high deprivation in parts of the District.

8.10 The implications of devolution for the role and function of Bradford Council and councillors is as yet unclear. Likewise, the future shape and role of the Council as it reduces to a smaller size and scale has yet to be fully determined and the outcomes of the review or Constituency Boundaries are unknown. This uncertainty leads some senior councillors to believe that this is not the appropriate time to reduce Councillors although they do not discount the possibility in future.

8.11 Comparisons with other local authorities would suggest that current numbers of Councillors in Bradford are not unusually high given the size of its electorate and the range of the Council's representative responsibilities. While the number of electors per Councillor is lower than in some broadly comparable authorities such as Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Kirklees and Leicester, it is higher than many others for example, Nottingham, Derby, Southampton, Liverpool, Newcastle and Blackburn and Darwen. The numbers of electors per Councillor are higher than national averages and amongst the upper quartile of Metropolitan authorities.

A growing electorate will mean each Councillor representing increasing numbers of people in future. A reduction in numbers would risk a deficit in democratic representation.

8.12 Bradford does not currently meet the criteria for an LGBCE review however if Bradford Councillor numbers were to reduce in line with national averages for upper tier Councils subject to Boundary Commission reviews since 2010 it would see a reduction of 8 Councillors and the numbers of electors to councillors increase to 4,080 based on the total electorate at 1 December 2015. A reduction of 33% from 90 to 60 Councillors based on 30 two member wards would represent the highest percentage change in any reduction at a higher tier council since 2010 and would increase elector to councillor numbers to 5,576 – in December 2014 only Birmingham had a higher ratio among all upper tier Councils.