

# Watford Borough Council

## Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

January 2015



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## **Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission on Council Size**

### **1. An overview of Watford**

In order to provide some context to the Council's submission below is some facts and figures about Watford as at January 2015. This includes an overview of the Borough, information on the town's population, including its electorate and details about the Council and its democratic arrangements.

Watford is an urban borough in South West Hertfordshire, on the edge of the East of England region to the north-west of London. It covers an area of 2,142 hectares (8.3 square miles), and is the only non-metropolitan borough wholly contained within the M25 and the largest town in Hertfordshire. However, about 20% of the Borough forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt and this is supplemented by a variety of open spaces.

The Borough has excellent transport links with mainline rail connections to London, Gatwick Airport, the Midlands and the North, Underground and Overground connections to London, its north-west suburbs and the rural Chilterns, community rail connections to St Albans, coach services to Heathrow airport, bus services to Luton airport and convenient road connections via the M1, M25 and A41.

A long established urban centre, with a market charter dating to the 12th century, Watford has always been a strong location for business and industry. Today the town remains a successful commercial hub and is a desirable place in which to live, work and enjoy leisure time. Local businesses are active and engaged in local governance and partnerships which help underpin commercial vitality, and the large, skilled working-age population makes a significant contribution to the local economy, as well as embracing the close links with London. The town is currently home to around 3500 businesses with a good mix of company size and sector, with many international HQ's and a higher than average start-up success rate, and a range of businesses in between. There is representation from financial and professional services sectors, pharmaceutical, health sciences, creative media, manufacturing and retail and leisure industries, amongst many others.

Watford is the centre of a sub-region serving around 500,000 people, living within a 20 minute traveling time catchment. Known for traditional industries including printing, the town has successfully diversified into an attractive and popular regional shopping and business centre and a focus for culture and recreation. Watford's town centre attracts visitors to enjoy its broad retail offer and vibrant night time economy for decades, and recent initiatives such as the public realm enhancements, New Watford Market and comprehensive events programme have enabled the High Street to fare comparatively well during a challenging period for town centres across the UK. The forthcoming £100m redevelopment of Charter Place, due for completion in 2017, also demonstrates the town centres continued attractiveness to the market as one of the premier retailing destinations nationally.

## 2. Watford's Population

<p><b>Population</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The size of Watford's population at the time of the census in 2011 was <b>90,300</b>. This was around a 13% increase in population since the last census in 2001 when the population was 79,726.</li> <li>• The current mid-year estimate (2013 revised) puts the population at <b>93,700 (rounded figure)</b>.</li> <li>• Watford's overall population increase as a percentage, from the mid-2012 estimate, was the 4th highest of all local authorities in the country i.e. Watford's estimated change in population of <b>circa 2,000 = 2.18%</b>. Forest Heath (4.16%), Tower Hamlets (3.76%) and Islington's (2.19%) are the highest in the country. Details of the components of change mid-2012 to mid-2013 estimate show that the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Majority of Watford's estimated increase is from net internal migration - within the UK (6,905 in / 5,843 out) = 1062 net (53% of overall increase)</li> <li>○ Followed by twice as many births than deaths (1,494 births -718 deaths)= 776 more births than deaths (39% of overall increase) ;</li> <li>○ With the least increase stemming from net international migration (723 in/558 out) =165 net (8% of overall increase).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 49.6% of Watford's resident population are male and 50.4% are female</li> </ul>																								
<p><b>Population density</b></p>	<p>The population density for Watford is circa 4,358 people per square kilometre. This makes it the most densely populated district in England and Wales. However, in comparison with some metropolitan boroughs, particularly those in and around the outskirts of London, the density is relatively low.</p> <p>In 2011, Callowland was the most densely populated ward in the borough (i.e. number of persons per hectare)</p> <p>Mid 2013 year population estimates show Central has the highest population of any ward in Watford and Tudor the lowest at 6,099:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Callowland</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7,704</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Central</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8,975</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holywell</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8,927</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leggatts</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7,876</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Meriden</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8,089</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nascot</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8,160</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oxhey</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6,921</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Park</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7,873</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stanborough</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7,227</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tudor</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6,099</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vicarage</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8,660</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Woodside</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7,225</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>This is ONS experimental data (Ward Level Mid-Year Population Estimates (experimental), Mid-2013)</i></p>	Callowland	7,704	Central	8,975	Holywell	8,927	Leggatts	7,876	Meriden	8,089	Nascot	8,160	Oxhey	6,921	Park	7,873	Stanborough	7,227	Tudor	6,099	Vicarage	8,660	Woodside	7,225
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<p><b>Age bands</b></p>	<p>Watford continues to be a relatively young population - particularly in comparison to the rest of Hertfordshire.</p>																								

	<p>The largest populations by age band in Watford are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25-29 (7,826)</li> <li>• 30-34 (8,975)</li> <li>• the numbers in each successive age-band fall progressively from ages 30-34 until there are estimated to be circa 1,700 who are 85+.</li> </ul> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;"><b>Watford</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>93,736 (overall)</b></td> </tr> <tr><td>0-4</td><td style="text-align: right;">7,327</td></tr> <tr><td>5-9</td><td style="text-align: right;">6,177</td></tr> <tr><td>10-14</td><td style="text-align: right;">5,387</td></tr> <tr><td>15-19</td><td style="text-align: right;">5,223</td></tr> <tr><td>20-24</td><td style="text-align: right;">5,356</td></tr> <tr><td>25-29</td><td style="text-align: right;">7,826</td></tr> <tr><td>30-34</td><td style="text-align: right;">8,975</td></tr> <tr><td>35-39</td><td style="text-align: right;">7,620</td></tr> <tr><td>40-44</td><td style="text-align: right;">7,085</td></tr> <tr><td>45-49</td><td style="text-align: right;">6,568</td></tr> <tr><td>50-54</td><td style="text-align: right;">5,794</td></tr> <tr><td>55-59</td><td style="text-align: right;">4,673</td></tr> <tr><td>60-64</td><td style="text-align: right;">3,862</td></tr> <tr><td>65-69</td><td style="text-align: right;">3,540</td></tr> <tr><td>70-74</td><td style="text-align: right;">2,634</td></tr> <tr><td>75-79</td><td style="text-align: right;">2,255</td></tr> <tr><td>80-84</td><td style="text-align: right;">1,744</td></tr> <tr><td>85-89</td><td style="text-align: right;">1,041</td></tr> <tr><td>90+</td><td style="text-align: right;">649</td></tr> </table> <p>The <b>median age</b> in Watford in 2011 was <b>35</b> - no change since 2001. This was the lowest median age in Hertfordshire and the fifth lowest median age in the Eastern region (47 local authority areas in total). The median age for the UK was 39.</p> <p>Watford has the fourth highest percentage population of 0-4 year olds in the Eastern region and the sixth highest 0-14 year olds. In comparison, Watford has the third lowest percentage population of 65+ in the region.</p>	<b>Watford</b>	<b>93,736 (overall)</b>	0-4	7,327	5-9	6,177	10-14	5,387	15-19	5,223	20-24	5,356	25-29	7,826	30-34	8,975	35-39	7,620	40-44	7,085	45-49	6,568	50-54	5,794	55-59	4,673	60-64	3,862	65-69	3,540	70-74	2,634	75-79	2,255	80-84	1,744	85-89	1,041	90+	649
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<b>Projections</b>	<p>The ONS interim 2012-based subnational population projections are an indication of the future trends in population over the next 10 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watford's population is projected to be <b>103,000</b> by 2022</li> <li>• Births are projected to be double deaths each year</li> </ul>																																								
<b>Households</b>	<p>The average household size in Watford is <b>2.4</b>. This is average for the region.</p> <p><b>Number of households</b> The ONS data, based on the census, says that there were <b>36,681</b> households in Watford at the time of the Census; as of March 31 2014 the figure was <b>38,195</b>.</p> <p>Watford had the fourth highest percentage change in households - <b>+14.6%</b> - in the Eastern region from 2001 to 2011.</p>																																								

### Household Composition

- **Most frequent household** = single people aged under pensionable age.
  - Grown from 17.5% in 2001 to **21.1%** in 2011 (overtaken married couples with children)
- **Lone parents** - significant rise in the number and % of lone parents (from 4.9% in 2001 to **7.2%** in 2011)
- **One person pensioner households** – declined in both numbers and percentage (from 12.2% 2001 to **10.0%** in 2011)

### Household tenure

- **Privately rented housing:**
  - increased from 3,170 homes in 2001 to 7,371 homes in 2011, from 9.8% to 20.1% of the housing stock
- **Homes owned outright:**
  - decreased from 26.1% to 24.4%
- **Homes being purchased with a mortgage:**
  - decreased from 46.1% to 37.2%
- **Social housing**
  - remained static as % of the total housing stock (16.3% in both 2001 and 2011) yet it has increased in number from 5,266 in 2001 to 5,987 in 2011

### Household projections

Watford					
Household types	2011	2021	Change 2011-21	% Change 2011-21	% of total change
One person	11.7	12.5	0.8	6.6%	32.8%
Couple and no other adult (single family, a married or cohabiting couple, with or without dependent children)	14.9	15.0	0.1	0.5%	3.0%
Couple with other adults (one or more married or cohabiting couple families with one or more other adults present, with or without dependent children)	4.6	5.1	0.6	12.1%	23.4%
Lone parent (one or more lone parent families, with dependent children, no married or cohabiting couple families)	2.8	3.7	0.9	32.3%	38.3%
Other (multi-person household e.g. lone parents with only non-dependent children, non-cohabiting adults sharing a dwelling)	2.9	3.0	0.1	2.1%	2.6%
<b>All households</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>39.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Data source: Compiled by WBC, Planning Policy from DCLG 2011-based interim household projections*  
*N.B. Household numbers are in thousands*

### Ethnicity

The White British population in Watford decreased from 2001 to 2011 and is now 62% of the Watford population.



All ethnic categories except for White British and White Irish have increased over the time period, with notable percentage increase in White Other, Indian, Pakistani and

	<p>Black African.</p> <p>The largest non-White British categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White other (up from 2.1% in 2001). This would include people from Europe, Australia etc</li> <li>• Asian: Pakistani (up from 4.6% in 2001)</li> <li>• Asian: Indian (up from 2.4% in 2001)</li> </ul> <p>In terms of where people were people living in Watford were born, Census 2011 showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>UK</b> = <b>75%</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Ireland</b> = <b>2%</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Rest of EU</b> = <b>6%</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Rest of world</b> = <b>17%</b></li> </ul> <p><b>National Insurance Number registration to adult overseas nationals</b> This can give some idea of current migration into Watford and the changes this might have long-term on the ethnic profile of the local community.</p> <p>As of September 2014, the registration showed for the year to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,822 registrations in Watford</li> <li>• 445 were to EU nationals (excluding accession states)</li> <li>• 992 were to EU nationals (accession states)</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<p>A skilled workforce supports the economic development and employment aspirations for Watford. Year on year results show that there is an increasing trend in both GCSE results for pupils in Watford and the qualifications of the working age population.</p> <p>In the academic year 2011/12, 92.2% of pupils in Watford achieved 5 or more GCSEs graded A* to C, compared to the national average of 81.8%,</p> <p>There has been a mostly increasing trend in Watford over the last few years in NVQ qualifications held and these again increased during 2012. Watford's working age population has the second highest percentage (43.7%) in Hertfordshire of those with qualifications at NVQ 4 and above (St. Albans is the highest with 52.9%); this is also higher than both the 40.4% average in Hertfordshire and the England average of 34.2%.</p> <p>There are fewer people with no qualifications and significantly more people with Level 4/5 qualifications (degree level).</p>
<b>Health</b>	<p>Watford's population enjoys better health than the Eastern Region and England overall with nearly 85% of the population stating that they have 'good health' and just under 14% recording a disability.</p> <p>However, there are health issues that need addressing in the borough, some of which are related to improving people's physical activity - see 2 below. These have been identified by the borough's Health and Wellbeing Partnership as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving access to help with alcohol related issues</li> <li>2. Increase exercise &amp; weight management referrals (NOTE: this may focus on</li> </ol>

	<p>specific gender, ages and/or communities)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Improve availability of screening in Primary Care for TB &amp; Sexual Health (NOTE: this may be through wider community engagement)</li> <li>4. Safe Healthy Food</li> <li>5. Continued focus on delivering health outcomes through safe and healthy homes</li> <li>6. Local or Emerging issues that arise from further or local research</li> </ol>
<b>Deprivation</b>	<p>The current English Indices of Deprivation 2010 was published by the Government on the 24 March 2011, and uses 38 separate indicators (most of which are from 2008), organised across seven domains; these are Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Other Services, Crime and Living Environment</p> <p>These domains can be combined, using appropriate weights, to calculate the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ('<b>IMD 2010</b>'). This is an overall measure of multiple deprivation experienced by people living in an area and is calculated for every Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in England, of which there are 32,482. LSOAs are small areas of relatively even size (around 1,500 people).</p> <p>In the IMD 2010, Watford is ranked 189 out of 326 authorities, putting it in the 6<sup>th</sup> decile nationally. This means that, overall, Watford is less deprived than half the authorities in England.</p> <p>Watford is the second most deprived authority in Hertfordshire. (Stevenage is the most deprived.) However, three Hertfordshire authorities are among the 10% least deprived authorities in England (Three Rivers, East Herts and St Albans) and the least deprived LSOA in England is in Three Rivers.</p> <p>No LSOAs in Watford are in the 20% most deprived in England and only four are in the most deprived 30%. Two of these are in Central, one in Stanborough and one in Meriden.</p> <p>The combined deprivation index, which weights income and employment more heavily than the other domains, obscures the more deprived areas in Watford, which are affected by crime, living environment deprivation and education, skills and training deprivation in particular. This is, at least in part, because income and employment deprivation are less of an issue for Watford.</p> <p>The ten most deprived LSOAs in Watford, as ranked in the IMD 2010, are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. E01023876 in Meriden</li> <li>2. E01023860 in Central</li> <li>3. E01023861 in Central</li> <li>4. E01023891 in Stanborough</li> <li>5. E01023865 in Holywell</li> <li>6. E01023883 in Oxhey</li> <li>7. E01023866 in Holywell</li> <li>8. E01023859 in Central</li> <li>9. E01023906 in Woodside</li> <li>10. E01023857 in Callowland</li> </ol> <p>Please see the map which shows which Watford LSOAs are among the 30% most deprived in England, 20% most deprived in the Eastern region and which are in the 30% most deprived in Hertfordshire.</p>








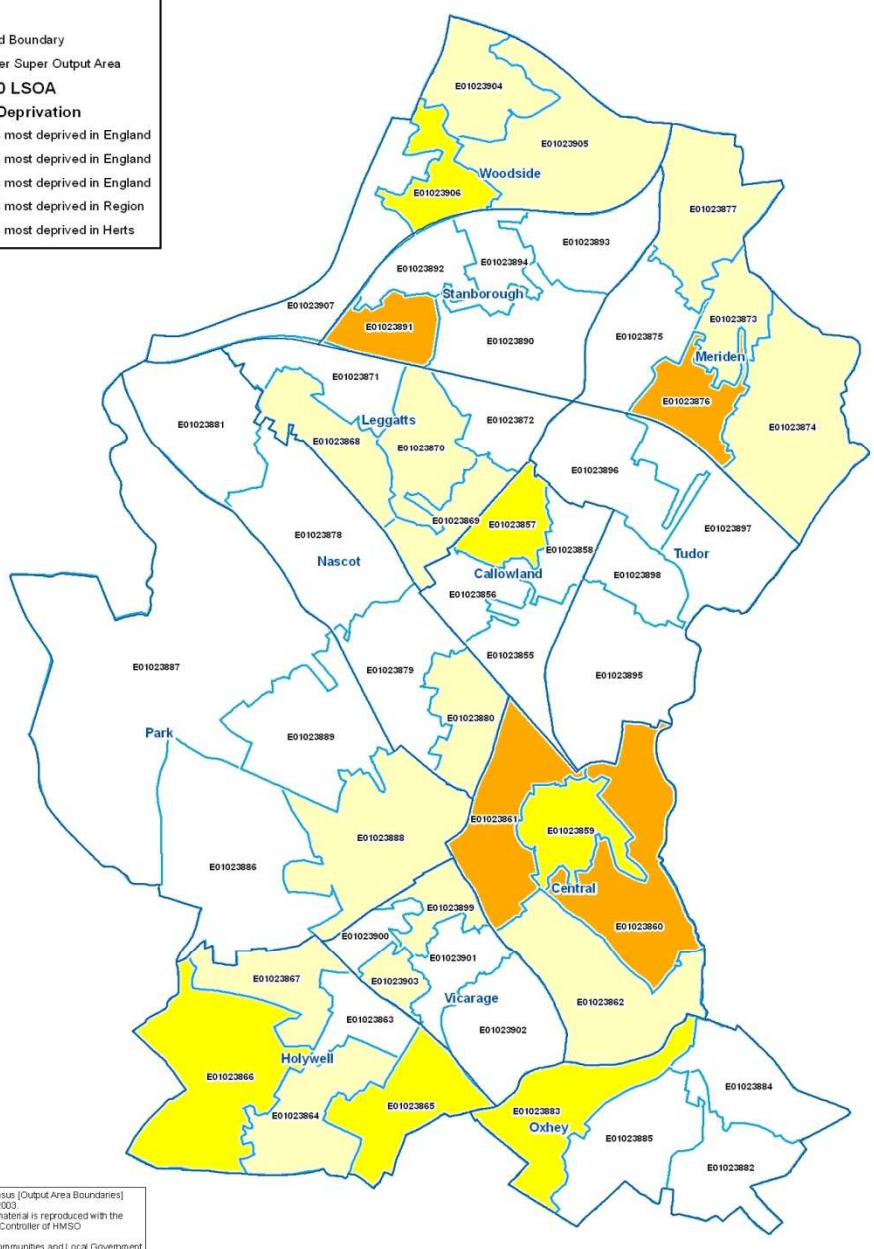
**Legend**

-  Ward Boundary
-  Lower Super Output Area

**IMD 2010 LSOA**

**Multiple Deprivation**

-  10% most deprived in England
-  20% most deprived in England
-  30% most deprived in England
-  20% most deprived in Region
-  30% most deprived in Herts



Source: 2001 Census (Output Area Boundaries)  
 Crown copyright 2003  
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 Department for Communities and Local Government, Indices of Deprivation 2010



**Map 1: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010**  
**Multiple Deprivation by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)**  
 Analysis shows the extent of multiple deprivation in Watford by illustrating which LSOAs are ranked in the top 10%, 20%, 30% in the county, region or nationally

Produced by Paul Morton, Corporate GIS, May 2011



Scale: 1:30,000  
 at A4

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Below are details of the current published electorate  
**WATFORD BOROUGH 2015 ELECTORATE**

Published	01/12/2014 =	69,225
Updated	02/01/2015 =	69,567

**Average Ward Electorate 01/12/2014 =**

69,255	divided by		
Total Wards i.e.			
12	=	5,771	1924 per cllr

**Average Ward Electorate 02/01/2015 =**

69,567	divided by		
Total Wards i.e.			
12	=	5,797	1932 per cllr

### **3. About the Council**

#### **Governance and Decision Making**

##### Leadership

Watford operates on the Elected Mayor and Cabinet model and has done since 2002. Currently the Elected Mayor has appointed 5 Portfolio Holders to her Cabinet. The legislation allows for a maximum of 9 on the Cabinet and as this is solely within the gift of the Elected Mayor this must be borne in mind when having regard to the availability of councillors for undertaking scrutiny.

Role profiles for Portfolio Holders have been established and are attached to this submission as are role profiles for a Ward Councillor, Chair of Scrutiny, and Chair of Non-scrutiny committees (Appendix A.) Whilst there is extensive delegation to officers there is some delegation directly to Portfolio Holders and they have the overarching responsibility for monitoring and being responsible for the services and functions within their particular portfolio. Whilst only the Elected Mayor role is a full time role they are expected to have regular meetings with their service heads and also act as the spokesperson for the Council on their areas of responsibility, including attending relevant scrutiny meetings. Portfolio Holders also serve on outside bodies. The Council has in recent years outsourced a number of services for which boards have been set up with the contracting partner to oversee management of the service. Cabinet members are on those boards.

Cabinet meets regularly and over the last three years has met an average of 8 times per year. Meeting last for an average of 1 hour 18 minutes and it received an average of 5 reports per meeting.

In addition members of the Cabinet have informal monthly meetings with Heads of Services.

In terms of delegation to officers: officers take around 120 formal executive decisions a year. Portfolio Holders take an average of 9 a year.

When making submissions to the Council's Independent Member Remuneration Panel in 2013 a Portfolio Holder estimated from looking at diary entries that he spent around 30 hours a week directly on Council business.

### Regulatory

The Council has set up 2 Licensing Committees, one to deal with matters under the Licensing Act 2003 and the other to deal with other non executive licensing matters such as taxis. Both committees have the same membership and meet consecutively.

The majority of day to day decisions regarding licensing are delegated to officers, however councillors are required to be involved in hearings regarding applications under the Licensing Act 2003 when there are representations made. This is usually a sub committee of the Licensing Committee and is made up of 3 councillors. The 2003 Act requires councils to set up a licensing committee of between 10 and 15 councillors and only members of the committee can sit on any sub committees set up to deal with hearings. Watford has elected to have a committee of 15 to give it maximum flexibility in finding 3 sub committee members. It has had to have the equivalent of at least one meeting per month of a sub committee over the preceding 3 years.

Having 36 councillors allows such flexibility. Potentially reducing the number of councillors by even 3 would mean that 45% of all councillors would have to sit on Licensing.

The main committees meet on average 7 times per year and deal with an average of 4 reports per meeting. The average duration of the meetings is 1 hour 30 minutes.

Development Control Committee deals with planning applications and planning enforcement. It is made up of 9 councillors. Decisions are delegated to officers with the exception of any applications where more than 4 objections have been received unless the application is to be refused or where the development is for non residential purposes of more than 1000 square metres or where the development is for 10 or more residential units.

Even with this level of delegation Development Control Committee meets on average 16 times a year usually every 3 weeks to enable decisions to be determined within the statutory periods. It has had over the past 3 years an average of 4 reports per meeting and meetings last on average 1 hour. It is not unusual for ward councillors to also attend Development Control to speak on behalf of their constituents on an application even though they are not a member of the committee.

The Council also has an Audit Committee made up of 5 councillors. This has met on average 4 times per year over the last 3 years. It has considered an average of 8 reports per meeting and each meeting is an average of 1 hour 42 minutes long.

Functions Committee is made up of 7 councillors it has met an average of 3 times per year over the last 3 years, had one report per meeting and the average length of the meeting has been 18

minutes.

### Other Non Scrutiny Panels

In addition to cabinet, the non executive committees and scrutiny, the Council has a number of working groups that meet on an ad hoc basis. These are Joint Highways Panel, Housing Policy Advisory Group, Planning Policy Advisory Group, Major Projects Board, Member Development Group and the Constitution Working Party. All these are cross party groups to provide guidance to cabinet/council on policy or major projects and provide a way for non cabinet members to influence policy.

They comprise between 5 to 10 councillors and meet as and when required.

The Council also has a Standards Committee.

### Council

Council meets on average 6 times a year. It has (except for annual council) a standing item for the Elected Mayor to report on her activities to Council and all councillors are allowed to ask questions of the Elected Mayor. It also receives motions and petitions. Over the last 3 years each council meeting has lasted an average of 1 hour 48 minutes.

Attached is some information about council committees and their remit (Appendix B).

### Demands on time:

The Council has developed, in consultation with councillors, role profiles which are attached.

The Council also develops training for councillors based on their individual needs as assessed and in consultation with the Member Development Group.

The Council encourages every councillor to complete their own self assessment at the end of the municipal year which is reported to Annual Council. Attached are the end of year self assessments for 2012/13 and 2013/14 (Appendix C). The majority of members have completed them and these evidence the amount of work and time councillors spend not only on council business inside the council but also in the community.

The Council has a healthy democratic process and at every election candidates are fielded by at least 3 and sometimes 4 or 5 parties for each ward. At most elections the incumbent councillor will seek re-election.

The Council has never been in a position where it has been unable to discharge any of its functions. There are occasions, however, where appointment to outside bodies are not filled.

### **Scrutiny Functions**

The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a sub-committee of a Budget Panel, and an Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel, it also has a standing task group for Community Safety. Each panel has its own work programme and due to resource issues dedicated pieces of scrutiny work which are usually undertaken by task groups set up by Overview and Scrutiny

are limited to 2 at a time.

The process of selecting items for scrutiny is regulated by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Task Group membership can come from any non Cabinet member. These are usually time limited with a specific remit to look at a particular topic which has been put forward for scrutiny by either a councillor, the Cabinet, Heads of Service or the public. There is a formal process for requesting a scrutiny and each request is put to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel who has the role of either approving or rejecting a request. The task group has to report back to Overview and Scrutiny at the end of their deliberations and any recommendations are forwarded to Cabinet. Progress on recommendations accepted by Cabinet is then monitored by Overview and Scrutiny. Members are expected to familiarise themselves with the topic they are scrutinising between meetings.

#### Overview and Scrutiny

Has 9 councillors, it has on average 7 meetings a year and considers on average 6 reports. The length of each meeting is an average of 1 hour 48 minutes.

#### Budget Panel.

Has 9 councillors, it has on average 6 meetings a year and considers an average of 4 reports. The average length of each meeting is 1 hour 48 minutes.

#### Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel.

Has 7 councillors. Meets 3 times per year and considers on average 3 reports per meeting and the average length of each meeting is 1 hour.

#### Community Safety Partnership Task Group.

Has 7 councillors. It meets 4 times a year and receives an average of 2 reports each meeting and the average length of each meeting is 1 hour 42 minutes.

The Council considers it is important, particularly as it operates under an Elected Mayor and Cabinet model, to have robust scrutiny. This enables both back bench majority group councillors and opposition councillors to both be involved in policy development through task groups and to hold the Elected Mayor and Cabinet to account.

In recent years the Council has outsourced a number of services such as refuse collection, street cleansing, management of parks and open spaces, operation of its leisure centres and has a shared service with its neighbouring district council Three Rivers whereby Three Rivers manages back office finance and revenues and benefits and Watford manages HR and ICT. The Council has felt, with such a high level of externalisation, that it was important to encourage councillors to scrutinise the operation of those services via a dedicated scrutiny committee.

Monitoring and managing the Council's finances, through the Budget Panel, is also seen as important for councillors to scrutinise. It enables early discussion and challenge on budget proposals and also acts as an ongoing monitor of spend.

Having a council size of 36 enables the Council to operate an effective scrutiny. It should be borne in mind that, whilst the current Elected Mayor is a member of the majority group on the Council, this may not always be the case in the future. Therefore the Council needs to maintain sufficient numbers of councillors for political balance to be achieved to enable scrutiny to function having removed councillors as appointed to cabinet.

The Council is of the opinion keeping the size at 36 achieves this. Reducing the size would place a greater burden on a smaller number of councillors. Increasing the size would incur extra cost for no additional benefit.

#### **4. Representational Role of Councillors**

As can be seen from the attached self assessments all councillors play an active role within the communities they serve. Whilst it is up to each individual councillor how much time they put in, evidence given to the Council's Independent Member Remuneration Panel would suggest an average of circa 25 hours per week on council business for a non cabinet member is the norm.

Each ward has its own Neighbourhood budget of £2,500 to spend on either ward meetings or other community projects. There are guidance notes and rules regarding how and what it can be spent on and at least 2 of the 3 ward members must agree to the expenditure. This enables councillors to have meetings on local issues within their own ward as well as support local initiatives. The budgets are managed within the Democratic Services section.

To, therefore, reduce the number of councillors would only serve to increase each councillors individual workload. The majority of councillors are in employment and the Council feels it is important to try to reflect the demographic of Watford in the make up of its councillors and the need to encourage young people, women and those from ethnic minorities to want to stand and become councillors.

Only the Elected Mayor has dedicated support with a PA to manage her diary and a case worker to deal with issues that come directly to the Elected Mayor. The Chairman also has support to manage his civic diary and the same officer also manages all civic events. This officer also arranges councillors training and manages their remuneration. As stated above officers in democratic services also manage the neighbourhood budgets. Councillors are provided with laptops if they require them and a communication allowance. Therefore councillors have to organise their own constituency work.

#### **5. Boundary Review Group**

The Council set up a Review Group to consider the question of council size. It looked at how the council would look based on a range of councillor numbers of 39, 36, 33 and 30 and considered that increasing the number of councillors would be hard to justify at a time when the Council budgets are being reduced. The Group also concluded that decreasing the number of councillors from the current 36 would have a detrimental effect on the operation of the Council particularly with regard to the Licensing Committee, due to the need to have members available for Licensing Sub Committees which generally met during the day. It could also affect scrutiny if the Elected Mayor came from the minority group. They also took into account issues relating to the current and expected increase in the local population and the continued expectations for the town as a regional centre and hub for business, commerce and transport that also impact on the calls of local councillors.

The Council would therefore recommend that the optimum size for Watford Borough Council to allow it to continue to take decisions effectively, manage council business and it's responsibilities successfully and continue to provide effective community leadership and convenient local government is 36 councillors .