Appendix A

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF GEDLING BOROUGH

Submission by Gedling Borough Council on Council Size

1 Introduction

This submission sets out the Council's response to an invitation from the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) to put forward a case for Council size. The Council wrote to the LGBCE asking to be considered for electoral review on 16th September 2011, and the LGBCE wrote to the Council on 13th October 2011 confirming the Council's inclusion in the review programme, and that the review would start on 13th March 2012. The issue of Council size is the key factor in determining the type and scale of the review to be undertaken by the LGBCE.

The Council's submission has been developed by a cross-party working group of Borough councillors. The Council's submission was agreed by the whole Council at its meeting on 22nd February 2012.

The submission has been informed by:-

- Briefings given by the LGBCE to the Borough Council, the Group Leaders of the political parties on the Council, key officers of the Council and to local representatives;
- Current and projected electorate figures for Gedling Borough;
- Individual councillors' views, including those of Parish Councillors, in response to invitations to input into the process individually on a ward by ward basis; and
- The work of the cross-party councillors' group who assimilated all of the available information and reached conclusions on Council size over three meetings during December 2011and February 2012.

2. The Council's Submission

This section sets out the Council's recommendation and a summary justification for that proposal. Appendix 1 to the submission contains more detail on specific aspects of the rationale for the proposal.

Prior to receiving the up to date current and projected electorate figures, the working group had concluded that a Council size of 40 councillors would be appropriate in order to maintain sufficient councillor capacity to undertake all current and likely future roles with particular reference to their representational role in Gedling Borough.

The current and projected electorate figures then enabled the working group to refine the Council's position to confirm this proposal. The electorate figures

pointed to a preferred Council size of 40 on the grounds of councillor workload and electoral equality.
The justification for the proposal to reduce the Council's size to 40 elected members is summarised below and set out in more detail in the attached Appendix 1:

- It retains sufficient councillor capacity to run the current Cabinet, scrutiny and regulatory arrangements of the Council. Experience suggests that it would also retain sufficient capacity to support any future governance model that the Council may wish to adopt such as any variation on the cabinet / scrutiny model or a committee model.
- Councillor workloads would remain manageable. Electors will continue to be able to receive comprehensive support from, and have good access to, councillors in all areas of the Borough.
- It still retains sufficient councillor capacity to enable changes to the roles and responsibilities of councillors to be catered for to reflect local implementation of national policy initiatives in areas such as 'localism', public health, community safety and the recently published Open Services White Paper.
- It provides a good degree of electoral equality across the Borough through the planning period.
- The current national average Councillor / elector ratio for all Councils is 1: 2542; the average for Nottinghamshire Districts is 1: 1967 and for Mansfield District, which undertook a review in 2009, is 1: 2267. The current ration for Gedling Borough Council is 1: 1769. Under our proposal for a reduction to 40 Councillors the ratio at Gedling would be 1: 2260.
- This effectively moves the average Gedling Borough Councillor / elector ratio closer to the national average although by 2017 the projected Gedling Borough figure will still be below the current national average.

APPENDIX 1

Local Government Boundary Review – Council Size Submission (Type C)

1. Managing the business of the Council: To what extent is council size influenced by the council's decision-making process or, conversely, the decision making structure fitted around the council size?	
1.1 What is the overall structure of decision making? Do Councillors match the work to fit the time available to them, or stretch/shrink the time they spend according to how much work they want to/ need to do?	**Please refer to Annex A – model of local governance: Gedling** The Council operates a Strong Leader / Cabinet model. This enables swift decisions to be made and provides clear accountability. However, it also provides fewer opportunities for a significant number of members to be involved in decision making. As a result, workloads between members vary considerably, with time spent on Council business being largely determined by demand.
1.2 Has the Council studied how much time their members spend on Council business?	Although there have been no such recent studies, we have examined the Gedling strand of the LGA Councillor Census 2010 and made comparisons with the national data. The comparison indicates that Gedling members are doing up to 5 hours a week less than the national average. Additionally, through the member development process, the workloads of a significant proportion of Members were assessed through Personal Development Reviews in 2011. These indicate that whilst the workload of some members is more challenging than others, this is usually due to the individual enthusiasm of those members to drive forward initiatives in their wards rather than demand of Council commitments. The work / life balance of Members is monitored as part of the Member Development Charter delivery plan and any concerns are promptly raised with individual members and political group Business Managers.
1.3 What assessments have been made of how many members it needs to function effectively, particularly since the introduction of executive arrangements? In a hypothetical scenario where the council size was	No formal assessments have been made although comparisons have been made with other district councils of a similar size. More importantly, finding ways to occupy and engage non – executive members is a constant challenge and the streamlining of Scrutiny arrangements has further reduced the input of some members. If Council size was reduced by 10%, we would look to increase the input of ward members to service planning and decision making. As mentioned in the Governance arrangements at Annexe A, the further streamlining of the activity of the Scrutiny Committees and forthcoming changes to the national standards

increased or reduced by 10%, how would you do things differently?	regime, which are likely to remove the requirement for a Standards Committee, will both help to ameliorate a 20% reduction in Councillors. The key change we would make, and hope to make regardless of the outcome of this submission, is to deliver a programme of community engagement in Council decision making through the 'Cabinet on Tour' initiative. By creating a framework for devolving smaller scale consultation and representation into wards and areas the Council aims to improve the quality of decision making at Cabinet and Committee level whilst simultaneously providing resource and development 'hubs' that are closer to Ward members' local concerns, through which members can more quickly (and less labour intensively) resolve their local issues, alongside partners and residents.
1.4 To what extent is the current council size a factor in determining the political management, scrutiny and governance arrangements or is it the other way round? 1.5 If you had a free hand, are there any changes you would make to the political management, scrutiny and governance arrangements? If so, how might that impact on the number of councillors required.	Our Strong Leader and Cabinet decision-making process and scrutiny processes (see Annex A attached) reflect the legislative position and local political choice rather than the Council size so there is no direct correlation between the two. The last review in 2000 pre dates the introduction of this arrangement at Gedling, so was not able to take into account changes in workload arising from this governance model. It is unlikely that the Council will adopt revised cabinet / scrutiny arrangements or consider returning to a committee style system of governance under the localism provisions, however it aims to develop an area working focus through the 'Cabinet on Tour' initiative to support the current model, which will in fact further enable members in their constituency work, by providing a conduit and coordination point for local resources and decisions as described at 1.3 Consultation with members suggests that member workloads are manageable although they vary according to the role. At Gedling there has traditionally been a small number of Councillors with little or no Committee responsibility. Presently 12 members sit on just 1 committee and 1 member does not sit on any committees. A reduction in councillor numbers would therefore result in a more even workload across the Council without reducing the level of support being provided to the local electorate. It is true that the roles and responsibilities of the councillor have changed significantly over recent years. The Council is currently reviewing the likely impact upon the work of members of the Localism Bill and other national policy initiatives, and is assured that a

	council size of 40 would still retain sufficient member capacity to meet challenges coming the Council's way under the national policy agenda.
1.6 How are decisions 'cascaded' down the structure? Is the balance between member decisions and officer delegated decisions effective? Is there any duplication of work?	**Please refer to the decision flowchart at Annexe B** The attached flowchart demonstrates the hierarchy and process by which decisions of the Council are reached. The process of decision making is likely to be reviewed in 2012/13 in the light of key legislation, i.e. Localism, and following the recent Management Restructure. The aim will be to create clearer definition and delineation between the decisions of members and Officers, to eliminate duplication and improve the communication of decisions of the Council. In the current process, officers are responsible for preparing reports to Council and the Executive on which to base executive decisions, and to recommend the delegation of any non executive decision to officers or other Committees. Executive decisions are recorded on the Committee Administration system and any forthcoming key decisions added to the Council Forward Plan. It is the responsibility of Corporate Directors and Service Managers to cascade decisions down to departments, teams and the wider public.
2. Scrutiny of the Council, outside bodies and Others	
2.1 What's the structure? An overview and scrutiny committee, or several scrutiny committees? How do subjects get tackled – in Committee or Task & Finish Groups? How many subjects at any one time? What's the time-span for a particular study?	We presently operate over and above the statutory minimum formal scrutiny arrangements, with three Scrutiny Committees to which we add the use of task and finish groups. The recent Management Restructure has led to the deletion of dedicated officer support for Scrutiny and the creation of a more generic Member Services team. Mirroring this development, in April 2012 the Overview Scrutiny Committee will reconsider the Scrutiny process with a view to redefining the format of committee meetings and maximising the use of smaller, ad hoc task and finish groups, thereby reducing duplication and bureaucracy. We are aware of the potential implications of changes to the partnership agenda and additional responsibilities coming the way of the Council, e.g. in the area of public health. The health and wellbeing agenda will have implications for decision-making, scrutiny and councillor skill sets and retaining sufficient member capacity will be essential to deliver the Council's statutory obligations. Also, although police authorities are disappearing, joint scrutiny arrangements to hold police

	commissioners to account will impact on councillor time and capacity. We are currently reviewing the appointment of members to internal groups, joint bodies such as partnerships and outside bodies with a view to rationalising these appointments and refocusing member priorities. These changes should provide space to cope with the additional partnership responsibilities outlined above.
2.2 Is Scrutiny just the Councillors doing meetings or do they take external evidence?	Scrutiny Committee meetings are presently about reporting back, monitoring of performance data and work programmes and approval of reports and recommendations. There is little or no external evidence taken – this activity takes place predominantly in the task and finish groups. For this reason there is a strong rationale for streamlining further the Scrutiny Committee structure to allow the energies of members, officers and partners to be more productively engaged in policy and performance improvement work.
2.3 If the former, what do the members do between meetings?	Members are actively involved in Scrutiny task and finish groups, of which there are usually 5 ongoing at any one time, and between 3 and 6 members involved in each group. Scrutiny members also engage in information gathering, visits to key projects and snap consultations on Scrutiny subjects with their constituents.
2.4 How is the Council handling health scrutiny – who is involved? How much work do they do?	Although Health Scrutiny is not a statutory District Council function, nevertheless a high level Scrutiny review of the NHS Restructure was carried out at Gedling BC in 2010/11, which facilitated the early representation of Gedling Members on the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board, the upcoming co location of the Clinical Commissioning Group in Council premises and the continued joint funding of Healthy Lifestyle initiatives in the Borough. Ongoing Scrutiny of Health could be directed through representation on Health Panels, and will be one of the subjects considered in the annual review of the Scrutiny function in April 2012.
2.5 How many 'twin-hatted' members sit on outside bodies and how are conflicts of interest resolved?	The Council presently has member representation on 54 outside Bodies. 6 of our members are also County Councillors, 12 are also Parish Councillors and 1 is also both a County and Parish Councillor. All Council members are required to sign the Council Code of Conduct and to maintain an up to date register of their interests with the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, who provides members with ongoing advice and guidance on conflict of interest issues as they arise. Members are required to declare any interests at the outset of Committee meetings and, if a prejudicial interest in an item is declared, that member must leave the room while the item is discussed and must also abstain from the vote. If a

	complaint was received alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct, this would be referred for consideration by the Standards Committee. There is provision for the Standards Committee to consider applications for a dispensation in certain circumstances. Nominations in response to requests for representation on outside bodies are proposed by the ruling group Business Manager and can only be approved by Cabinet or Council. The register of Outside Bodies is regularly reviewed and representation limited to those organisations that are of strategic significance to the Council.
3. Representational Role: Representing Electors to the Council	
3.1 What sort of engagement is there between front-line councillors with electors? One–to-one when there's a customer complaint, or gathering views about policy from the whole community? If the latter, how?	Frontline Councillors engage with constituents in a variety of ways – through championing local community development initiatives and events in their wards, by responding to individual queries and complaints, by leading local Neighbourhood Watch meetings and increasingly by canvassing households in their wards and holding community meetings to determine a majority response to issues of local concern. Members engaged in Scrutiny also carry out snap consultations on specific Scrutiny Reviews, i.e. On Street Parking issues, and are increasingly successfully engaging members of the public in participating in the Scrutiny of public services in the Borough.
3.2 What is the structure of local area committees. What are their responsibilities? Is membership limited to councillors? – is it open to district councillors or co-option from the wider community?	Gedling Borough Council does not presently operate an Area Committee structure, however from April 2012 onwards we will deliver a 'Cabinet on Tour' programme, initially providing informal public meetings within each of the Nottinghamshire County Council Electoral divisions at which members of the public can pose questions to Cabinet Members, local Ward Councillors and key agencies and have an influence over local programmes and services. These sessions may evolve into a more formal mechanism for devolving local decision making; pooling and targeting of resources over time.
3.3 Do Councillors fix day-to-day problems by taking them to officers or by representing elector issues as policy views in meetings of the Council? 3.4 How does the Councillor engage?	Councillors use a range of routes to fix day to day problems: by researching and keeping abreast of avenues to support and advice, by picking up on 'hot spots' of issues and raising them with officers and/or portfolio holders and by feeding recurrent problems into operational / tasking groups. Where there is a groundswell on a particular issue Councillors also present these as policy views at meetings of the Council. In their day to day dealing with constituents, councillors give advice, information and signpost where appropriate and will involve officers only when necessary. This can sometimes be in the event of service

Surgery, newsletter, blog, public meetings, or not at all? 3.5 Are Councillors "go-between" between clients/customers/electors and paid service staff to fix service delivery complaints?	failure but mostly when technical advice is needed. The Member Services Team at the Council provides regular bulletins to members to support their constituency work, providing updates on services and plans affecting local communities, i.e. 2012 /Jubilee celebrations, emergency out of hours services. Parish councils welcome engagement with their Borough Councillors, and a number of District Councillors are in fact Parish Councillors as well. Additionally, the Portfolio Holder for Community and Employee relations holds regular meetings with Parish Council representatives from across the Borough as well as meeting with individual Parishes. These discussions often pick up on trends or issues coming out of councillors' work with constituents. Regular visits to parishes help members to know their patch and the issues arising. Many Councillors run group surgeries comprising of representatives of ward clusters, which are promoted on the Council's website and mainly delivered through the Council's community and leisure centres. Some members also circulate a regular newsletter in their ward or across clusters of wards. Central to the recent Management Restructure has been the rebranding of the Council. The new Vision and Values reflect cross cutting themes that make sense from the public perspective, the Portfolios of Cabinet members are strategically delineated and the Website offers a range of methods of engaging both with Members, and with specific areas of interest, including blogging, twitter and email.
4. Representing the Council in the community	
4.1 Does the councillor go to meetings of community bodies, parish councils? If so, how many? What for? Do councillors feel obliged to go to meetings of each individual parish council in their respective divisions or is it to meetings of "clusters" of parishes? Where the former, is this an effective use of an elected	Councillors work with local communities and their mechanisms and structures where appropriate – for example through regular visits to local Children's Centres, Access Centres or Youth Centres or involvement with local community groups, including Neighbourhood Planning groups. These are practical examples of partnership working at a local level and often involve a range of agencies. Members manage their meeting commitments in communities, including Parish Council meetings, by supporting and liaising with each other to ensure a rotation of attendance and effective use of their time. Surgeries are delivered by clusters of ward representatives where possible.

members time?	
4.2 Does the Council attract candidates and retain members?	The Council has an excellent record of attracting Candidates and retaining members. 11 members have served the Council for at least 25 years since the Council was first formed in 1974. The May 2011 local election attracted 147 Candidates, and all 50 seats were contested. Uncontested seats are isolated and very rare. Despite the influx of 32 new Councillors last year, a large proportion of whom were inexperienced in the role as well, only one member gave up his seat, due to changes in his personal commitments.
4.3 What happens when a Councillor is absent? Formal taking on of responsibility by other elected members, informal contact point for electors, or nothing? (Maybe different in multi-member wards). Do front line councillors take the strain of, for example Executive members whose time maybe limited?	Members at Gedling have an informal mentoring arrangement within their political groups. We have had several instances this year where a Member has had illness or other personal difficulties. In these cases, an alternative Member of the group is nominated to receive all communication, to notify apologies and to act as a contact point for electors. The current Cabinet has opted to appoint non Executive Policy Advisors for the Green Agenda, Community and Third Sector Engagement and Business and Enterprise to advise and drive forward key manifesto commitments in these areas, and have also selected other members to liaise on key Council initiatives, i.e. Warmstreets.
4.4 Do Councillors learn and develop on the job or in formal training?	The Council is committed to achieving Member Development Charter Status in 2012 and post May 2011 election delivered a comprehensive, three month induction programme comprising of structured events on the role of the Councillor, Council Vision and Values, statutory Planning and Licensing training, Media and Communication, Performance Management and a range of other necessary introductory information. A quarterly programme of ongoing training is also delivered. The Council is a Member of the East Midlands Member Development Network and Members are advised of Countywide training and conferences by the Member Services Team on a regular basis. A cross party Member Development Group ensures that training is member led and appropriate to the identified needs of Members. Needs are identified through individual training session evaluation and Personal Development Reviews.

	Members at Gedling have been proactive over the last year in taking up Conferences that are relevant to their Portfolios, Committee responsibilities or Ward issues.
4.5 Has the Council experienced any statutory or other failures because there weren't enough councillors? Are Councillors bored or "inventing" work to do?	No service failure has been experienced on the grounds that there were not enough Councillors. Whilst we cannot report that Councillors are bored or inventing things to do, there are nevertheless distinct variations in workloads across the Council, and in where Members direct their time and efforts, and it is felt that a reduction of 10 members would allow a fairer, more compact division of responsibility, particularly when coupled with a streamlined organisational and decision making structure and underpinned by a robust Member Development framework.

ANNEX A

Gedling Borough Council – Model of Local Governance

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced fundamental changes to the political management arrangements of local authorities by separating executive from non-executive functions. The Council went from a traditional committee system to a cabinet style of governance, opting for the 'Strong Leader model' to improve efficiency and accountability in decision-making. In 2009 the Council also implemented a much reduced scrutiny function whereby membership of the two existing Performance Review and Policy Scrutiny Committees was in each case reduced from 22 to 11, and an ad-hoc Overview Committee implemented comprising of the Chairs and Vice Chairs to streamline and increase the efficiency of the Scrutiny process.

The Council's democratic arrangements and structures reflect, of course, at any one time both local political choice and statutory requirements. They are regularly reviewed in response to national legislative changes or local changes made perhaps as a result of experience of working with the arrangements. The Council's current structure reflects the wishes of the administration elected in 2011.

The dramatic change from the committee to the cabinet model of governance had a significant impact on the role of a councillor with councillors spending less time in meetings and a greater focus for the majority on their community leadership role which itself has changed in focus over these years, which also saw the advent of neighbourhood working and the creation of priority neighbourhoods in Gedling. This has enabled members to better define their role in the community, prioritise workloads and receive officer support to progress key local initiatives.

The data to assess time spent by Members on Council business has been taken from the LGA Councillor Census 2010, which indicated an average time of 18.5 hours per week at Gedling Borough Council, compared to a national average of 23 hours per week. Of 50 Councillors, 12 currently serve on just one committee and one has no committee representation.

The cabinet system of governance can result in extreme time commitments for a disproportionately small proportion of councillors, however at Gedling the majority of Members are active on at least two committees and involved in partnership groups that are appropriate to their expertise.

Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

Full Council

The Council currently has 50 Councillors, elected every four years at a single set of elections, with the last being in 2011. All Councillors are members of Full Council. Full Council is responsible for appointing the Leader and the Committees of the Council, and for setting its Budget and Policy framework on

the recommendation of the Cabinet. The Full Council meets on average 6 times per year.

Cabinet

The Council appoints the Leader for the four year term. The Leader appoints the Cabinet and decides the cabinet scheme of delegation to Cabinet members and officers. The Cabinet scheme of delegation covers most of the day-to-day decisions required to enable the Council to function. The Cabinet currently comprises the Leader and 6 Cabinet members and is single party.

Individual members of the Cabinet are allocated service responsibilities and have wide ranging individual decision-making powers in relation to their service responsibilities. These arrangements are kept under constant review by the Leader to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the changing climate in which the Council finds itself.

The Cabinet meets to perform its collective executive functions 12 times a year although there are also ad-hoc meetings to allow for any urgent and unforeseen business.

The Council is currently responding to the implications of the public health agenda and new Policing arrangements, and is pioneering co location arrangements in Council premises with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and Neighbourhood Policing teams.

Scrutiny Functions

The LG Act 2000 required each local authority to set up a scrutiny process as a statutory function of the Council.

The Council currently has three Scrutiny Committees: a Performance Review Scrutiny Committee, a Policy Review Scrutiny Committee and an Overview Scrutiny Committee that cover all of the statutory scrutiny functions including those that have added to the core scrutiny functions since the LG Act 2000 in areas such as:

- health and social care;
- crime and disorder issues; and
- the Call for Action provisions contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007.

The Overview Scrutiny Committee together with a 50% reduction in membership of the other two committees was introduced in 2009 following a review of the Scrutiny function. The intention was to eliminate long, drawn out reviews and varying levels of commitment from Members, and to increase the strategic impact of Scrutiny. The Scrutiny Function is now formally reviewed on an annual basis, with the ongoing aim of streamlining and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy.

Scrutiny is made up of 23 councillors across all three Committees which meet on a quarterly basis. Places on the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committees are allocated according to proportionality rules and there is a Chair and Vice Chair. Task & Finish Groups are established by the Committees according to an annual work programme developed by the Overview Scrutiny Committee and 15 reviews have been undertaken since 2009.

The Council is aware of national policy initiatives that will impact on the Council's scrutiny function, in particular in areas such as public health and policing where joint scrutiny arrangements involving partners and other district councils in Nottinghamshire may be required. As to how the Council meets any statutory requirements in these areas is a matter of local political choice but it is important that the Council retains sufficient councillor capacity to meet its statutory obligations.

Regulatory Functions

The **Planning Committee** currently meets once a month to determine planning applications and consider other planning issues and ad hoc issues as delegated by Full Council. A **Planning Delegation Panel** comprising of 6 Members which is open to Ward Members also meets on a weekly basis. The Service Manager – Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Planning Delegation Panel (PDP), considers applications which do not fall within the other delegations to the Corporate Director. In particular this includes:-

- applications which have attracted objections on valid planning grounds,
- departures from the Development Plan,
- applications which are to be recommended for refusal and which would otherwise be delegated items.

The aim of the Planning Delegation Panel is to maintain the momentum of the Planning process and ensure speedy resolution of applications.

20 councillors sit on the Planning Committee. These places are allocated according to proportionality rules and there is a Chair and Vice Chair.

All members of the Committee are required to have training on regulatory matters before they can sit on the Committee. In addition to the meetings themselves members of the Committee regularly attend site visits.

Environment and Licensing Committee

This committee has 14 members and meets 6 times a year, with the facility to hold ad hoc meetings as and when required. The committee receives and notes for information any notices that have been served by the Council, and

also considers applications for taxi licenses in instances where contrary indications arise during the application process.

Licensing Act Committee

This committee is generally made up of the same members as the Licensing committee, has 14 members and normally meets once every three years to fulfil the statutory requirement to review the Licensing Act Policy of the Council. Hearing Panels made up of Licensing Act Committee members can be appointed from time to time to consider applications under the Licensing Act where representations have been made, and also to consider applications for review of existing licenses.

Ordinary Committee Responsibilities

(NB – Unless stated otherwise all committee memberships outlined below are subject to the proportionality rules.)

Audit Committee

Audit Committee has 7 Councillors and meets 4 times a year. Its main functions are to steer internal audit arrangements, consider the report of external audit and inspections and review the Council's wider governance arrangements.

Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee

This Committee of 7 Councillors has responsibility for the Council Personnel policies and meets on an ad – hoc basis.

Joint Consultative and Service Committee

This Committee includes 7 Councillors as well as an equivalent number of Trade Union representatives and provides a forum for discussion and consultation between the Council and Trade Union representatives on matters affecting the Council's employees. Such matters included are:

1. Employee terms and conditions
2. Employee health and well-being.

Appeals and Retirements Committee

The Appeals and Retirements Committee comprises a total membership of 7 councillors. The Committee hears appeals on disciplinary matters and staff grievances. It meets as and when required.

Standards Committee

The membership of the Standards Committee is 3 Borough Councillors and 4 Independent Members of which 2 are Parish Councillors (i.e. members with no political affiliations). Proportionality rules do not apply.

The purpose of the Standards Committee is to promote ethical conduct within the Council, to carry out assessments of complaints and determination hearings.

The Committee meets once every three months. The Committee also has 4 sub-committees. These sub-committees meet to consider complaints on an ad hoc basis.

The Council awaits changes in the national standards regime and will consider whether to retain a Standards Committee on a voluntary basis even if the Council is no longer required by statute to have such a committee.

Ad-hoc Working Parties and Working Groups

In addition to scrutiny task and finish groups the Council establishes planned and ad-hoc working parties and groups as and when required. Some of these may last the four year term and others may have a task and finish status. The Council's cross-party Electoral Review Task & Finish Group is a good example of this arrangement. Such groups can have a limited life, but require considerable commitment from those Councillors involved in them. Whilst they are not committees of Council (i.e. proportionality rules do not apply), they are important meetings and the Council voluntarily applies the rules of proportionality to their membership where appropriate. They make a valuable contribution to the effective management of the Council.

Member Development Group

The Council has for several years had a cross-party panel of councillors to work with officers on member support, training and development. Comprising 6 councillors, it meets on a quarterly basis.

Neighbourhood Working Arrangements

The Council is presently reviewing the way it engages with its customers and local communities and the role of the councillor in such engagement. Currently, the Council does not have any formal system of area democratic meetings, and is implementing a 'Cabinet on Tour' initiative whereby informal public meetings will take place in each of the County Council Electoral Divisions within the Borough, providing the opportunity for members of the public to meet and raise questions with Cabinet Members and representatives of key agencies.
These arrangements could develop into a more formalised area working structure in the future.

The precise impact of any changes in this area on the time commitment of Councillors is unknown at this stage. It is most likely to impact on how they

consult with and represent local electors, but should enhance their engagement with the community by putting in place more formal mechanisms for consultation and engagement.

Appointments to Partnerships and Outside Bodies

There are currently 54 appointments on Partnerships and Outside Bodies for councillors which means on average each councillor has 1.08 places. There is not however an equal spread of appointments across all 50 members meaning that some councillors have a significant number of appointments and others have none or very few.

The frequency with which these Partnerships / Outside Bodies meet and the time commitment required from councillors appointed to them varies. All of these appointments are reviewed on a regular basis to assess their value to the Council as well as to the specific body and the intention is to reduce their number and focus the councillors' role on those bodies which have the greatest strategic significance for the Council. This will ensure that councillors' time on these bodies is spent to best effect.

Appointments to Internal Groups

In addition, there are informal appointments to internal (Borough Council) working groups. There are a number of groups that fall under this heading which support and enhance key strands of work and are usually time limited and members can easily be substituted. Again there is not an equal spread of appointments across all councillors.

Partnership Working

The Council has in recent time reviewed and changed its approach to partnership working. This has resulted in the Gedling Local Strategic Partnership being disbanded and a number of its sub groups halted, refocused or recreated to tie in with changing national policy, for example the Local Enterprise Partnership and Health and Well Being Board. The Gedling LSP has been replaced with a Gedling Leaders Board which is focussed on delivering outcomes in partnership.

These new, more flexible arrangements allow the Council and relevant partners to respond quickly to government initiatives and funding opportunities and councillors are at the forefront of these initiatives. An example of such a 'delivery' partnership is the Gedling Health and Wellbeing Partnership where the Council with its partners have been successful in directing significant NHS funding to deliver healthy lifestyles initiatives to target groups and neighbourhoods in the Borough.

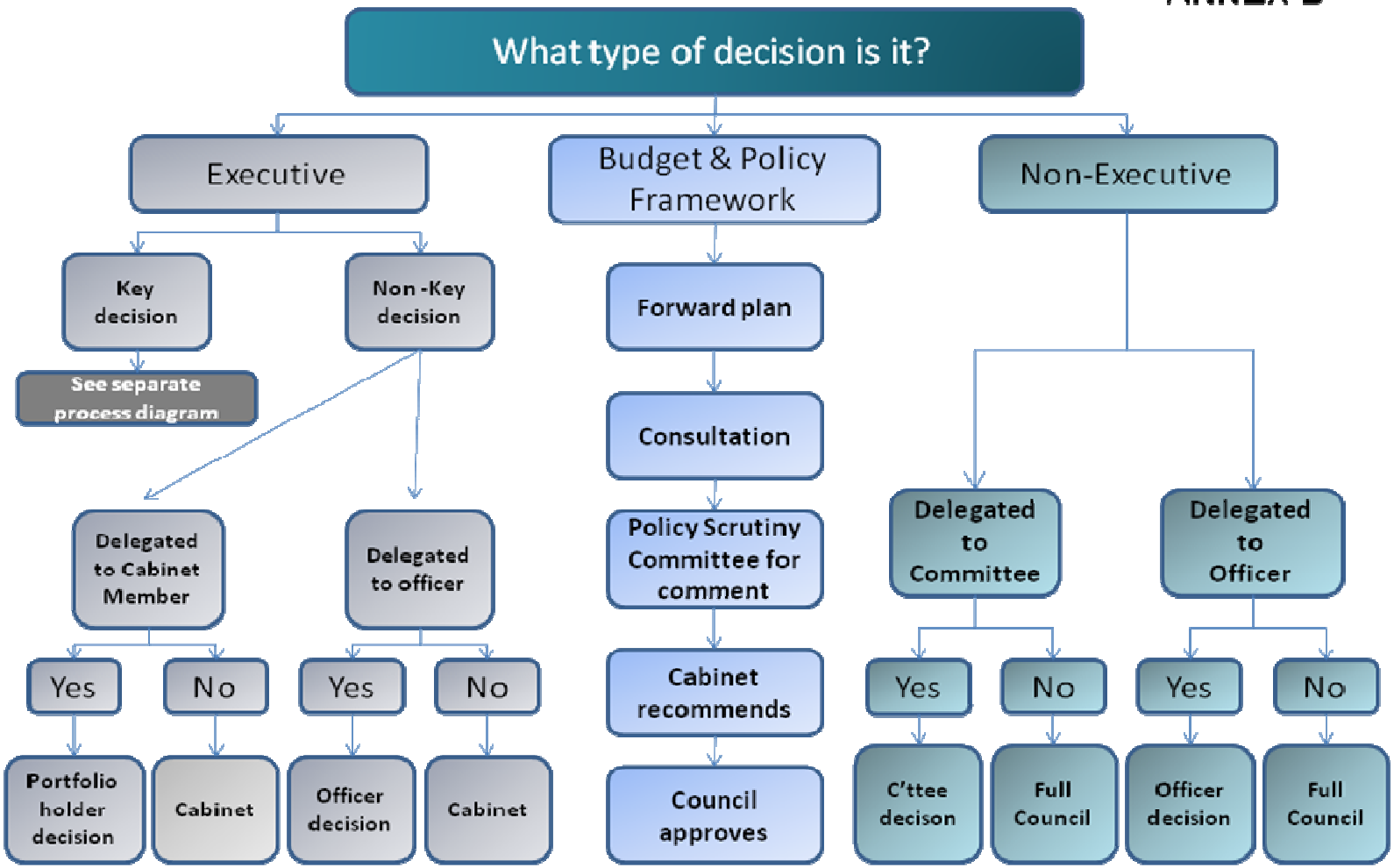
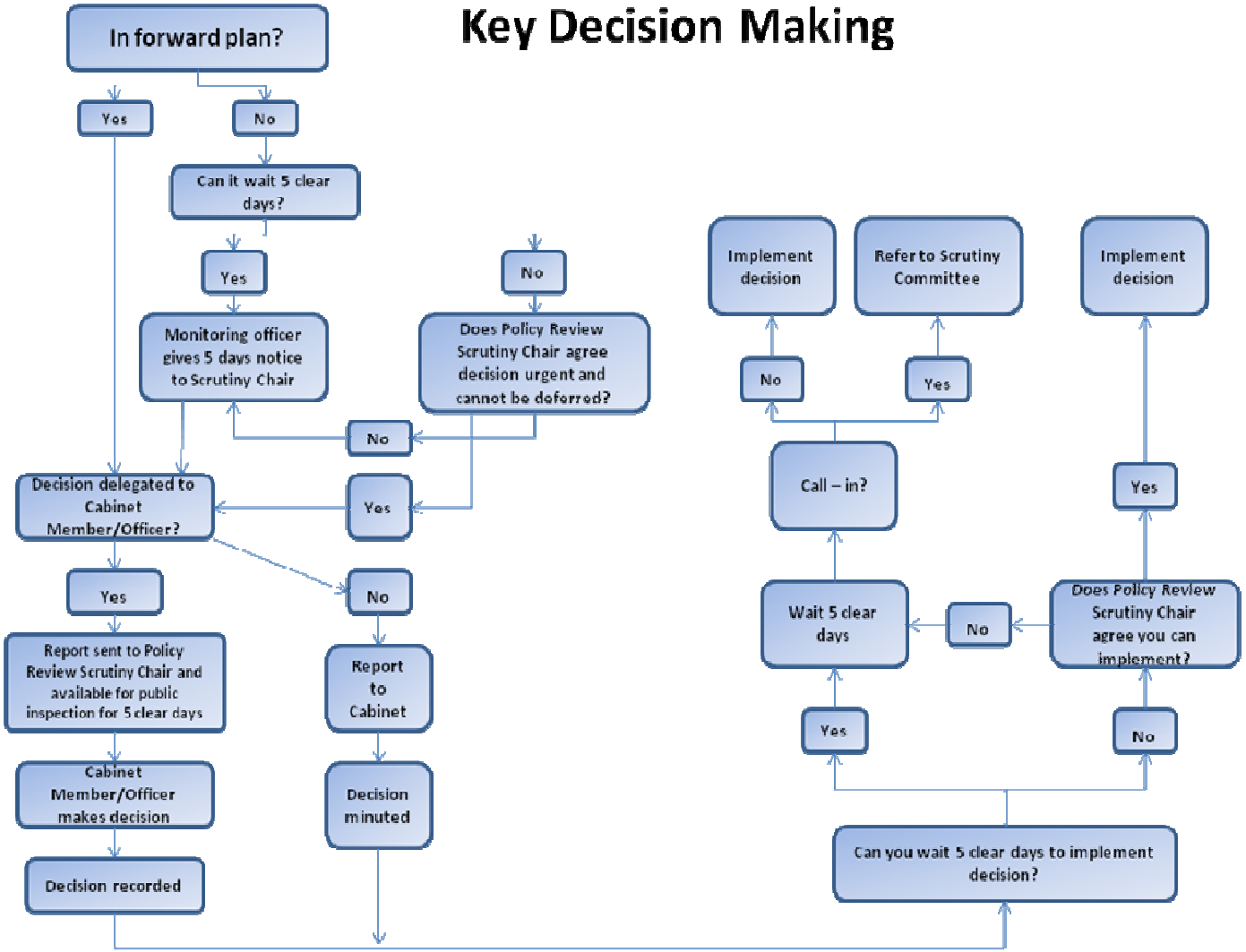
Parish Councils

There are 11 parish councils in Gedling Borough, each of which holds regular meetings. Local councillors provide a key link to local parishes and there are

expectations on both sides that Borough councillors will normally attend local Parish Council meetings. 12 of our members are also Parish Councillors. This does not present any significant challenge to the workloads of Councillors.

Decision Making Process

ANNEX B



Key Decision Making