

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

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Comment text:

I am writing this both as a Parish Councillor, although not on behalf of the Parish Council, and in a personal capacity. In the interests of true local democracy, I find myself in agreement with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council proposal to maintain the level of Borough Councils at 48. However, as I understand it, the decision to reduce the number of councillors to 39, to which I wholeheartedly object, is not open to negotiation. Therefore, the discussion must be around the validity of creating 13 Wards throughout the Borough, each with 3 elected councillors, and of an equal number of electors. In a Borough, such as Tunbridge Wells, with such a distinctive split between the highly populated urban west and the more sparsely populated rural east, this makes no sense. The rural areas are clearly set out in self-contained communities which have their own local issues, which may not be relevant to another nearby community. In order to create (artificial) Wards with an electorate of approximately 7,000, it may be necessary to link traditionally separate communities spread over many square miles. It has been estimated that a worse case scenario will find a Ward that is 15 miles from one end to another – making it almost impossible for a part-time Borough Councillor to cover the ground necessary to truly represent their Ward. This, of course, would not be such an issue in urban areas. The obvious answer would be to have larger Wards in the more populated areas, such as Tunbridge Wells itself, whilst keeping smaller Wards in rural areas to reflect the individuality of those communities. This could also result in those rural areas being more fairly represented than is currently the case, where the Borough Council is dominated by councillors from urban Wards. This is an opportunity to provide levelling up at a truly local level.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded