

## Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

### Personal Details:

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### Comment text:

Frittenden Parish Council wishes to register to the Boundary Commission Electoral Review our serious concerns relating to the current proposals for the Tunbridge Wells Borough. 1. We recognise the reduction of the number of Borough Councillors from 48 to 39 (a decision by the Commission) 2. On the basis of 39 councillors, with a voting regime of one third changing every year, Tunbridge Wells will be split into 13 wards of 7,050 electors in each, with 3 councillors in each ward. 3. It was TW Borough Councillors by a narrow majority who voted that each ward will vote annually, rather than "all out" every 4 years. These proposals produce seriously unsatisfactory consequences, especially for the rural parishes, no more so than in the case of our parish. Frittenden is the smallest parish in the Borough, located at its far north eastern corner, and uniquely within Tunbridge Wells, is without public transport in the village centre. Accordingly, on behalf of our community, Frittenden Parish Council registers its OBJECTION to the current proposals. The reasons are: • In rural areas the current structure with one, or two member wards respects distinct "parishes" and "communities". Under these arrangements our parish is served by one member able to know well the two small communities he serves, Frittenden and Sissinghurst • The proposed 7,050-electors non-community wards will require combining several different parishes, each with their own needs, breaking the very close link between Borough Councillors and the community or parish they represent. In some cases, although unlikely in Frittenden because of its location, this will mean dividing historic communities. • The opportunity for worthy local individuals to be recognised and elected as Borough Councillors is reduced as it is only political parties that are likely to have election capabilities of contesting such large rural multi parish wards,. • It will be difficult for individual Councillors (volunteers, without private offices unlike MP's) to be known and personally represent 7,050 electors across several different rural parishes, often with different local issues. Three-member representation reduces individual accountability to their parish or community. In the case of Frittenden this would almost certainly mean being attached to the much larger neighbouring parish of Cranbrook. The electoral arithmetic means that voters from the larger entity would always dominate the electoral outcome: specific matters of local concern to small parishes like Frittenden would count for little and be overlooked. • We have concerns about the likely turnout, voting annually in large wards, stretching across miles of countryside, with unknown candidates to represent artificially-created non-community wards. These proposals disadvantage smaller parties and independent candidates. In the rural areas community matters. None of this was anticipated at the first consultation, which is why many voted to maintain the status quo of voting by thirds. What do we want? We will be asking ALL our Borough Councillors and candidates for election May 2022 to vote to change the proposed voting system to 'one out, all out' elections every 4 years to ensure each ward can have one councillor, with approximately 2,350 electors. Thus our concerns with the proposed very large non-community rural wards of 7050 electors can be avoided. (We have no objection if towns wish to have multi-member wards) If such a solution is not achieved, we will press LGBC to relax the 'rule of 3' to allow flexibility in the warding of rural areas to allow for one- or two-member wards, not voting at every occasion (just as now). Finally we wish to note: It is also our concern that although we recognise that the present review does not concern parish boundaries the results of any unsatisfactory changes to Tunbridge Wells ward boundaries, could be taken, as a starting point for any future review of Parish Boundaries, possibly circumventing our historic parish boundaries. This OBJECTION represents the view of Frittenden Parish Council on behalf of our community. Clerk to Frittenden Parish Council

### Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded