

## Local Government Commission Boundary Commission Review at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

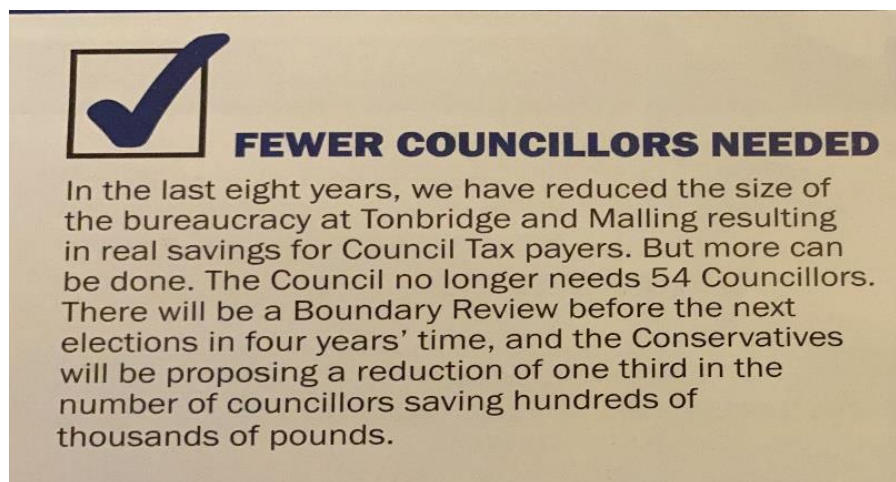
### Submission of the Conservative Group on Council Size

The Conservative Group welcomes this Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and is pleased to be submitting evidence to this first stage in respect of Council size.

As a Group, we have recognised that the number of elected members on the Borough Council is greater than similar sized authorities (this is confirmed in the Borough Council's own submission).

At the 2019 Borough Council elections, we recognised that the Borough Council was over-represented, and made a pledge to address it.

In our manifesto, we spoke about reduction of one-third in the number of councillors. However, in the past couple of years we have seen significant changes across society and have made an assessment that this level of reduction (to 36 councillors) would be too severe in the light of current evidence:



A reduction in the Council size also featured in the most recent review of Member's Allowances for the Borough Council undertaken by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) in January 2017. While it is not within the remit of the Panel to comment on the number of councillors/council size, the observations made should not be dismissed.

They wrote:

*"Given the high proportion of total expenditure on Members' Allowances that is made up by the Basic Allowance and the high level in comparison to other Kent districts, the Panel recommends that the Council gives consideration to pursuing the reduction of the number of councillors in the Borough as a longer term strategic option, to reduce the cost of representation. The Panel understands that a number of councils have already done this for example Canterbury City Council (from 50 to 39) and Shepway District Council (from 46 to 30)."*

As the LGBCE has advised Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, with 54 Councillors, is on the upper quintile, in comparison, to similar authorities (2019 CIPFA Count and Councillor Size), with only Chelmsford within that group having a higher number of Councillors

For our proposal at 43 Councillors, the Borough Council would still be within range, but on the lower quintile and like Test Valley and Winchester, but with a higher number of Councillors than Vale of White Horse and Tewkesbury.

We conclude that the Council size should be in the region of **43 elected members**.

At the meeting of the General Purposes Committee and then the Full Council (Wednesday 17 March 2021), members resolved that the Borough Council's own submission should argue for a council size of 43 members.

We acknowledge all the work done by the council officers and are grateful for the data collected in the Council's own submission. The conclusions that were agreed through the Council decision making process were that the council size should be around 43 based on data alone, a conclusion with which our group concurs.

Our submission sets out to illustrate the time and the effort required by each elected member to successfully carry out their duties. We have conducted a survey to establish how each of the 39 members of the Conservative Group at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council engages with residents and conducts casework. This is to help ensure that the representational role of councillors in the local community is fully accounted for in our submission. Based upon that survey, we do not believe that the reduction in numbers will result in a significantly greater requirement for extra work in order to represent residents efficiently and properly.

We have also considered what would be the correct council size if a wholly new authority was to be established. The approach is from two angles: one from the existing governance of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, and one from that of creating a new properly governed council. Results of this work conclude that we are correct in submitting that the council size should be in the region 43 elected members.

In 'building a new council' the analysis considers the number of members required for strategic Leadership, Scrutiny, and of course Community Leadership. The key points are:

- An executive of seven portfolios is an appropriate size for an authority such as Tonbridge and Malling.
- Overview and Scrutiny can be best discharged with a maximum committee size of 13-14. Any larger than this can result in the loss of focus and strength from councillors serving this function.
- Statutory Committees, covering licencing and planning, are also best discharged by committees of equivalent size, with a panel size of just three for the licensing hearings.

There is no formal member role for Partnerships in Tonbridge and Malling, save the Joint Transportation Board, and individual representatives on external bodies.

This concludes that residents of Tonbridge and Malling are best served by 7 Executive councillors, 13 members for Scrutiny functions, 21 members for Regulatory functions, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

In order to discharge the duties of the council as described here would require 43 councillors.

### Analysis of the data presented in Annex 1.

The following table shows the data gathered by the council in presenting their case for the councillor numbers. Our Group has taken the view that each of the metrics provided need to be moderated in some form. The table therefore has a weighting figure from 1 to 10. This is used to assign importance to each of the percentage changes that have occurred, resulting in a weighted percentage change. In turn this figure is averaged to show an overall percentage reduction of 19.7% which we feel is appropriate.

**Table 1: Changes in the Council taken from Annex 1.**

Metric	% Change	Weighting /10	Weighted %
Cabinet Size	25	1	2.5
Appointments to all Council meetings	13	8	10.4
Reduction in scheduled meetings	14	8	11.2
Reduction in Advisory boards	48	8	38.4
Reduction in Advisory and Panel Meetings	20	9	18.0
Cancellation rate of scheduled meetings	21	9	18.9
Non-attendance Rate	20	3	6.0
Council Budget reduction (forecast to 2027)	35	10	35.0
Staff FTE	37	10	37.0
			<b>19.7</b>
Adjusted Council Size from 54			<b>43.3</b>

*Notes to assumptions made*

- *Cabinet Size, this could reflect the wish to save money or just to create/disband a post. This number can change at the discretion of the Leader. So has a weighting of just 10%*
- *Appointments and Reduction in meetings have a weighting of 80%, these meetings could increase in frequency, given the reduction in size of the council we believe this to be unlikely.*
- *Advisory Boards can be changed over time, and a 48% reduction demonstrate the reduced need of such boards, again a weighting of 80% is given as they could be reinstated (but very unlikely)*
- *Reduction in Advisory Boards and particularly regulatory Panels has a weight of 90% as this includes statutory functions.*
- *Cancellation rate of meetings demonstrates a lack of business so has a weighting of 90%*
- *Non-attendance rate is weighted at 30% as I believe many will still not always be able to attend, but with better engagement they may be a better attendance rate, so weighted at 30%*
- *The two important measures of council activity are the numbers of full-time employees and financial throughput hence we ascribe these metrics the highest importance at 100%.*

## Representation and Community Leadership

As previously referred to, the Conservative Group has surveyed our members to assess the general pattern of workload in serving their residents. As expected, it highlighted a varied use of methodology and a varied level of workload. The results of the survey should be taken as an indication of the workloads, and not as a definitive set of data.

The number of required meetings is well established in the Borough Council's own submission, running to approximately four committees and boards per member, with a pattern of several repeated meetings a year. Many of our members will attend other meetings where they are not members.

It is important to understand that as a group we are not focusing on the attendance at meetings as this is only a part of the work undertaken by the members of this (and any other) council. The table below shows the meeting attendances for all members of the council:

**Table 2: Attendance per year per Councillor**

Attendance	Expected	Present	Other meetings
Low	10	3	0
High	28	26	43
Average	19.6	16.8	10.5

On average, our members attend a further 6.7 events as a councillor and 4.2 meetings held by outside bodies, making the total average attendance at meetings 28.7 per year. For these meetings, the agenda will need to be read in advance of the actual meeting. As an estimate the agenda would take between 45 minutes and two hours to properly digest. If one were to say one hour per agenda, and two hours per meeting making a total of three hours per meeting. The extrapolation of these figures would imply a commitment of over 267 hours at

its highest down to just 9 hours with the average being 90 hours per year. It should be said that there are very few conservative councillors with the low rate of attendance.

Our members also attend other groups, for example church meetings and residents' associations, 2.7 times per year. These meetings are more difficult to quantify but do add to the commitment of our members.

Some of our group hold surgeries, either as specific events or added into other events such as a farmers' market. For those who do hold surgeries, they occur every other month across the group.

Those members whose wards have seen higher levels of new housing growth reported the need for above average resident engagement.

Our group have a mixed approach to social media, some do not use any of those channels, others embrace the whole digital world. The average time spent on social media is 7.75 hours per month. More traditional channels – the parish magazine and church magazine – take just over an hour per month. The telephone is used by residents approximately six times a month, whereas emails fluctuate significantly from over 520 down to just 2 with an average of 26.8 per month. The high figure is from a ward with many new build properties, that level is expected to decline sharply as this area 'beds down.'

Interaction with other councils is an important factor in determining the workload of the ward member. Where an area has a Parish Council each of our members attend 1.1 meetings per month: with some members overseeing several parishes. Parish and other councils accounts for 10 phone calls per month.

As members we all become involved in litter picking, Christmas lights erecting and other community events with just over 3 attendances per year.

From the survey the average time spent by our members on ward related work (excluding the meetings) is just under 10 hours a month, those with special responsibility are taking an average of 16.3 hours a month to discharge their responsibilities.

The conservative group fundamentally believe that the reduction in councillor numbers from 54 to 43 will not create an unacceptable increase in workload.

As a community leader each member should easily be able to provide that role with the proposed size of council.

**Table 3: Summary survey for conservative members of Tonbridge and Malling.**

How many Surgeries did you hold <b>per year</b> ?	6.00
How long do you spend writing for publications <b>per month</b> ?	1.15
Do you use Social Media for contacting residents (Y/N)	
If Yes, how many hours <b>per month</b> ?	7.75

How many groups (meetings) do you attend outside strict council meetings and appointments <b>per year</b> .	2.73
How many outside council appointments do you hold?	1.45
How often do you attend ( <b>per year</b> total)	4.18
How many phone calls do you receive from residents <b>per month</b> ?	6.00
How many ward related emails do you exchange <b>per month</b> ?	26.82
How many phone calls do you receive from other councils / councillors <b>per month</b> ?	9.55
How many events do you attend as a councillor BUT NOT PROGRAMMED MEETINGS <b>per year</b> ?	6.73
How many community projects do you work on (litter pick) <b>per year</b> ?	3.18
<b>For Parished area:</b>	
How many parishes do you oversee?	1.18
How many parish meetings <b>a month</b> do you attend?	1.09
Taking all of the above, but excluding TMBC meetings, can you estimate how much time you spend <b>per month</b> on ward related work?	9.73
For Councillors with special responsibility	
How much time do you estimate that your special responsibility consumes <b>per month</b> ?	16.29

*Some Additional comments:*

- *"I spend time with lonely and venerable residents, both listening and trying to help."*
- *"I regularly exchange emails and calls with my ward colleague."*
- *"I am regularly active on social media – Facebook & Twitter – so residents tend to contact me via Messenger or Direct Message rather than email or telephone."*
- *"It is difficult to be accurate as the workload goes from a full-time job to very occasional."*
- *"I attend the local farmers market."*

## **Community Engagement**

The role of a Councillor, in both a Parished and Non-Parished area, has changed in that communication has become easier with residents. There are no longer geographical challenges in communication, or accessibility difficulties in reaching some electors. We don't

need to travel 20 minutes in some wards to speak with people, for example. As technology has evolved so has the speed at which we can communicate with electors, and they can communicate with us

The result of this is that each councillor spends less time in reaching electors. Therefore, they can deal with the queries from more electors than previously, as each enquiry and piece of casework takes less time

Social media increases the accessibility and means that much of the representational role of councillors in the local community can be achieved even quicker. Facebook groups, twitter exchanges, resident WhatsApp groups all allow residents to access their councillor quicker than previously. There has been anecdotal evidence from our members that an online presence helps resolve issues quickly. You can make sure everyone knows about concerns when they happen, rather than waiting for them to contact you

Interaction with local partner organisations, Residents Associations, Housing Associations, Management Companies, etc. has become much easier to communicate. Many of these organisations operate across the borough creating the occasional need for many councillors from different areas to become involved. It would simplify the process if each councillor represented more residents as the problem-solving method remains the same.

For example, Clarion Housing Group and Trinity Estates, who manage developments, do so across the borough. This increases the ability to communicate more clearly and quickly with residents which allows for problems to be resolved more easily.

Video conferencing and meetings over the past few years has also reduced the number of individual meetings which we need to hold with residents. For example, what was once having to speak to residents individually about the same issue turned into the ability to hold meetings with groups of residents together, but this would involve finding and hiring a venue. Covid-19 has accelerated the use of online communication, such as Zoom/Teams, for such meetings, increasing the ability to communicate with more residents more effectively.

These changes have resulted in the reduction of more traditional methods of communication – letters and e-mails – which we once saw. Again, these were taking place individually rather than collectively, so the same effort allows you to reach with, and connect with, a greater number of people

It is our contention that the workload across the working week of a councillor will not increase directly proportionate to the number of electors. The number of external and parish meetings will not change. Time spent writing for the magazines will not change, there will be an uplift in meetings attendance and interaction with residents will increase. If this lift were directly proportional to the reduction in member numbers, this would represent an increase in time spend from 9.73 to just under 12 hours per month outside existing meetings. However, as discussed as modern communication practices evolve the uplift, if present, will not be directly proportional to the number of electors represented.

## **Conclusion.**

From the evidence supplied on

- Governance
- Meetings attendance
- Size of the operational Council (FTE and turnover)
- Member Engagement
- Community Engagement
- Comparison with CIPFA grouping

The inevitable, and only, conclusion that the Conservative Group can bring forward is that the **council size should be 43** (or 44 if the warding pattern dictates in the next stage).



# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

10 March 2021

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 2 - Private

#### Non-Delegated

### 1 **BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW – COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION**

This report provides an overview of the Boundary Commission Review process and provides a recommendation regarding the future size of the Borough Council using an evidence base that analyses the operation of the organisation in recent years.

#### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 In early 2020, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) contacted the Borough Council to state that due to electoral imbalances arising in Tonbridge and Malling Borough since the last review in 2011/12, the criteria for triggering a Boundary Review had been met, and as such the LGBCE would look to commence a review.

1.1.2 The Electoral Review effectively comprises two distinct parts. The first part considers the total number of councillors to be elected to the Council in the future, and this is followed by a second stage that looks at the extent to which ward boundaries need to be re-drawn so that they meet the Boundary Commission's statutory criteria. This report is specifically addressing the first part of the review only.

1.1.3 The LGBCE ultimately make a judgement on Council size based on three broad areas:

- The governance arrangements of the Council and how it takes decisions.
- The Council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and its responsibilities to outside bodies.
- The representational role of councillors in the local community.

1.1.4 Submissions on Council size need to be submitted to the LGBCE by 20 March 2021. Once this stage has been concluded, then the second stage, which looks at ward boundaries, will commence. The LGBCE aims to have this process completed well before the next Council elections in May 2023.

## 1.2 Council Size Submission – Considerations

- 1.2.1 In considering the future size of the Borough Council, the starting point has been to look at trends and changes over recent years, and specifically since the last review was undertaken in 2011/12. The evidence base provided in Appendix 1 aims to provide this starting point.
- 1.2.2 From this exercise, there are several headline findings that are supplied within the conclusion:
- There has been a **25%** reduction in the size of the Cabinet since 2015 (from 8 to 6 Cabinet Members)
  - **6%** reduction in total number of appointments to all Council meetings since 2010/11
  - **13%** reduction in scheduled Council meetings since 2010/11
  - **14%** reduction in regulatory and other committees since 2010/11 and a **6%** reduction in meetings.
  - **48%** reduction in the number of Advisory Panels and Boards and a **20%** drop in Advisory Board and Panel Meetings since 2010/11
  - **21%** cancellation rate of scheduled meetings since 2015/16
  - **20%** non-attendance of members at meetings that do take place (although attendance of Councillors that are not members of meetings is quite high)
  - **7%** reduction (minimum) in annual appointments to outside bodies
  - **17%** drop in the Council expenditure from 2010/11 to 2019/20, with a forecast reduction of **35%** in Council expenditure from 2010/11 to 2027/8
  - **37%** drop in the number of staff (FTE) working for the Borough Council since 2010/11
- 1.2.3 Taking each of these statistics in isolation is not particularly telling, and indeed, the percentage changes range from a 6% reduction (in the total number of appointments to all Council meetings) to a 48% reduction in the number of Advisory Panels and Boards, which is rather broad.
- 1.2.4 As such, whilst there is no doubt that the Borough Council continues to do excellent work across a broad range of disciplines, it is very clear that the overall direction of travel is a reduction in size.
- 1.2.5 This has meant the Council has essentially had to use the resources that it does possess as efficiently and effectively as possible, be it using technological innovation, partnership working across all sectors and maximising commercial opportunities. This pattern of change is demonstrated through initiatives such as the required growth in virtual meetings and digital communications, and the potential further outsourcing of Council operations, such as Leybourne Lakes Country Park to the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust or the transfer of public conveniences.

### 1.3 Proposed Council Size

- 1.3.1 As mentioned in paragraph 1.2.3, each of the individual pieces of evidence need to be considered as a whole in order to come to a reasonable conclusion about what an appropriate proposal regarding Council size might look like.

**Table 1: Variables and Council Size**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Reduction/Increase</b>	<b>How this would equate to Size of Council</b>
Size of Cabinet	25% reduction since 2015	40.5 Councillors
Council Appointments to all Council Meetings	6% reductions since 2010/11	50.8 Councillors
Scheduled Council Meetings	13% reduction since 2010/11	47.0 Councillors
Regulatory and Other Committees	14% reduction in the number of committees since 2010/11	46.4 Councillors
	6% reduction in meetings since 2010/11	50.8 Councillors
Advisory Panels and Boards	48% reduction in the number of Advisory Panels and Boards since 2010/11	28.1 Councillors
	20% reduction in meetings since 2010/11	43.2 Councillors
Cancellation Rates	21% cancellation rate of scheduled meetings since 2015/16	42.7 Councillors
Non-Attendance	20% non-attendance rate since 2015/16	43.2 Councillors
Annual Appointments	7% reduction (minimum) since 2010/11	50.2 Councillors
Budget	17% drop between 2010/11 and 2019/20	44.8 Councillors
	35% forecast drop 2010/11 and 2027/28	35.1 Councillors
Staffing	37% reduction in FTE since 2010/11	34.0 Councillors
<b>Average Across All Variables (equal weighting)</b>	<b>20.69% reduction</b>	<b>42.8 Councillors</b>

<b>Median Across All Variables</b>	<b>20% reduction</b>	<b>43.2 Councillors</b>
------------------------------------	----------------------	-------------------------

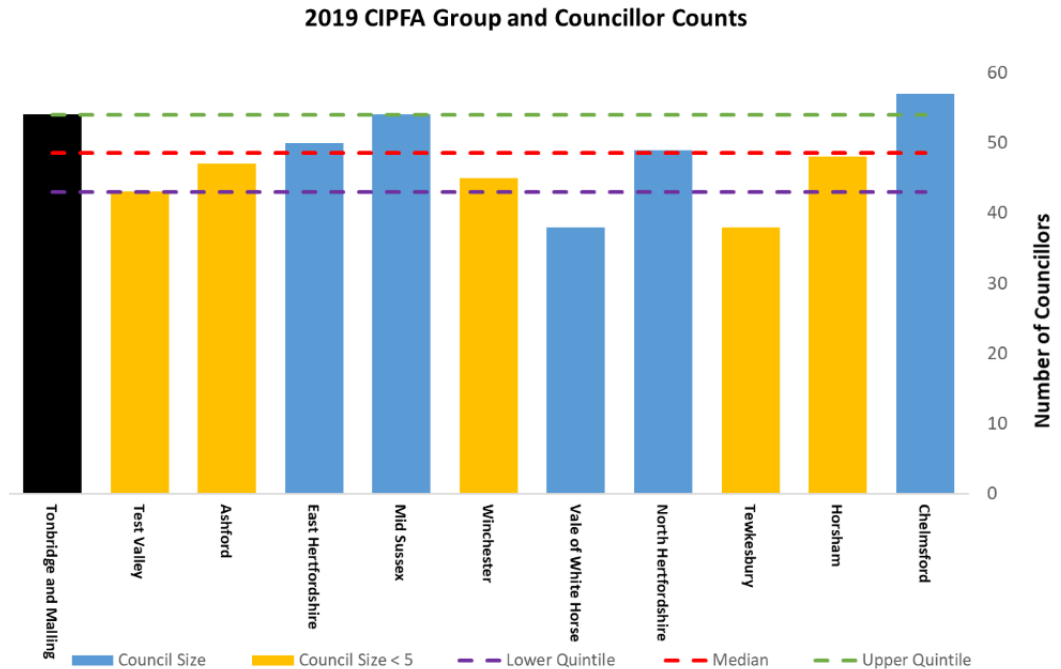
- 1.3.2 Table 1 considers each of the 13 variables individually and applies the reduction for each directly to the number of Councillors. It also looks at both the average and median reductions across all variables and applies these to the number of Councillors. What this shows is that there is a wide range when looking at the variables individually (from 28.1 to 50.8 Councillors). However, even with this wide range, it is quite telling that both the average and median come to a similar conclusion – that is a 20-21% reduction.
- 1.3.3 By applying this level of reduction, the Council size would come to **43 Councillors** (rounded up or down to the nearest whole number).
- 1.3.4 Such a reduction would be consistent with the findings of ‘A Review of Council Member’s Allowances for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council’ which was undertaken by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) in January 2017 and presented to General Purposes Committee on 06 March 2017. The recommendations from the report were accepted in full, effective after the Borough Council elections in 2019.
- 1.3.5 One of the recommendations within the report relates specifically to the number of councillors and then stipulates that the Borough Council should pursue a reduction in the number of councillors:

*“Given the high proportion of total expenditure on Members’ Allowances that is made up by the Basic Allowance and the high level in comparison to other Kent districts (SEE Table 1), the Panel recommends that the Council gives consideration to pursuing the reduction of the number of councillors in the Borough as a longer-term strategic option, to reduce the cost of representation. The Panel understands that a number of councils have already done this for example Canterbury City Council (from 50 to 39) and Shepway District Council (from 46 to 30). The number of councillors in Tonbridge and Malling is high in comparison to other Kent councils and therefore the total cost of basic allowances is high at £285,000, which needs to be reflected upon in an environment where councils are being forced to cut budgets for services” (Paragraph 2.5)*

*“The Panel is aware that this not a quick solution given the processes adopted by the Boundary Commission but this long lead time supports the view that the Council should give this serious consideration as soon as possible. The Panel is aware that a number of councils have already done this e.g. Canterbury City Council (from 50 to 39) and Shepway District Council (from 46 to 30)” (Paragraph 10.2).*

- 1.3.6 However, to further sense-check the conclusion reached in 1.3.3, it is helpful to go back to the information that the LGBCE originally provided to the Council. In the graph below, the Borough Council is compared against other Councils within the same CIPFA group. As is evident, the Borough Council, with 54 Councillors, is on

the upper quintile, with only Chelmsford within that group having a higher number of Councillors. At 43 Councillors, the Borough Council would still be within range, but on the lower quintile and similar to Test Valley and Winchester, but with a higher number of Councillors than Vale of White Horse and Tewkesbury.



1.3.7 Whilst the Borough Council is not suggesting a reduction in Councillor numbers that would be similar to Vale of White Horse or Tewkesbury, it is evident that Councillors elsewhere within the CIPFA group do manage with higher electorate numbers. In the past few years and certainly since 2010/11, there has been a considerable step change in the accessibility of the Borough Council as a whole, driven in most part by technological innovation which has meant both Officers and Councillors have been able to manage their workloads and communicate with residents efficiently but also leading to local residents being able to discuss issues or questions they have with the Council through multiple channels.

1.3.8 It is quite clear that these changes over time have contributed towards changes in Council size within the CIPFA group, with those Councils with lower numbers of Councillors having undertaken reviews within the last ten years, as shown in the table below:

**Table 2: CIPFA Group Reviews:**

Local Authority	Year of Last Review	Council Size (Councillors)
Tewkesbury	2018	38
Test Valley	2018	43

Ashford	2017	47
Horsham	2017	48
Winchester	2015	45
Vale of White Horse	2014	38
North Hertfordshire	2006	49
Mid Sussex	2001	54
Chelmsford	2000	57
East Hertfordshire	1998	50

1.3.9 Indeed, if solely looking at reviews undertaken within the CIPFA group since the Borough Council last undertook a review (Tewkesbury, Test Valley, Ashford, Horsham, Winchester, and Vale of White Horse), the average council size is 43.2 Councillors and the median is 44 councillors, which again accords with the analysis of other variables.

1.3.10 As such, all these points lead to the conclusion that a change to a figure in the region of 43 Councillors would be consistent with the change in governance and scrutiny arrangements since 2010/11 as well as the reduction in the size of Council expenditure and staffing. It would also reflect current and future changes in work patterns (which are mostly technologically-led) and would be consistent with the level of Councillor numbers within the CIPFA group, especially when considering other reviews undertaken within the group since 2010/11.

1.3.11 It should be highlighted that the reduction in the total expenditure and staffing at the Council since 2010/11 has been partly as a result of the outsourcing of services such as the running of leisure facilities to the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust. It will therefore still be vitally important to ensure that scrutiny of such contracts will continue to be undertaken through the current arrangements, and there is no reason to believe that a move to 43 councillors would compromise this in any way.

1.3.12 Given the above, it is therefore considered that a Council with 43 Councillors would be able to maintain a good level of governance and delivery. However, a reduction to a smaller number than this would potentially begin to have an impact on delivery.

## **1.4 Legal Implications**

1.4.1 The LGBCE has functions under Part 3 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Under S56(1) of the 2009 Act, the LGBCE must, from time to time, conduct a review of the area of each principal

council, and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements. In this regard, “electoral arrangements” means:

- The total number of members of the Council
- The number and boundaries of electoral areas for purposes of the election of Councillors
- The number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral area in that area
- The name of any electoral area

1.4.2 The 2009 Act does not set out how many councillors each authority (or type of authority) will have. It is the LGBCE’s responsibility to determine the appropriate number of councillors for each authority.

1.4.3 In making its recommendations, Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act requires the LGBCE to have regard to:

(a) The need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the Council

(b) The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and, in particular

(i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any localities

(c) The need to secure effective and convenient local government.

## **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.5.1 There are no financial and value for money considerations at this stage. However, should the Boundary Commission be minded to agree with this recommendation, or any reduction in the number of Councillors, then there could be potential savings on Member’s allowances, albeit this would be subject to the recommendation of any Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

## **1.6 Risk Assessment**

1.6.1 Not Applicable

## **1.7 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.8.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## 1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the report **BE NOTED**.

1.8.2 That the approach and conclusions set out in this report regarding the future size of the Council **BE RECOMMENDED** to General Purposes Committee.

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker

Strategic Economic Regeneration  
Manager

Julie Beilby, Chief Executive



## Appendix 1

# Electoral Review of Tonbridge & Malling

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council submission on  
Council Size – Evidence Base

March 2021



[www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk)

# Contents

Council Size Submission – Evidence Base  
Introduction  
Council Vision & Priorities  
Managing the Business of the Council  
Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors  
Regulatory and other Committees  
Advisory Panels and Boards  
Summary of Internal Appointments  
Appointment to Outside Bodies  
Changes in Council Size since 2010/11  
Further Anticipated Changes  
Conclusion

## Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Brief Description of Changes
2	February 2021	Jeremy Whittaker	Update of statistics and brief analysis of data supplied.

## Maps

Any maps in this document are reproduced courtesy of Ordnance Survey under © Crown Copyright, all rights reserved, licence number 1000023300

## Contact Information

Further information about this document is available from:

Jeremy Whittaker  
Strategic Economic Regeneration Manager  
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
Gibson Drive  
Kings Hill  
West Malling ME19 4LZ  
[jeremy.whittaker@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:jeremy.whittaker@tmbc.gov.uk)

# **Council Size Submission – Evidence Base**

## **About this Evidence Base**

1. This document is submitted as evidence from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in respect of the Electoral Review commencing during 2020 concerning the size of the Council.
2. This document has been prepared and collated by Officers using a range of information available, for consideration by Elected Members of the Borough Council through the Electoral Review Working Group and General Purposes Committee. This evidence base will accompany the Council submission which will be considered by Full Council.

## **Executive Summary**

3. At present, 54 Councillors representing 24 wards serve on Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. All Councillors are elected every four years and serve a four year term of office. The most recent elections were held in May 2019, with the next scheduled Borough Council elections due to take place in May 2023.
4. It should be noted that the Submission should be considered in its entirety, rather than as a series of smaller sections.

# Introduction

## Background to the Review

5. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council was created in 1974 following the Local Government Act 1972. The most recent electoral review of the authority commenced in 2011 and was published in 03 October 2012. This review recommended that the number of wards was reduced from 26 to 24 and the number of Councillors was increased from 53 to 54, representing 7 three-member wards, 16 two-member wards and 1 single-member ward across the Borough.
6. This current Electoral Review has been conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the 2020 Electoral Roll showed that Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council met the Commission's criteria for electoral inequality, with 1 ward (Burham & Wouldham) having a variance from the average of 32%. In addition, there are three other wards with a variance of greater than 10% - Kings Hill (18%), Snodland West & Holborough Lakes (-11%) and Wateringbury (-12%).
7. The initial stage of an Electoral Review is to identify and confirm the preferred Council Size. This is the number of elected Councillors who will serve on the Borough Council, and should be the number required to deliver effective and convenient local government (the number of members to enable the council and individual councillors to perform most effectively).
8. The final size of the council will determine the average number of electors per councillor, and this is then used to determine warding patterns. As such, it is important that the figure agreed is correct and reflects the needs of the authority and of the community, although it should be noted that the LGBCE may amend the agreed figure if necessary in order to allow for a better representation of electors and as a result of consultation.
9. Within the review process, the LGBCE do not have an initial view on whether there should be an increase, decrease or no change in the size of the Council. However, all submissions must be evidence-led and justifiable.

## Guidance on calculating Council Size

10. The LGBCE has provided guidance that highlights the areas that should be considered when developing a proposal for Council Size; these are considered in detail in the pages that follow:
  - a) The **governance arrangements** of the Council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
  - b) The Council's **scrutiny functions** relating to its own decision making and the Council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
  - c) The **representational role of councillors in the local community** and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the Council on local partner organisations.

## About the Borough

11. The Borough of Tonbridge and Malling is situated in the heart of Kent, covering an area of around 93 square miles from the North Downs at Burham and Snodland in the north to the town of Tonbridge in the south. It is largely rural with few large settlements, with Tonbridge in the south being the largest and home to around 40,000 residents. The remainder of the borough is dotted with villages and smaller towns.

12. It is a generally affluent borough, with comparatively low levels of unemployment and good household income levels. However, there are pockets of relative deprivation within the borough that contrast starkly with more affluent neighbourhoods.
13. Mosaic profiling data from 2016 indicates that the most prevalent groups in Tonbridge and Malling are (Kent figures in brackets):
  - Group B ('Prestige Positions' – established families in large detached homes living upmarket lifestyles) – 17.6% (9.0%)
  - Group D ('Domestic Success' – thriving families who are busy bringing up children and following careers) – 15.9% (10.1%)
  - Group H – ('Aspiring Homemakers' – younger households settling down in housing priced within their means) - 14.6% (12.7%)
  - Group M – ('Family Basics' – families with limited resources who have a budget to make ends meet) - 9.9% (8.8%)
14. The 2019 mid-year estimate indicates that the population of Tonbridge and Malling is approximately 132,200 people. Key characteristics of this population are:
  - It has an average age of 40.7 years, which is slightly lower than the Kent average of 41.2 years.
  - There are slightly more female residents (51.1%) than male.
  - There is an overall population density of 5.5 persons per hectare (which is higher than the average of 4.5 for Kent as a whole)
  - The borough is not particularly diverse in terms of ethnic backgrounds. The most recent data relates to the 2011 census which showed 92.4% of residents describing themselves as White British and 3.5% as another White ethnic group.
15. Forecasts indicate that the population of Tonbridge and Malling is expected to grow to around 142,900 by 2028. The largest increase will be in people over 65 years of age – growing from 24,500 currently to around 30,000 by 2028 (an increase of roughly a quarter).

# Council Vision & Priorities

## Council Vision

16. The Council's Vision is set out in its Corporate Strategy 2020-2023 and reflects its role and purpose within the local community. It is designed to convey what the Council is striving to achieve through its work. The vision is:

*"To continue to be a financially sustainable Council with strong leadership that delivers valued services, a commitment to delivering innovation and change to meet the needs of our Borough"*

## Values and Priorities

17. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council focuses on the following values and priorities:

- i) Achieving Efficiency - focusing on ensuring good value for money, continuously reviewing how our services are provided and funded, focusing our available resources where they will have most beneficial impact for our communities, and maximising commercial opportunities.
- ii) Embracing Effective Partnership Working - achieving more by working and engaging effectively with a wide range of local partners from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors.
- iii) Valuing our Environment and Encouraging Sustainable Growth - keeping our towns, villages and countryside clean and well maintained, planning for our future homes and jobs, led by our Local Plan, driving investment in economic regeneration and infrastructure and meeting the challenges of climate change.
- iv) Innovation – developing more cultural change, innovative and efficient ways to deliver our services through the use of improved systems and technologies guided by our recently adopted Digital Strategy.

# Managing the Business of the Council

## Political Governance

18. Following the Local Government Act 2000 coming into effect, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council adopted the 'Leader and Cabinet' model in 2002. This model currently consists of:

- a) Full Council of 54 Members approves and adopts the budget and key policies within which Cabinet decisions are taken. Council appoints members of committees and holds them and the Cabinet to account for the decisions they take.
- b) Cabinet comprises 6 Members, including the Leader of the Council. They are responsible for most day-to-day decisions. Each Member has responsibility for particular service areas.
- c) Councillors' overriding duty is to the whole community, but they are democratically accountable to all the residents of their ward. Their role is to represent the residents of their ward, share in the policy and budgetary decisions of the Full Council, suggest policy improvements, and scrutinise the Cabinet's policy proposals and their implementation.

## Member Allowances

19. During the financial year 2019/20, the total sum of allowances paid to the Borough Councillors was just over £370,000 (including subsistence and expenses). This overall figure has reduced year on year since 2011/12. The sum paid to each Councillor varies, depending on their roles and responsibilities, but the average paid per Councillor is around £6,870.

# Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

## Separation of Roles

20. The Constitution of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council formalises the separation of roles for Councillors. These include specifications as to which Committees and Advisory Boards members of the Cabinet may be members of, and how many Cabinet members may be part of those other bodies.
21. Whilst this separation of roles is crucial in the fair, effective and transparent running of the Council, it does impact on the number of available Councillors for certain bodies and in doing so, increase the requirement of those members in terms of the number of bodies they must join and attend.

## Full Council

22. The Council currently has 54 Councillors, elected every four years for a four year term of office. The last elections were held in May 2019, with the next scheduled elections due to take place in May 2023.
23. All Councillors are members of Full Council, which is responsible for approving and adopting the budget and key policies within which Cabinet decisions are taken. Council appoints members of committees and holds them and the Cabinet to account for the decisions they take.
24. The Council normally has between 5-8 (average 6) meetings per year, including additional special meetings that are held as necessary.

## Cabinet

25. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council operates and Leader and Cabinet model. The Cabinet comprises 6 members including the Leader of the Council. Before 2015, the number of Cabinet members was 8 including the Leader of the Council. Members are responsible for most day-to-day decisions. Whilst each member has a responsibility for a particular service area, when major or key decisions are to be discussed or made, they are taken collectively by the whole Cabinet. The Cabinet meets around 6 times per year.
26. In addition to attending Cabinet meetings, each Cabinet member has regular meetings with relevant directors and other senior officers.
27. The current Cabinet member's portfolios (as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution) are:

### a) Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration

**Leadership roles:** To lead in the development and delivery of Council policies

#### **Key Tasks (Economic Regeneration):**

- i) Business Engagement
- ii) Economic Development
- iii) Promoting Inward Investment
- iv) Partnership Working
- v) Rural Business Sector
- vi) Skills and Employability



- vii) Supporting Town Centres
- viii) Supporting the Tourism Sector

**b) Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property**

**Key Tasks:** To support the Leader in the development and delivery of Council policies in the following areas of responsibility:

- i) Customer Service
- ii) Efficiency and Innovation
- iii) Financial Responsibilities
- iv) IT and E-Government
- v) Non-Financial Responsibilities (land and property assets)
- vi) Procurement
- vii) Skills, Education and Training

**c) Cabinet Member for Community Services**

**Key Tasks:** to support the Leader in the development and delivery of Council policies in the following areas of responsibility:

- i) Arts Programme
- ii) Community Development
- iii) Crime and Disorder
- iv) Equal Opportunities
- v) Health
- vi) Indoor and Outdoor Leisure
- vii) Older Persons
- viii) Rural Affairs
- ix) Tonbridge Castle
- x) Youth and Children
- xi) Voluntary Sector

**d) Cabinet Member for Housing**

**Key Tasks:** To support the Leader in the development and delivery of Council policies in the following areas of responsibility:

- i) Housing – Empty Homes; Homelessness; Enforcement of caravan site licensing and Houses in Multiple Occupation

**e) Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment Services**

**Key Tasks:** To support the Leader in the development and delivery of Council policies in the following areas of responsibility:

- i) Car Parking
- ii) Environmental Services
- iii) Street Scene
- iv) Technical Services Projects

**f) Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure**

**Key Tasks:** To support the Leader in the development and delivery of Council policies in the following areas of responsibility:

- i) Building Control
- ii) Development Control
- iii) Infrastructure Policy and Programming
- iv) Planning Policy

**Delegations to Officers**

28. The Borough Council has a comprehensive Scheme of Delegation to Officers (as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution) which clearly sets out where the responsibility and extent of delegation lies.

29. These delegations to officers have helped to reduce the burden on Members.

**Notification of Cabinet Decisions**

30. Following each meeting of the Cabinet, all Members of the Council are circulated with a list of all decisions taken. Decisions are subject to a five day delay before implementation to enable decisions to be called in.

## Regulatory and other Committees

31. Under the terms of the Constitution, a number of regulatory and other Committees have been established. These have delegated authority to carry out and/or oversee specific duties and functions of the Council. The table below gives an overview of how these committees have changed since the last review in 2011:

**Table 1: Regulatory and other Committees 2011 and 2020**

<b>Committees</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Area Planning Committees</b>	Three separate Area Planning Committees covering different sub-regions of the Borough – each committee meets 9 times a year (27 meetings)	No change – still 9x3=27 meetings per year.
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	Meets 5 times a year	Currently meeting 5 times a year
<b>Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee</b>	Meets 3 times a year	N/A
<b>Audit Committee</b>	Meets 4 times a year	Meets 4 times a year
<b>Standards Committee</b>	Meets 4 times a year	Meets 4 times a year
<b>Licensing and Appeals Committee</b>	Meets 5 times a year	Meets 5 times a year
<b>General Purposes Committee</b>	Meets 3 times a year	Meets 3 times a year
<b>MINIMUM MEETINGS PER YEAR</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>

32. Over the past ten years there has been only a minor change to the regulatory and other committees. In effect, the only change has been that the Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee is no longer in operation. As such, this means that the number of committees has dropped from 7 to 6 (a drop of 14%) and the number of meetings has dropped from 51 to 48 (a drop of 6%).

# Advisory Panels and Boards

## Introduction

33. Since 2011, the Borough Council has made a concerted effort to streamline the number of advisory panels and boards in order to better reflect the priorities of the Council and in order to reduce the level of duplication. This has meant that the number of panels and boards has reduced from **21** in 2011 to just **11** in 2020 (a reduction of **47.6%**). The table below illustrates the changes that have happened:

**Table 2: Advisory Panels and Boards 2011 and 2020**

<b>Advisory Panel and Board</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2020</b>
Car Parking Charges Advisory Board	Meets once per year	Merged with Local Environmental Management Advisory Board to create the Street Scene and Environmental Services Advisory Board ( <b>SSESAB</b> ) – meets 4 times per year
Communities Advisory Board	Meets 4 times per year	Merged with Strategic Housing, Community Safety, Health and Well-Being & Leisure and Arts Advisory Boards to create the Communities and Housing Advisory Board ( <b>CHAB</b> ) – Meets 4 times per year.
Community Safety Advisory Board	Meets as required	Now part of <b>CHAB</b>
Economic Regeneration Advisory Board	N/A	<b>ERAB</b> meets 4 times per year
Finance and Property Advisory Board	Meets 4 times per year	Merged with Innovation and Improvement AB to become Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board ( <b>FIPAB</b> ) – meets 4 times per year.
Health and Wellbeing Advisory Board	Meets as required	Now part of <b>CHAB</b>
Innovation and Improvement Advisory Board	Meets as required	Now part of <b>FIPAB</b>
Leisure and Arts Advisory Board	Meets 4 times per year	Now part of <b>CHAB</b>
Local Environmental Management Advisory Board	Meets 4 times per year	Now part of <b>SSESAB</b>
Planning and Transportation Advisory Board	Meets 4 times per year	Meets 4 times per year
Strategic Housing Advisory Board	Meets 4 times per year	Now part of <b>CHAB</b>
Community Infrastructure Levy Panel	Meets as required	N/A

Electoral Review Working Group	Meets as required	Meets as required
Gypsy and Travellers Issues Panel	Meets as required	N/A
Housing Associations Liaison Panel	Meets as required	Meets as required
Joint Transportation Board	Meets 4 times per year	Meets 4 times per year
Management Liaison Panel	Meets as required	N/A
Parish Partnership Panel	Meets 4 times per year	Meets 4 times per year
Tonbridge Forum	Meets 4 times per year	Meets 3 times per year.
Tonbridge Town Centre Panel	Meets as required	N/A
Twinning Committee	Meets 2 times per year	N/A
Joint Employees Consultative Committee	Meets 1 time per year.	Meets 1 time per year.
<b>MINIMUM MEETINGS PER YEAR (not including 'as required' meetings)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>

34. As is evident in this table, the number of advisory boards alone has been reduced considerably from 10 to 5, and now covers the following areas:

- Communities and Housing
- Economic Regeneration
- Finance, Innovation and Property
- Planning and Transportation
- Street Scene and Environmental Services

35. In terms of the minimum number of meetings per year (i.e. not including 'as required' meetings), these have decreased from **40** in 2011 to **32** in 2020, a reduction of **20%**

# Summary of Internal Appointments

## Introduction:

36. Having looked at the number of boards, panels and committees in the previous sections, this part of the evidence base focusses internal appointments, i.e. the number of Councillors appointed to various internal bodies, and the number of meetings per year for each body. This leads to an overview of the projected attendances per year across the authority.

## Summary of Internal Appointments in 2011:

37. In 2011, there were 215 appointments (including all groups) across all the committees, and a total of 79 meetings scheduled (not including training committee), giving a total of **1267** projected attendances per year.

**Table 3: Summary of Committee Places - 2011:**

Body	No of Appointments	Quorum	Meetings per Year	Projected attendances per year
Council	53	14	6	318
Cabinet	8	4	6	54
Overview & Scrutiny	18	n/a	5	90
Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee	9	n/a	3	27
Area 1 Planning	19	4	9	171
Area 2 Planning	17	4	9	153
Area 3 Planning	19	4	9	171
Licensing and Appeals	15	4	5	75
Licensing and Appeals Panel	5	3	10	50
General Purposes	14	4	3	42
Audit Committee	7	n/a	4	28
Standards Committee	13	4	4	52
Standards Assessment Sub-Committee	6	3	2	12
Standards Hearings Sub-Committee	6	3	2	12
Standards Review Sub-Committee	6	3	2	12
Training Committee	13	n/a	4	52
<b>TOTAL Including All Groups</b>	<b>228</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>1319</b>
<b>TOTAL Excluding Training Committee</b>	<b>215</b>		<b>79</b>	<b>1267</b>

38. At the same time, there were also a number of appointments to advisory boards and panels. In total there were 134 appointments to a minimum of 38 meetings (not including 'as required' meetings), giving a minimum total of **486** projected attendances per year.

**Table 4: Summary of Advisory Board and Panels Places - 2011:**

Advisory Board/Panel	Number of Appointments	Quorum	Number of Meetings per Year	Minimum Projected Attendances per Year
Car Parking Charges	13	4	1	13
Communities	13	4	4	52
Community Safety	13	4	As required	-
Finance and Property	13	4	4	52
Health and Well Being	13	4	As required	-
Innovation and Improvement	13	4	As required	-
Leisure and Arts	13	4	4	52
Local Environmental Management	13	4	4	52
Planning and Transportation	13	4	4	52
Strategic Housing	13	4	4	52
Community Infrastructure Levy	13	4	As required	-
Electoral Review	9	n/a	As required	-
Gypsy and Travellers Issues	13	4	As required	-
Housing Associations Liaison	5	3	As required	-
Joint Employee Consultative Committee	9	4	1	9
Joint Transportation Board	7	4	4	28
Management Liaison Panel	13	4	As required	-
Parish Partnership Panel	13	4	4	52
Tonbridge Forum	13	4	4	52
Tonbridge Town Centre Panel	19	4	As required	-
Twinning Committee	10	4	2	20
<b>TOTAL For those meeting regularly only</b>	<b>134</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>486</b>

39. In summarising the above two tables, the table below shows that the total minimum projected attendances per year in 2011 was **1,753**.

**Table 5: Summary of Internal Appointments in 2011:**

Meetings	No. of Appointments	Meetings per year	Minimum Projected Attendances per year
Committees (not including training committee)	215	79	1,267
Advisory Boards and Panels (for those meeting regularly only)	134	38	486
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>1,753</b>

## Summary of Internal Appointments in 2020

40. Having highlighted the situation with regards to internal appointments at the time of the last review in 2011, it is essential to undertake a similar exercise for the current year in order to gain an insight into the changes that have taken place over the past 9 years.
41. Firstly, turning to Committee places in 2020, the table below shows that there were a total of 191 appointments and a total of 70 meetings scheduled, giving a total of **1218** projected attendances per year.

**Table 6: Summary of Committee Places - 2020**

Body	No. of Appointments	Quorum	Meetings per Year	Projected attendances per year
Council	54	14	6	324
Cabinet	6	4	6	36
Overview & Scrutiny	18	n/a	5 (some year less)	90
Area 1 Planning	20	4	9	180
Area 2 Planning	17	4	9	153
Area 3 Planning	20	4	9	180
Licensing and Appeals	15	4	5	75
Licensing and Appeals Panel	5	3	10 (varies)	50
General Purposes	14	4	3	42
Audit Committee	9	n/a	4	36
Joint Standards Committee	13	4	4	52
<b>TOTAL Including All Groups</b>	<b>191</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>1218</b>

42. At the same time, as in 2011, there were also a number of appointments to advisory boards and panels in 2020. In total there were 137 appointments to a minimum of 32 meetings (not including 'as required' meetings), giving a minimum total of **449** projected attendances per year.



**Table 7: Summary of Advisory Board and Panels Places – 2020:**

Advisory Board/Panel	Number of Appointments	Quorum	Number of Meetings per Year	Projected Attendances per Year
Communities and Housing Advisory Board	16	4	4	64
Economic Regeneration Advisory Board	16	4	4	64
Finance, innovation and Property Advisory Board	16	4	4	64
Planning and Transportation Advisory Board	16	4	4	64
Street Scene and Environmental Services Advisory Board	16	4	4	64
Electoral Review Working Group	9	N/A	As required	-
Housing Associations Liaison Panel	5	N/A	As required	-
Joint Employee Consultative Committee	10	N/A	1	10
Joint Transportation Board	7	4	4	28
Parish Partnership Panel	13	4	4	52
Tonbridge Forum	13	4	3	39
<b>TOTAL For those meeting regularly only</b>	<b>137</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>449</b>

43. As such in summary, the table below shows that there were **1,667** minimum projected attendances for 2020.

**Table 8: Summary of Internal Appointments in 2020:**

Meetings	No. of Appointments	Meetings per year	Minimum Projected Attendances per year
Committees	191	70	1,218
Advisory Boards and Panels	137	32	449
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>1,667</b>

### Internal Appointments - Comparing 2011 and 2020

44. Comparing the two years, it is clear that overall the number of appointments and meetings has dropped since 2011 when the last review was undertaken. The table below shows that the number of appointments has dropped by 6%, the number of meetings by around 13% and the minimum projected attendances by around 5%. This decrease has resulted from a reduction in the number of advisory boards, as well as a reduction of appointments on some bodies. However, it has also been in spite of an increase in the number of appointments to advisory boards.

**Table 9: Internal Appointments – 2011 and 2020**

Meetings	No. of Appointments		Trend	Meetings per year		Trend	Minimum Projected Attendances per year		Trend
	2011	2020		2011	2020		2011	2020	
Committees	215	191	Down 11.2%	79	70	Down 11.4%	1267	1218	Down 3.9%
Advisory Boards and Panels	134	137	Up 2.2%	38	32	Down 15.8%	486	449	Down 7.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>Down 6.0%</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>Down 12.8%</b>	<b>1753</b>	<b>1667</b>	<b>Down 4.9%</b>

### Cancellations – April 2015 to March 2020:

45. Having given consideration to the changes in the structure and frequency of various meetings within the Borough Council, it is also important to look at whether these meetings have been taking place, and if so, what level of attendance has been achieved at these meetings. The table below gives an overview of meeting cancellations between April 2015 and March 2020.
46. By way of explanation, this period was chosen because it reflects the recent operation of the Borough Council, whilst not including the initial period of disruption that was caused by the covid-19 pandemic, which would (certainly in the period from April to June 2020) have skewed the figures.
47. The table below shows that with the exception of Council and Audit Committee, all the bodies set out below have seen some degree of cancellation over this period of time. Whilst the levels of cancellation do vary quite considerably, overall around a fifth (20%) of meetings have been cancelled during this period.

**Table 10: Cancellations between April 2015 to March 2020**

Body	Meetings Scheduled 2015/6-2019/20	Meetings Cancelled 2015/6-2019/20	Percentage Cancelled
Area 1 Planning Committee	46	25	54%
Area 2 Planning Committee	45	5	11%
Area 3 Planning Committee	45	18	40%
Audit Committee	20	0	0%
Cabinet	35	6	17%
CHAB (goes back to 08 June 2016)	16	2	13%
Council	31	0	0%
ERAB	21	6	29%
FIPAB	21	3	14%
General Purposes Committee	16	1	6%
Joint Standards Committee	20	15	75%
Joint Transportation Board	19	2	11%
Licensing and Appeals Committee	24	3	13%
Licensing and Appeals Panel	47	1	2%

Overview and Scrutiny Panel	24	5	21%
Parish Partnership Panel	19	1	5%
PTAB	25	7	28%
Standards Hearing Panel	6	1	17%
SSESAB (established May 2016)	17	3	18%
Tonbridge Forum	12	1	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>20.6%</b>

## Attendance of Members:

48. In addition to looking at the extent to which cancellations have taken place, it is also important to look at the levels of attendance in order to gain an appreciation of how the Council currently functions. During 2019/20, average attendance at meetings for the various bodies ranged from 62% to 100%. The overall average attendance rate was 80%, highlighting that there was a 20% absence rate overall during this year.

**Table 11: Attendance of Members 2019/20**

Body	Meetings 2019/20 (Members x Mtgs)	Attended 2019/20	Attendance (%)
Area 1 Planning Committee	60	55	92%
Area 2 Planning Committee	102	79	77%
Area 3 Planning Committee	120	99	83%
Audit Committee	36	26	72%
Cabinet	30	30	100%
CHAB	64	44	69%
Council	324	266	82%
ERAB	48	37	77%
FIPAB	64	48	75%
General Purposes Committee	42	35	83%
Joint Standards Committee	13	8	62%
Joint Transportation Board	28	23	82%
Licensing and Appeals Committee	45	32	71%
Licensing and Appeals Panel	25	16	64%
Overview and Scrutiny Panel	72	53	74%
Parish Partnership Panel	52	46	88%
PTAB	64	52	81%
Standards Hearings Panel	-	-	-
SSESAB	80	61	76%
Tonbridge Forum	39	36	92%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1308</b>	<b>1046</b>	<b>80%</b>

## Appointments to Outside Bodies

49. In 2011, the Borough Council made 39 annual appointments to outside bodies (which was followed by a further 14 appointments that year). In comparison, in May 2019 there were a total of 36 annual appointments made, representing a slight reduction in appointments.

**Table 12: Appointment to Outside Bodies**

Outside Body	No. of Councillors	Councillors Appointed 2020/21 (rolled over from 2019/20)
Kent County Playing Fields Association	1	Cllr Rhodes
Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge	2	Vacancies
Citizens Advice North and West Kent	1	Cllr Boughton
Maidstone and District Care Committee for Chest, Heart and Stroke	1	Cllr Hammond
West Kent Relate	1	Cllr Bates
Action with Communities in Rural Kent	2	Cllrs Dalton and Sergison
Maidstone Mediation Scheme	1	Cllr Kemp
Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee	1	Cllr Lettington
Basted Mill Public Open Space Joint Committee	2	Cllrs Betts and Taylor
Snodland Partnership	3	Cllrs Bell, Keeley and Lettington
South East England Councils (Leaders Forum)	1	Cllr Heslop (Substitute: Cllr Coffin)
Youth and Community Centres/Project Management Committees	1	Cllr Rhodes
LGA General Assembly	1	Cllr Heslop (Substitute: Cllr Coffin)
West Kent Partnership	1	Cllr Luker
Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee	1	Cllr Dalton (Deputy: Cllr Botten)
Rochester Airport Consultative Committee	1	Cllr Keers
Rochester Airport Delivery Board	1	Cllr Luker
Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel	1	Cllr Rhodes
Kent Flood Risk Management Committee	1	Cllr Rogers
Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust	2	Cllrs Bishop and Davis
Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board	3	Cllrs Boughton, Davis and Rogers
Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board	1	Cllr Davis
Haysden Country Park and Leybourne Lakes Country Park User Panels	4	Cllrs Hood and King (Haysden) Cllrs Bishop and Luker (Leybourne Lakes)
West Kent Improvement Board Members Forum	1	Cllr Montague
Dry Hill Disabled Persons Trust	1	Cllr Branson
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	

## Changes in Council Size Since 2010/11:

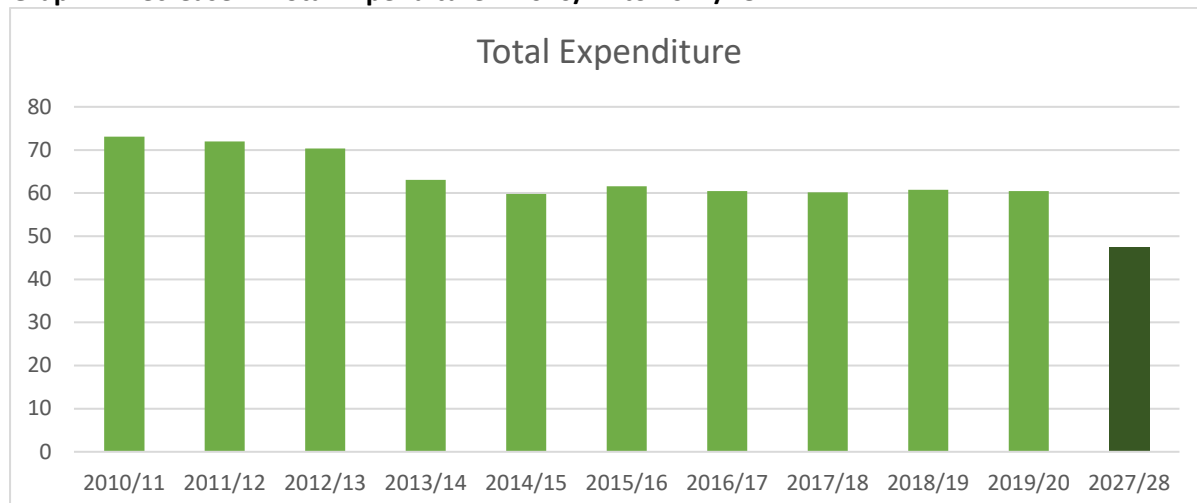
50. When the last boundary review was undertaken, the Borough Council had an annual total expenditure of over £73 million and a staff count of over 350 people (Full-Time Equivalent). Since that time, the size of the Council (as measured by total expenditure and staffing levels) has reduced. By 2019/20, the Borough Council had an annual total expenditure of just over £60m and a staff count of just over 220 people.
51. Part of this decrease can be attributed to the transfer of leisure centre operations to the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust, along with departmental streamlining, with both expenditure and staffing having plateau-ed somewhat since 2016/17.

**Table 13: Reduction in Council Size – Expenditure and Staffing**

Financial Year	Total Expenditure	Staffing (FTE)
2010/11	£73.075m	352.84
2011/12	£71.953m	345.61
2012/13	£70.348m	340.45
2013/14	£63.036m	324.03
2014/15	£59.784m	238.36
2015/16	£61.569m	230.99
2016/17	£60.481m	218.48
2017/18	£60.143m	213.34
2018/19	£60.732m	219.79
2019/20	£60.459m	223.36
<b>Total decrease from 2010/11 to 2019/20</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>

52. The table above shows that in total total expenditure has decreased by 17% and staffing numbers by just under 37% over the course of the last ten years.
53. Looking forwards, the impact of covid-19 has added considerable uncertainty regarding the future of the Borough Council. However, even before this impact, the Council's expenditure was scheduled to reduce further, reaching £47.394m by 2027/28, which would amount to a **35%** decrease from the position in 2010/11.

**Graph 1: Decrease in Total Expenditure – 2010/11 to 2027/28:**



## Further Anticipated Changes

54. In addition to the above information, it is worth also highlighting that the day-to-day role of a councillor has changed substantially since 2011, and will no doubt continue to do so into the future. In addition to there now being fewer council meetings to attend, and less duplication within remaining meetings, the technological changes at the Council have also provided councillors with an opportunity to communicate across IT platforms that greatly increase efficiency, and allow more time for face-to-face contact with residents who do not have access to the internet.
  
55. The impact of the covid-19 pandemic has sped up this process considerably, and the use of technology, be it social media or virtual meetings has now become very much a key part of the role of both officers and councillors as an effective means of communicating within the existing restrictions. This is something that is likely to continue even once these restrictions are eased.

# Conclusion

56. The headline findings from this exercise are as follows:

- **25%** reduction in the size of the Cabinet since 2015
- **6%** reduction in total number of appointments to all Council meetings since 2010/11
- **13%** reduction in scheduled Council meetings since 2010/11
- **14%** reduction in regulatory and other committees since 2010/11 and a **6%** drop in meetings.
- **48%** reduction in the number of Advisory Panels and Boards and a **20%** drop in Advisory Board and Panel Meetings since 2010/11
- **21%** cancellation rate of scheduled meetings since 2015/16
- **20%** non-attendance of members at meetings that do take place (although attendance of Councillors that are not Members of particular meetings is quite high)
- **7%** reduction (minimum) in annual appointments to outside bodies
- **17%** drop in the Council expenditure from 2010/11 to 2019/20, with a forecast reduction of **35%** in Council expenditure from 2010/11 to 2027/8
- **37%** drop in the number of staff (FTE) working for the Borough Council since 2010/11