

Dear Local Government Boundary Commission for England,

Re: Bolton Electoral Review – Council Size

Thank you for this opportunity to write to you on behalf of the Horwich and Blackrod First Independents Group, a local political party with two councillors, elected in 2019 to Bolton Council. -

Both members of the Horwich and Blackrod First Independents Group have individually completed the comprehensive questionnaire created by Bolton Council's Democratic Services, which gathered evidence from councillors about areas such as case workload, numbers and frequency of meetings, time spent carrying out councillor role, all related pressures, etc. This information has collectively informed the Council's submission re; suggested council size.

To give a brief overview of our Group's opinion regarding the council size, Horwich and Blackrod First Independents Group councillors feel that the council structure should not decrease from 60 councillors, this takes into account the 24/7 instant-access-environment and growing pressures of members' roles.

Should the feedback from all councillors collectively suggest that an increase in council size is preferable, Horwich and Blackrod First Independents Group note that three additional members could be a sensible outcome, taking the overall total to 63.

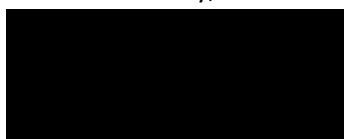
This increase would enable and support the creation of a further ward in part of the borough experiencing the greatest increase in residential developments/population growth (qualified by planning statistics relating to planning consents and development proposals over the next 5 years). Our two wards, Horwich North East and Horwich & Blackrod will see a 25% increase in population due to new housing development on sites included in the adopted Allocations Plan, open land brought forward by developers and the Strategic development of Horwich Loco Works.

The extra capacity (21 wards instead of 20 wards) could also positively impact on existing wards owing to a potential reduction in electors per ward, thereby helping to better focus quality time and coverage by each councillor in each respective ward.

To conclude and add further context, as members of a small party, we share all democratic and regulatory roles and also positions on other bodies and it is fair to note that as a small party, by default, individual councillors have more roles and commitments per head. These currently comprise of a Group Leader role, all the Executive Cabinet Members' meetings, four areas of Scrutiny meetings, Policy Development Groups, Licensing Cttees, Planning Cttee, Area Forum/Neighbourhood Management, Outside Bodies, and Full Council.

Thank you for taking the time to read these further notes.

Yours Sincerely,

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Cllr Marie Brady, Horwich North East Ward, Bolton Council.

Party and Group Leader of Horwich and Blackrod First Independents.