



## **INDEPENDENT ALLIANCE (KENT)**

**c/o 41 Maidstone Rd**

**Borough Green**

**Kent TN15 8BQ**

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION ENGLAND

19 March 2021

### CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO BOUNDARY REVIEW

We are Members of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and are aware there is a boundary review into district/borough councils at present.

We completely understand the need for boundary reviews at all levels to ensure that changing population distribution is monitored and adjusted to ensure a fair distribution of representation at all levels.

However, our Conservative majority Borough Council is using the review as a lever to reduce the overall number of Borough Councillors from 54 to between 43 & 36. The excuse is ostensibly financial savings, citing a £370k allowances bill. We can see no reason why allowances cannot be withdrawn completely or reduced, except for a few means tested exceptions where financial hardship could limit a Councillor's effectiveness as a representative. I myself am on State Pension, with a miniscule private top-up, and whilst I would definitely miss that £5000 per annum, it would not impact whatsoever on my performance as a representative of my electors.

T&MBC's planned reduction in councillor numbers from 54 to say 43/36 would have an infinitesimal impact on the allowance cost of £370k, at most £75k, when compared to the Council's overall current annual spend of over £60m, but would have a deep impact on democracy and representation.

At present, as three Independent ward councillors, covering 4 rural parishes and a population of 5822, we share duties. There is always at least one of us attending Parish Meetings and surgeries. We share all the other duties of planning, traffic, housing, Open Spaces, outside bodies, etc. It is effective and perfectly attuned to the needs of our electors.

There is no doubt that the governing machinery of TMBC would continue to operate efficiently whether there are 54, 43, 36 or even 10 elected Members, but it would lose its most important role - representation of the Electors, and accountability of the Council to those Electors.

The Members do more than just representation, we field and collate complaints and questions from the Electors, explaining Council policies and actions. We save Officers hours of time with that seemingly simple, fundamental connection to our Electors.

Regrettably, we feel there is a more sinister element to TMBC's wish to reduce councillor numbers. At present, as an opposition party we have representation on all boards and advisory committees due to the need for political balance. This is of course a minority representation but at least gives a voice to opinions not constrained to party lines.

If the councillor numbers were reduced further, the ruling party would still have enough of a majority to pack all committees, but the percentage balance brought about by the general reduction in numbers would result in the loss of minority party members. Shifting the political balance away from the minority parties, reducing democratic choice and representation for the electorate.

With less opposition Members, and less seats, the Conservative Party would have far greater resources to target the few remaining Opposition Members.

Cllr Mike Taylor



Cllr Tim Shaw



Cllr Wendy Palmer



TMBC Ward Members Borough Green & Longmill, representing the Parishes of Borough Green, Platt, Plaxtol and Shipbourne,

**Mike Taylor - Tim Shaw - Wendy Palmer - Scott Millener  
Independent Alliance Party**

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