

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

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Comment text:

SUMMARY 1. We support reducing the numbers of Councillors to 39 2. The proposed Wards appear to give a clear electoral advantage to one particular Party (the Conservatives), and should therefore not be implemented, on the grounds of distorting democracy (supporting calculations have been uploaded) 3. The same applies to the proposal to hold a "big bang" election in 2024 in all 39 seats, as bigger Parties with the ability to field many more candidates than smaller ones will be at an unfair advantage 4. Given the above, we propose the existing Ward boundaries be maintained (or minor expansions/reductions of neighbouring Wards be made if needed to balance numbers per Councillor), and nine 3-seat Wards have their numbers reduced to 2 seats 5. An exception could be Paddock Wood, where a change to a single 3-seat Ward would be appropriate, though with the retention of the 750 or so "fully Paddock Wood" residents in the area currently proposed to be carved off to Pembury & Capel

DISCUSSION 1. Supported on grounds of cost saving and manageability of the Council 2. The attached spreadsheet "Future Wards analysis_Sep_22 v2" shows the method used to calculate the outcome of elections in the proposed 13 Wards if the voters voted the way they did in the most recent election in the 20 existing Wards; this gives a valid indication of any bias introduced by the proposed Ward designs, under the existing first-past-the-post system - the most recent results in the existing 20 Wards are tabulated first (16 for 2022, 3 for 2021, and 1 for 2019), with the winning seats identified by Party - the fractions of each of the existing 20 Wards that makes up the proposed 13 Wards is then tabulated, based on eyeballing the maps in the consultation pages, and making some allowance for largely unpopulated areas such as commons and parks - the resulting vote results for each proposed Ward is then calculated, and the winners identified by Party - in the final table, the number of seats per Party won in the existing "OLD" 20 Wards is normalised to 13 Wards by multiplying by 13/20 - it can be seen that in this comparison the Conservatives gain 3 seats, whilst the Alliance loses 1 seat, the LibDems lose 1.5 seats and Labour loses 0.5 seat - these numbers should be multiplied by 3 to give the overall picture in a 39-seat election - the proposed change clearly favours one Party at the expense of the other three, and the analysis backs up the observation that in several cases smaller Parties' votes are being diluted by the mixture of Wards they are traditionally strong in with others, the combination of Rusthall and Southborough North with the adjacent halves of Speldhurst & Bidborough being a clear example - the proposed system therefore has too much of a democratic deficit 3. In 3-seat elections, the Party that can put up three candidates is at an advantage, as no elector's vote goes to another Party, and thus does not dilute their own chances It would be very difficult for smaller Parties or Independents to find 39 candidates willing to be Councillors at once, and for that reason we consider the proposal to have a "39 seat" election in 2024 to be unacceptable on the grounds of democratic deficit 4. The above shortfalls can be addressed with minimum disruption by maintaining the existing Ward boundaries, which everyone is familiar with, and reducing 3-seat Wards to 2-seat Wards. If necessary some local changes of boundary with the adjacent Ward could be made to keep the numbers of electors per Councillor within 20% of the norm, without introducing a significant bias to the election outcomes 5. Paddock Wood (including the piece in the south-east currently proposed to join Pembury & Capel) is a coherent town, and could be converted to a single large Ward with 3 Councillors without significant disruption. Carving off the 750 or so people mentioned above would leave them confused between their Town identity and where their Councillors are, and simultaneously impact the identity of Paddock Wood, so should not be implemented.

Uploaded Documents:

[Download \(https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1665247992_Future+Wards+analysis_Sep+22_v2.xlsx\)](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1665247992_Future+Wards+analysis_Sep+22_v2.xlsx)

T Wells New Wards Votes Calculation - transferring votes from the last election in the 20 old Wards into tr

| LATEST RESULTS | | RURAL | RURAL | URBAN | RURAL | URBAN |
|--|---------|----------------------|------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| | | Benenden & Cranbrook | Brenchley & Horsmonden | Broadwater | Capel | Culverden |
| | Year: | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Con | | 766 | 556 | 296 | 187 | 732 |
| All | | 675 | 755 | 68 | | |
| LibDem | | | | 429 | 717 | 1313 |
| Lab | | 174 | 225 | 72 | 16 | 276 |
| Green | | 162 | 139 | 376 | 17 | |
| Other | | | | 18 | 16 | 85 |
| TOTAL | | 1777 | 1675 | 1259 | 953 | 2406 |
| | Winner: | Con | All | LibDem | LibDem | LibDem |
| Party numbers: Con 3, All 6, LibDem 7, Lab 4 | | | | | | |

NEW WARD FRACTIONS of OLD (eyeballed from Wards maps in the Consultation, with some allowance fo

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|---|-----|
| RTW West | | 0.2 | | 0.8 |
| RTW Central | | | | |
| RTW South | | 0.8 | | |
| RTW Grosvenor & Hilbert | | | | 0.2 |
| RTW North Woods | | | | |
| RTW North | | | | |
| Southborough & Bidborough | | | | |
| Rusthall & Speldhurst | | | | |
| Pembury & Capel | | | 1 | |
| Paddock Wood | | | | |
| Rural Tunbridge Wells | | 1 | | |
| Hawkhurst, Ben, S Goudhurst | 0.4 | | | |
| Cranbrook Siss & Frittenden | 0.6 | | | |

NEW WARDS RESULTS BASED ON LATEST ACTUAL VOTES

| URBAN / T Wells town | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|---------|----------|
| | RTW West | RTW Central | RTW South | RTW G&H | RTW NWds |
| Con | 837 | 928 | 737 | 432 | 836 |
| All | 14 | 812 | 54 | 90 | 0 |
| LibDem | 1590 | 809 | 1313 | 1192 | 98 |
| Lab | 687 | 316 | 149 | 281 | 952 |
| Green | 75 | 40 | 393 | 124 | 14 |
| Other | 72 | 3 | 22 | 17 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 3274 | 2908 | 2669 | 2136 | 1900 |

Winner:

LibDem

Con

LibDem

LibDem

Lab

Party numbers: Con 5, All 3, LibDem 3, Lab 2

COMPARISON OF NUMBER OF WINNING SEATS PER PARTY

| | OLD | OLD @ 13/20* | Proposed | Delta | |
|--------|-----|--------------|----------|-------|----------------------------|
| Con | 3 | 2.0 | 5 | 3.1 | ie system change favours 1 |
| All | 6 | 3.9 | 3 | -0.9 | |
| LibDem | 7 | 4.6 | 3 | -1.6 | |
| Lab | 4 | 2.6 | 2 | -0.6 | |

* ie normalise to 13 Wards

| RURAL | RURAL | RURAL | URBAN | URBAN | URBAN | URBAN |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Frittenden & Sissinghurst | Goudhurst & Lamberhurst | Hawkhurst & Sandhurst | Paddock Wood East | Paddock Wood West | Pantiles & St Marks | Park |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 |
| 347 | 613 | 746 | 391 | 301 | 715 | 793 |
| 321 | 641 | 868 | 577 | 217 | | 902 |
| 80 | 97 | | | 50 | 1386 | 437 |
| | 133 | 190 | 175 | 397 | 130 | 308 |
| | 119 | | 60 | 133 | 132 | |
| | | | | | 11 | |
| 748 | 1603 | 1804 | 1203 | 1098 | 2374 | 2440 |
| Con | All | All | All | Lab | LibDem | All |

r parks and open spaces)) <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/31880>

0.3 0.9
0.7
0.1

0.1
0.9
1
0.7
0.3
1
1

| | MIXED/RURAL | | | URBAN | RURAL | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| RTW North | Stbh&Bidbh | Rust&Spld | Pemb&Cap | Padk Wood | Rural TW | Hawk,B&S G |
| 411 | 1054 | 802 | 1025 | 662 | 985 | 1236 |
| 0 | 529 | 793 | 772 | 772 | 1204 | 1330 |
| 575 | 752 | 436 | 722 | 45 | 68 | 29 |
| 968 | 778 | 660 | 250 | 532 | 318 | 300 |
| 0 | 0 | 141 | 30 | 180 | 222 | 101 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1954 | 3112 | 2832 | 2815 | 2191 | 2797 | 2996 |

Lab

Con

Con

Con

All

All

All

the Conservatives

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| MIXED | URBAN | URBAN | URBAN | URBAN | RURAL | URBAN |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Pembury 2022 | Rusthall 2021 | Sherwood 2022 | Southborough & High Brooms 2022 | Southborough North 2022 | Speldhurst & Bidborough 2022 | St James' 2022 |
| 808 | 455 | 813 | 436 | 604 | 579 | 229 |
| 750 | 436 | | 243 | 630 | 1322 | 984 |
| 194 | 572 | 930 | 1033 | 203 | 146 | 217 |
| | 141 | | | | | 138 |
| 1752 | 1604 | 1743 | 1712 | 1437 | 2047 | 1568 |
| Con | Lab | Lab | Lab | LibDem | All | LibDem |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|-----|---|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | 0.9 |
| | | 1 | | | | 0.1 |
| | | | 0.5 | | | |
| | | | 0.5 | 1 | 0.4 | |
| | 1 | | | | 0.6 | |
| 1 | | | | | | |

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Cran Sis&Frt

| | |
|------|----------------|
| 807 | |
| 726 | |
| 80 | |
| 104 | |
| 97 | |
| 0 | |
| 1814 | Total 33398 |

Con

URBAN

St John's
2022
385

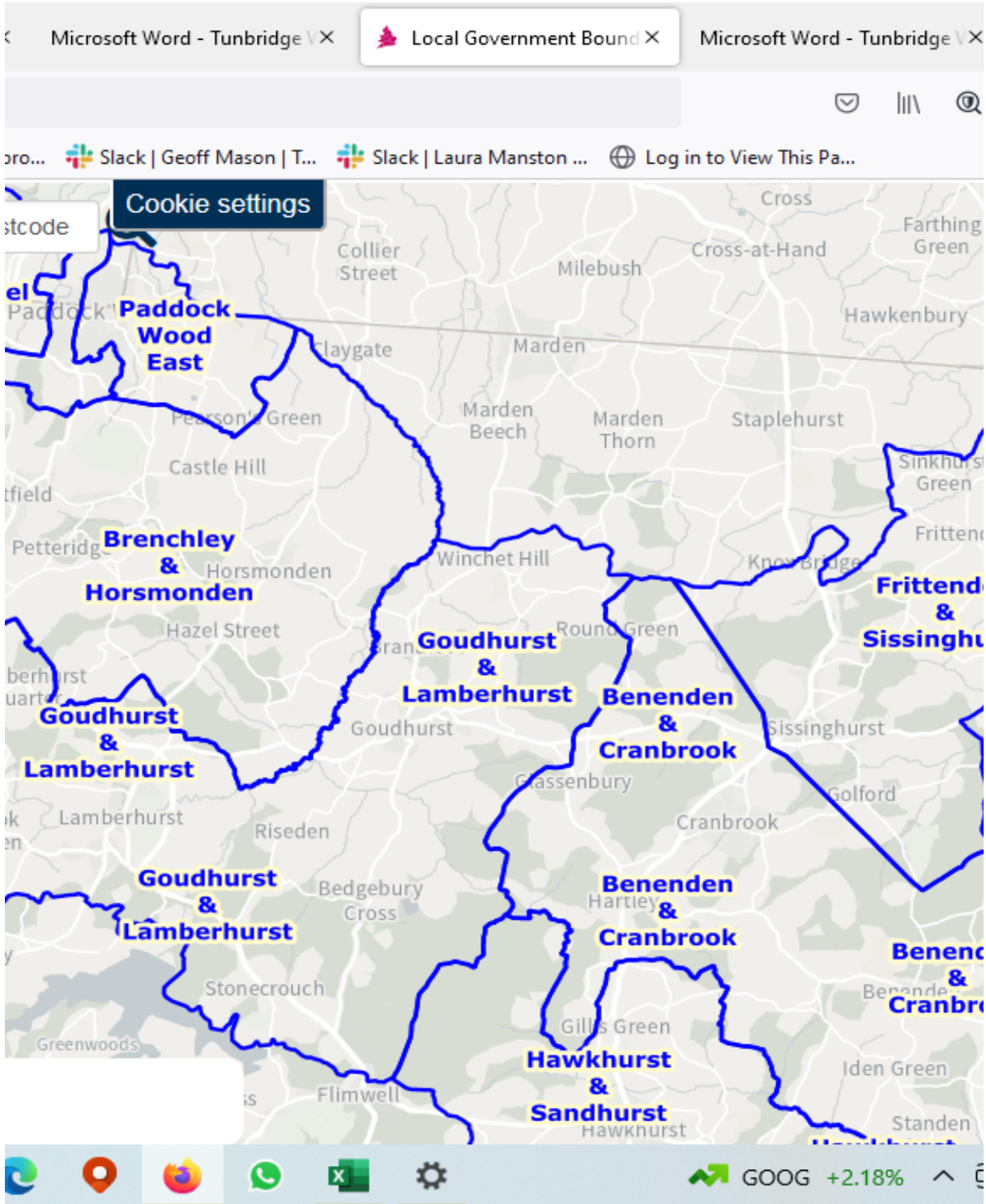
907
903

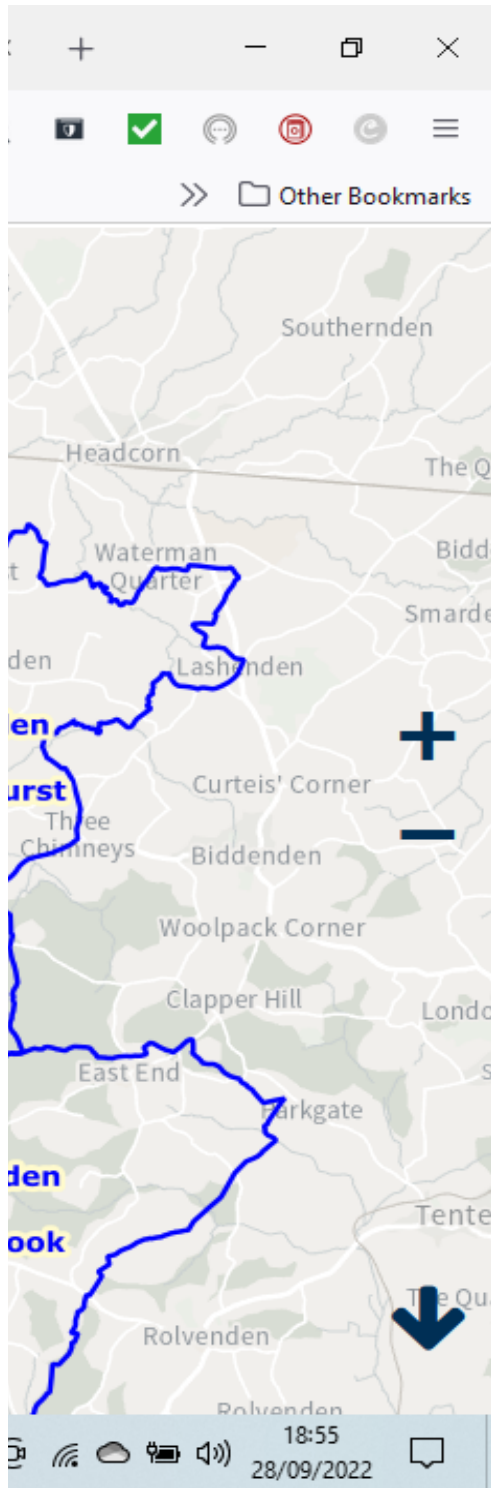
2195
LibDem

| |
|----------------|
| Total 33398 |
|----------------|

0.5

0.5



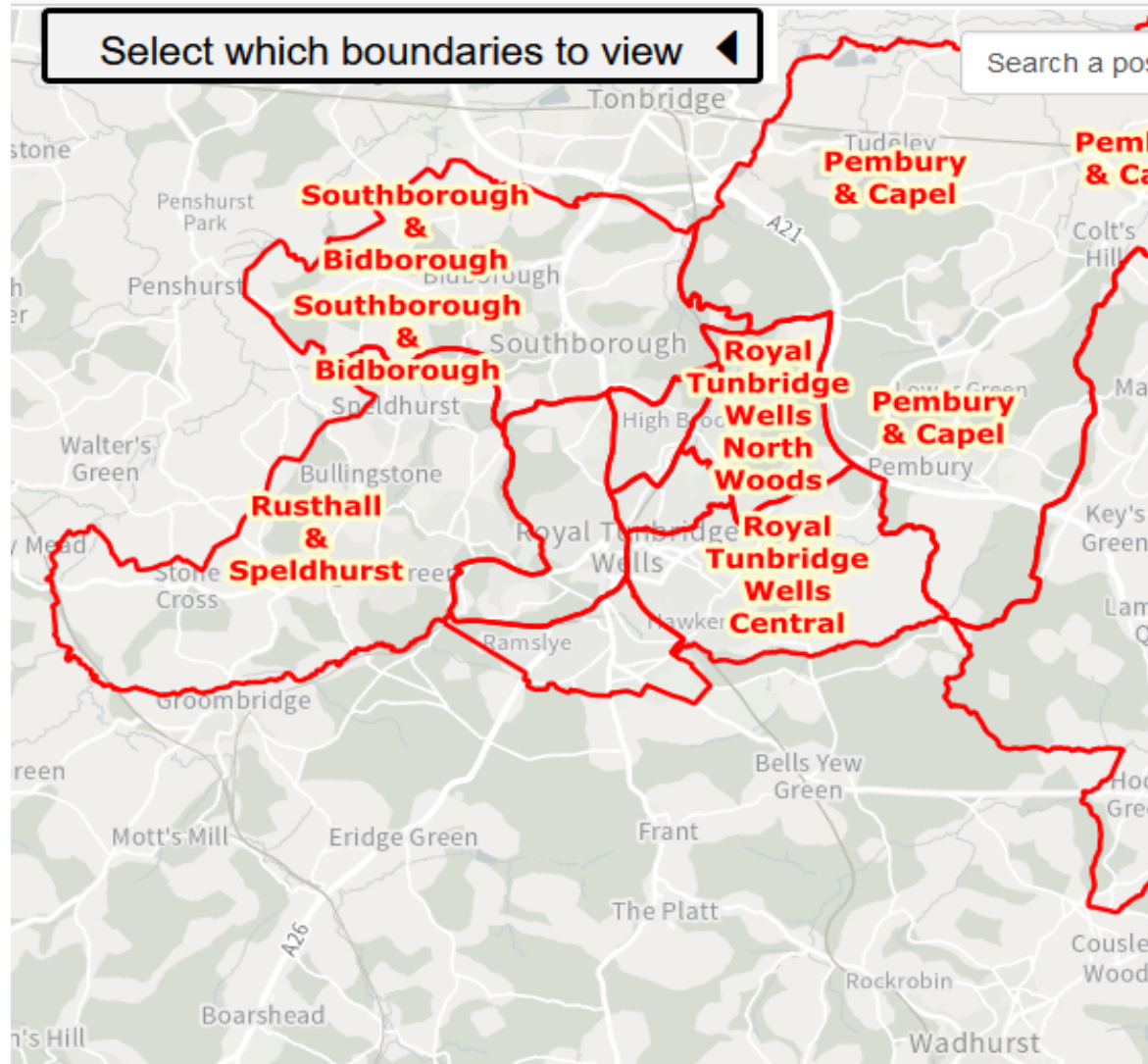




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