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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 March 2021 17:22
To: reviews
Subject: Electoral Review of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Wards (Kent)
Attachments: RR Submission.1.doc

Categories: Submissions

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to make a submission on my behalf as a serving member of the Council of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

My Background

I am currently on my second term as a Liberal Democrat Borough Councillor representing East Malling Ward and am currently Deputy Mayor of the above mentioned Council. I also serve as a parish Councillor on East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council. This sounds as if it were two Parishes but is in fact one which has existed since Norman times. Although I have only six year's experience of being a councillor. I believe I have the necessary skills gained in my career as a Work Study Officer and Industrial Engineer to evaluate the numbers of persons required to undertake tasks within business. On looking at the existing representation it is clear that some alterations may be necessary. However, with the coming onslaught of additional housing within our borough, particularly in the more rural eastern end I think it would be imprudent to make too many reductions in council numbers. We do have to remember however, as councillors we have been elected to represent the electorate and communities. Whilst the attendance at Meetings is necessary, I feel that casework on behalf of my ward residents takes up much more of my time than the formal meetings. Together casework and preparation for council meetings, reading papers etc usually consumes about eight to ten hours per week. Having looked at the position presented to us by the officers and voted upon at our last full council in which a proposal for a reduction to "in the region of 43 councillors" was made, the resulting vote was 32 for, 13 against with three abstentions and 6 no shows. This indicates that although a majority was in agreement (thought by many to be politically driven) there is also a substantial opposition to this amount of reduction of numbers. I would say in my own opinion that we should retain the number in the region of 54 in order to maintain the position of representation with the large increase in electorate on the horizon.

However, I have attached my analysis for you perusal.

I should be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt.

Councillor Roger Roud
East Malling Ward
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Using information available from Tonbridge and Malling I should like to make the following observations for the required Electoral Commission Boundary Review. I am an elected Councillor for the East Malling Ward.

The council currently has 54 Councillors representing 24 Wards. The South of the borough is predominantly urban but the vast majority is of a rural nature which renders it more spread out and so takes more time for members to cover in the business of representation of electors.

I believe that there is some room for a reduction in members and from figures supplied by the officers of the borough I see this as about 5-6 members somewhere between 9% and 11%.

Any more I believe would mean too large an increase in electors per member in the rural wards which would also mean members would possibly be spread over several parishes. The urban area of the borough is not parished and this would seem to be an easier task to modify wards and I consider it would be simpler to reduce numbers there.

The following table has been supplied by TMBC officers, my comments are to be found to the right of each cell.

Variable	Reduction/Increase	How would this equate to size	How I would equate this to size
Size of Cabinet	25% since 2015	40.5	The number of cabinet members has already been reduced and so cannot be used again.
Council Appointments to Council Meetings	6 % Reduction since 2010/11	50.8	50.8
Scheduled Council Meetings	13% Reduction since 2010/11	47.0	47
Regulatory and other Committees	14% reduction in No of committees since 2010/11 6 % in meetings since 2010/11	46.4 50.8	It cannot be guaranteed that meetings will be reduced since matters may arise to require meetings to take place. Committees may be reduced but business must go on 46.4
Advisory Panels and Boards	48% reduction in the number of Advisory and boards since 2010/11 20% reduction in meetings since 2010/11	28.1 43.2	Similar argument to above 43.2
Cancellation rates	21% cancellation rate of scheduled meetings since 1015/16	42.7	Meetings are only cancelled through lack of business and this cannot be foreseen
Non Attendance	20% non attendance rate since 2015/16 (92% attendance by Lib Dems over year to date)	43.2	If members are reluctant to attend now this is likely to still be the case no matter how many members there are so is irrelevant
Annual Appointments	7% reduction (minimum) since 1010/11	50.2	50.2
Budget	17% drop between 2010/11 and 2019/20 35% Forecast drop 2010/11 and 2027/28	44.8 35.1	Can only be one or another not both And is not guaranteed 44.8
Staffing	37% reduction in FTE since 2010/11	34.0	Nothing to do with council size as employee numbers are dictated by work load and could well increase
Average across all Variables	20.69	42.8	47.2

This table would in my view indicate that 48 members would be more appropriate than the 43 suggested thus a reduction of 11%.

The losses in numbers would inevitably be made up of councillors who are what I would describe as "foot soldiers" ie not committee chairs etc and would result in a saving to the authority of approx £33000.00 per annum, not a huge amount in the scheme of things. Bearing in mind there are currently 14 existing committees which are necessary to operate the Council effectively after the reduction mentioned in the table above. All of those committees are presided over by a chair and vice chair, that would equate to 28 members paid extra responsibility remuneration for this. That equates to 59.5% of the council members who have enhanced salaries for their positions.

My submission is that the council size at Tonbridge and Malling should remain in the region of 54 members but could if deemed necessary be reduced to 48 members (11%). If this proves to be the case then committees should be presided over by a Chairperson and the position of Vice Chair be withdrawn to save additional costs. Should a chair not be able to preside then a member should be elected by the committee to stand in for that occasion but without extra remuneration. That would reduce the overall number of extra responsibility members to approx 28%.

This reduction in number could I think work but would need warding to be sympathetically analysed so as not to adversely affect rural wards and communities. I have looked at the possibilities and it would seem to me that most savings in numbers could be made in the urban areas.

Councillor Roger Roud
East Malling Ward
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council