

From: mike taylor [REDACTED]

To: reviews reviews@lqbce.org.uk

Sent: 03 February 2021 13:01

Subject: Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Boundary Review

Dear Sir

We have been led to believe by our Borough Council that 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 36 & 40. The excuse is ostensibly financial savings, citing a £370k allowances bill. We can see no reason why allowances cannot be withdrawn completely, except for a few means tested exceptions where financial hardship could limit a Councillor's effectiveness as a representative.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 36 would have an infinitesimal impact on the allowance cost of £370k when compared to the Council's overall current annual spend of over £60m.

Any reduction in councillor numbers would automatically lead to clear reduction in representation. At present I am one of three Independent ward councillors covering 4 parishes, and we share duties so there is always at least one of us attending Parish Meetings and surgeries, and we share all the other duties of planning, traffic, housing, Open Spaces etc. It is effective and perfectly attuned to the needs of our electors.

But there is a more sinister element to TMBC's wish to reduce councillor numbers. At present we fare well as Independents with representation on all committees because there has to be political balance, so the mathematics means that fractions of single Lib Dem or Independents have to be appointed to each committee, so we get minority representation on every committee. If the councillor numbers were reduce further, the ruling party would still have enough bodies to pack all committees, but the percentage balance bought 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, and reducing democracy, choice and representation for the electorate.

By all means adjust boundaries, but don't allow your well-meant process to be hi-jacked for political purposes.

Cllr Mike Taylor

Chairman, Borough Green Parish Council,

TMBC Ward Member Borough Green & Longmill, representing Borough Green, Platt,
Plaxtol and Shipbourne,

Alongside Cllrs Shaw and Palmer