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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 July 2021 21:42
To: reviews
Subject: Tonbridge town ward boundary review

Categories: [REDACTED]

I have heard about the proposed boundary changes to wards within Tonbridge town and am concerned.

My concerns is that as voters we have become well used to the councillors representing us, and they are well used to the concerns of the areas they cover. My own ward councillor lives nearby, his children attend the same schools that mine attended, and he uses the same shops, park, library and other facilities. I often see him while he is walking his dog and feel that he is a representative member of our local community.

I have friends in the neighbouring ward who feel the same way about their councillor. They are happy that she lives in their street and understands their concerns. An example being that she runs the local Covid support group and was one of the organisers of the Christmas lights initiative in their street last year. I feel that it is important to keep communities together, and for this reason drawing up ward boundaries should not merely be about numbers, but also about stability and community cohesion. I feel that wards in cohesive communities should be kept intact as far as possible.

Tonbridge consists of a few separate communities, several of which are mirrored by the current ward boundaries.

Most wards have 2 councillors, but Medway ward has 3.

In my area (Judd ward) most primary aged children attend either Sussex road or Slade school. We also have a church called St Stephens in the ward which runs various activities such as playgroups and coffee mornings.

In neighbouring Vauxhall ward most primary school children would attend either Bishop Chavassee or Royal Rise school. There is a church called St Eanswythes just beyond the current Vauxhall ward boundary, which is currently just inside Medway ward.

In Trench ward most children would attend Longmead school and Tonbridge Baptist Church is a community hub with a foodbank and many other facilities. They would tend to use the shops in York Parade and the park at Longmead.

In Higham and Cage Green wards most children would attend Woodlands or Cage Green schools. The local shops are at Martin Hardie way, and the local churches are the Methodist church in Hunt road and St Philips church on Salisbury road. These churches are important community hubs as the food banks are run from them.

The 2 central wards in Tonbridge are less cohesive, and are somewhat scattered. Medway ward is spread out to include housing on either side of the industrial estate and shopping centre. It currently has 3 councillors.

Castle ward includes the Slade school and surrounding houses, but also more distant housing towards Longmead park and some streets which are almost into Hildenborough village.

To my mind, if the aim is to have less councillors to represent Tonbridge, it would make sense to extend Judd ward northwards across the park to include the Slade area, where many children from our area already attend school.

It would also make sense to extend the Vauxhall ward eastwards and northwards to include the part of Medway ward that is to the south of the industrial estate and shopping area.

Trench ward could be extended to include the part of Castle ward which is beyond the cemetery towards Longmead, and possibly some of the current Cage Green ward consisting of bungalows and mobile homes, and feeling very separate from the rest of that ward. People living in these

bungalows and mobile homes for senior citizens would be more likely to use the mini Sainsburys supermarket or cross the zebra crossing to York Parade than use shops in Martin Hardie Way. Higham ward could be extended to include some of Cage Green ward, since this whole area is to the east of the Shipbourne road and uses Martin Hardie Way shops and the facilities/foodbank provided by the 2 churches there, and the 2 schools.

The remaining houses in central Tonbridge in Medway ward, plus those left over in Castle and Cage Green wards could either form their own ward or be added to other wards depending on what works best.

Best wishes

