

# SCOTT BENTON MP

Member of Parliament for Blackpool South



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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26th May 2021

## **RE: Local Government Boundary Commission Review of Blackpool Council**

For the attention of the Review Officer,

I am writing regarding the pending Local Government Boundary Commission Review of Blackpool Council.

The Local Government Boundary Commission should take the opportunity of the boundary review especially at this time of economic challenge to reduce the number and associated cost of councillors. Comparisons of Blackpool Council with other unitary, metropolitan, Scottish and Welsh unitary authorities suggest that Blackpool has more councillors per head of population than other authorities.

Blackpool currently has 42 councillors. Hartlepool has 33 councillors and Torbay has 36 councillors. Meanwhile Dundee in Scotland has 29 councillors. If lower numbers of councillors are able to manage and scrutinise Hartlepool, Torbay and Dundee councils, I feel that Blackpool could also operate with fewer councillors.

Torbay has a population of 134,500<sup>[1]</sup> which is comparable to Blackpool's 139,446<sup>[2]</sup>. Both unitary authorities have similar populations. Both Torbay and Blackpool are seaside resorts. Yet Torbay enjoys lower potential costs in terms of councillors than Blackpool by having 36 councillors compared with Blackpool's 42.

Dundee in Scotland meanwhile has a population of 149,320<sup>[3]</sup> which is served by 29 councillors. Blackpool and Dundee both face challenges and social disadvantages caused by economic decline. Dundee manages with fewer councillors than Blackpool. Therefore, social disadvantage and economic decline are no excuses for keeping councillor numbers higher than necessary.

Blackpool also has a lower population per councillor than other local authorities. Bournemouth for example has councillors serving more ward constituents than Blackpool. Bournemouth has 76 councillors serving a population of 395,784<sup>[4]</sup>. Bournemouth has 5207 people per councillor (395,784/76). Blackpool meanwhile has 3320 people per councillor

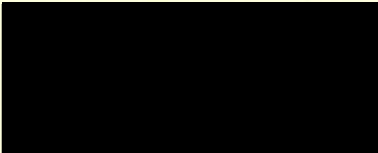
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(139,446/42). Both Bournemouth and Blackpool are seaside resorts. There is little justification for Blackpool having a proportionally higher burden of councillor costs (by having proportionally more councillors) when compared with Bournemouth.

Reducing the costs of councillors means that savings can then be moved into frontline services like adult social care, children's services and other services provided by Blackpool Council. Public opinion is also in favour of reducing the number of councillors and other politicians. Public support for cutting councillors will be even greater when savings are ploughed back into frontline services.

I therefore recommend that the Local Government Boundary Commission considers reducing the number of councillors in Blackpool to 27 from the current 42. I also recommend that the Local Government Boundary Commission replaces the current two councillor per ward structure to a new structure of three councillors per ward. This would reduce the number of wards in Blackpool to nine. Larger wards would make it less likely that Blackpool would require further boundary changes in future years thus providing boundary stability for a longer period of time.

Best wishes,



**Scott Benton MP**

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[1] <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/care-and-support-providers/mps/current-and-predicted-need/population-overview/>

[2] <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/area-profiles/local-authority-profiles/blackpool-unitary/>

[3] <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/dundee-city-council-profile.html>

[4] <https://public.tableau.com/profile/bcpinsight#!/vizhome/ProjectionsWorkbookDraft/BCPPopulationGrowth>