

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17th March, 2021

Present: Cllr Mrs F A Kemp (Chairman), Cllr L J O'Toole (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs P A Bates, Cllr Mrs S Bell, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr D J Cooper, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr K King, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr N G Stapleton and Cllr Mrs M Tatton

Councillors M C Base, R P Betts, T Bishop, J L Botten, V M C Branson, G C Bridge, R I B Cannon, A E Clark, C Brown, R W Dalton, M O Davis, Mrs T Dean, N Foyle, N J Heslop, P M Hickmott, F A Hoskins, S A Hudson, D Keers, A Kennedy, J R S Lark, D Lettington, Mrs R F Lettington, P J Montague, Mrs A S Oakley, M R Rhodes, H S Rogers, R V Roud, J L Sergison, K B Tanner, M Taylor, Miss G E Thomas, D Thornewell and C J Williams were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

GP 21/7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

GP 21/8 BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW - COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION

The report of the Chief Executive provided an overview of the Boundary Commission Review process. Proposals regarding the future size of the Borough Council using an evidence base that analysed the operation of the organisation in recent years were also outlined.

It was reported that there had been in-depth discussion on the proposals at the meeting of the Electoral Review Working Group held on 10 March 2021 and a number of views had been considered. The recommendations of the Working Group were set out for further consideration by the General Purposes Committee.

Some concerns were raised regarding the level of representation provided to local communities and the quality of decision making if the size of the council was reduced significantly. In response to these concerns, it was reiterated that the Boundary Commission would have regard to all submissions received and that individuals and/or groups were able to submit their own submissions.

In conclusion, and having regard to the evidence presented, it was felt that a figure in the region of 43 Councillors would be consistent with the change in governance and scrutiny arrangements since 2010/11 as well as the reduction in the size of Council expenditure and staffing. This reduction would also reflect current and future changes in work patterns and would be consistent with the level of Councillor numbers within the CIPFA group, especially when considering other reviews within the group since 2010/11.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the approach and conclusion to reduce the future size of the Council to 'in the region' of 43 Councillors, as recommended by the Electoral Review Working Group and as set out in the report, be commended to the Council.

***Referred to Council**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

GP 21/9 CHANGE OF POLLING PLACE

The report of the Chief Executive informed of changes required for two Polling Places and/or Stations ahead of the May 2021 elections. Both of the venues were educational and the Borough Council had been asked by the Department of Education to avoid the use of schools and educational facilities, except in cases where there were no alternatives, due to the loss of education arising from the pandemic.

Members noted the following replacement Polling Places and/or Stations for the local elections on 6 May 2021:

- St Saviours Church for the Castle North Polling District; and
- West Malling Baptist Church for the West Malling Polling District

If successful, all future elections would be held within these Polling Places, Stations and Districts.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

GP 21/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm