

**Notice of Motion submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 5.27**

**To consider the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor D King, seconded by Cllr A Mehmet on behalf of the Conservative Group:**

The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, makes clear the Government's desire for Local Government Re-organisation.

The Government expects all two tier areas to develop proposals for reorganisation and the creation of new Unitary authorities on a footprint with a population of 500,000 or more.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is deeply disappointed at the top-down approach by the Government to re-organisation, especially considering it was not included within the Labour Party manifesto ahead of the General Election in July 2024. The creation of larger authorities will make it harder for elected Councillors to represent their residents and has the potential for a democratic deficit. It will also result in significant cost, disruption and uncertainty for all residents, staff and councillors.

However, despite our reservations, we will work constructively to seek the best possible solution for residents across the borough during this process.

This Council also notes that the Government wishes to 'rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities'. It is therefore essential that the process towards the creation of a Town Council for Tonbridge, if residents wish one to be created, is started.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- (1) Express its deep disappointment with the top-down approach to Local Government reorganisation that the Government has taken;
- (2) Continues to work constructively with all other affected authorities across Kent and Medway to secure the best outcome for residents across Tonbridge and Malling; and
- (3) Start the process of a Community Governance Review, with the intention of creating a Town Council in Tonbridge, by establishing a politically proportionate Member working group to oversee the development of an initial Terms of Reference and timetable for this review.