

Council Size: Public Consultation Proposals

Methodology

The public consultation will be published online between Monday 26 July and Friday 3 September 2021.

Specific email invitations to respond to the consultation will be sent to:

- All Borough Councillors
- Town and Parish Councils (via the Clerk and Chairman)
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum
- Tunbridge Wells Access Group (paper copy)
- Kent County Council Division Members
- The Members of Parliament for the Borough

Except for the group above, respondents will be asked to supply their name and postcode, but the consultation will not discount responses from outside the borough area (although Members may choose to give weight as appropriate to responses from outside the borough area).

All responses will be captured through the online form on the Council's website, except where a respondent has specifically asked for a paper copy of the consultation.

The results of the consultation will be reported back to the General Purposes Committee in September 2021.

Consultation

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council currently has 48 Councillors who are each elected for a four-year term. The Borough area is divided into 20 roughly equal 'wards'. The Councillors are elected to, and represent, their local ward.

The Borough area (represented by the blue lines below) runs from Speldhurst and Bidborough in the West, to Hawkhurst and Sandhurst and Frittenden and Sissinghurst in the East, with the main settlements being Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst.

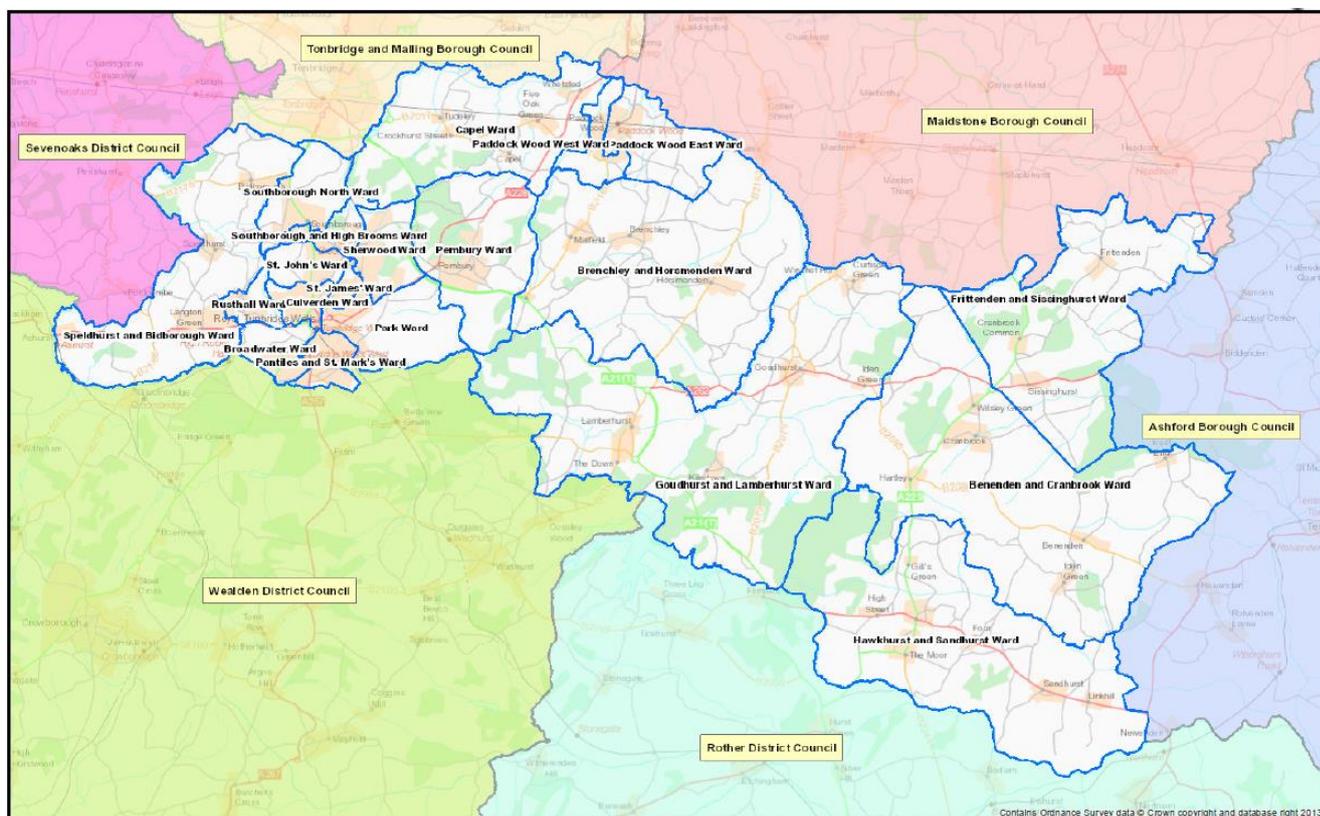
There are 14 Parish Councils and two Town Councils within the Borough area with separate Parish and Town Councillors representing these administrative bodies.

The Borough area lies within the County of Kent which is administered by Kent County Council. Within the Borough area there are six County Councillors who represent the views of the Borough at Kent County Council meetings (held in Maidstone).

There are also two Members of Parliament who represent the Borough area.

This consultation relates specifically to Tunbridge Wells Borough Councillors only.

The Borough Council is considering how many Borough Councillors it should have in the future. There are currently 48 Borough Councillors in 20 wards. Some wards have only one Borough Councillor to represent them (such as Capel), whilst others have up to three (such as Pembury). More information on Borough Councillors and wards can be found on the Borough Council website: [Councillors and Wards](#).



Elector Ratio

Each local authority has an elector ratio, which is determined by the number of electors in an area, divided by the number of councillors. The elector ratio (based on the 2020 register of electors) for the Borough is 1,918. This means that on average, each Borough Councillor is responsible for 1,918 electors.

The table below compares this ratio with a group of 14 other authorities of a similar size and type to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (our CIPFA Nearest Neighbours grouping).

Authority	Electorate	Number of wards	Number of Councillors	Elector ratio
Dacorum	113,191	18	54	2,533
Basingstoke and Deane	136,809	17	44	2,477
Chelmsford	135,909	10	30	2,422
North Hertfordshire	101,791	24	57	2,384
Test Valley	98,538	16	48	2,346
Warwick	109,025	26	55	2,309
Broxbourne	72,667	20	43	2,291
Tonbridge And Malling	98,280	25	51	2,219
Mid Sussex	114,159	26	54	2,114
Cherwell	112,645	24	49	2,077
Ashford	97,342	39	47	2,071
Rugby	80,584	16	39	1,977
Tunbridge Wells	84,917	16	42	1,918
Maidstone	127,013	24	54	1,820
Hertsmere	77,106	20	48	1,769

The Role of a Borough Councillor

Borough Councillors are responsible for a range of different tasks and functions.

Ward Work

Primarily they are responsible for representing the views of the people in the ward in which they are elected to. They also assist residents in their area with a variety of issues that can include problems with benefits payments, informal (non-professional) advice and guidance around planning applications, and signposting to a range of other authorities and organisations with specialist help available (such as adult social care or mental health support provision). This work is known as ward work and is an important part of being a Councillor.

Council Meetings

Alongside their ward work, Borough Councillors attend a range of meetings at the Borough Council to make decisions on policies, plans and projects, and individual applications. The Borough Council has 12 main public meetings where the public may attend and decisions are made. In 2019-20 there were 92 meetings held, with Councillors attending on average 17 meetings per year (the actual figure varies between Councillors depending on their responsibilities. The range is from 6 – 33 per year). Public meetings are largely held in the evenings starting at 6pm or 6.30pm.

Borough Councillors also attend a range of informal or non-public meetings with officers to discuss issues and plans in depth before they come to public meetings for decisions. These meetings tend to be held during the day.

Partnerships

Borough Councillors also work with a range of other organisations that seek to improve the lives of the residents of the Borough, such as charities and trusts. These organisations are known as 'outside bodies', and Councillors can be nominated to their main committees to help oversee the work of the body. The Borough Council formally appoints Councillors to 14 outside bodies, but individual councillors may offer their skills and experience to a range of other organisations outside of the immediate purview of the Council.

The Borough Council also has a formal relationship with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum and our Town and Parish Councils, and Borough Councillors attend the meetings of these bodies to ensure there is representation from the Borough Council.

Allowances

Borough Councillors receive a small allowance for the role they perform which is expected to cover the costs of any additional IT equipment, and the additional costs for printing, phone calls, and utilities for the work that they do for the Borough.

Most Borough Councillors receive a maximum of **£5,500** a year. Mileage and any training expenses can be claimed separately. More information on allowances and expenses can be found at: [Allowances and Expenses](#).

Consultation Question

Taking into account the above information, how many Councillors do you think Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should have going forwards?

For technical reasons the number must be divisible by 3 and should not be substantially lower or higher than the current number (48), therefore a range has been provided for consultation.

- 33
- 36
- 39
- 42
- 48

Please state your reasoning for your choice.