

LAMBERHURST PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN: Graham White

25, Hopgarden Close, Brewers Street, Lamberhurst Kent TN3 8DY

Tel: 01892 890713

Email: parishchairlamberhurst@gmail.com

CLERK: Mrs Tracie Dodd

The Tyled House, School Hill, Lamberhurst, Kent TN3 8DQ

Tel: 01892 891440

Email: clerk@lamberhurstvillage.org

Reply correspondence should be sent via the Clerk

Lamberhurst Parish Council has very serious concerns regarding the proposals insofar as they dilute the representation that our Parish will have at Borough Council level, take no account of community boundaries, do not recognise the diversity of issues arising in rural areas and will lead to less effective government and understanding of rural issues in what will become a largely a more "urban-district" focused Borough Council.

In particular, the grouping together of Lamberhurst with parts of Goudhurst, Horsmonden and Brenchley and Matfield parishes creates a large unwieldy ward with no real community links that will make it difficult for Borough Councillors to provide effective liaison between the Parish Councils and the Borough Council. Notwithstanding this the travel commitments and broader range of issues to be dealt with may make it difficult to attract capable local candidates with the necessary knowledge of community issues and opportunities to stand as Borough Councillors, this in turn will lead to less effective government.

Lamberhurst Parish Council has a Neighbourhood Development Plan that was "made" or adopted by TWBC last Autumn, it outlines a vibrant plan for the Parish over the next 15 years close working with TWBC, facilitated by Borough Councillors will be essential in its successful implementation in the years ahead. Goudhurst is at a similar stage as us and Horsmonden and Brenchley and Matfield are at the advance stages of their Neighbourhood Development Plans. These plans differ insofar that they are community specific and have been compiled through extensive local research and consultation led by hard working voluntary residents of their respective Parishes.

The workload created as we enter the implementation phases of our Neighbourhood Plan means that we will be looking for greater support from our Borough Councillors as I am sure will be the case with the other parishes that your proposal groups us with. This is an argument for more Borough Councillor support rather than less if effective government is to be maintained rather than diminished.

It is understood that the proposed changes are driven by a stipulation from TWBC that elections are "by thirds" that means that wards have to be configured by multiples of three councillor wards which clearly has led to some peculiar ward configurations with our neighbouring Parish of Goudhurst split in two. This "desk

driven" exercise has resulted in a proposal that is at best sub-optimal and given that the consensus amongst local people is that the two current wards in the proposed Rural Tunbridge Wells ward plus Kilndown largely works, could this status quo not be maintained with two 2 Borough Councillor wards? Failing that two 3 Borough Councillor wards so that the integrity of the "by thirds" methodology is maintained should be considered.

Finally the term "Rural Tunbridge Wells" is widely disliked as the communities proposed to be contained within it have strong individual sense of belonging to their diverse and separate parishes and any naming of future wards must reflect the identities of the parishes they represent.

In summary, we believe the proposals as presented needs a serious rethink as they take no account of community considerations, will lead to less effective government with TWBC becoming more focused on urban matters with less attention to the more diverse rural issues in the Borough.