



HAWKHURST PARISH COUNCIL

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TWBC Consultations

Good afternoon,

Hawkhurst Parish Council (HPC) is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on TWBC's Electoral System. HPC supports a change to all-out elections every four years.

The current LGBCE Review has brought to the fore the benefits of adopting all-out elections as this would allow the Boundary Commission greater flexibility when determining the warding pattern for the borough. Without the constraints of three-member wards, there is far more scope to design a pattern of wards which enables effective representation across the whole of the borough. Whilst this is particularly relevant for the rural wards in the eastern area of the borough where the proposed wards are geographically very big, other areas would also benefit as it would limit the necessity to split communities.

An advantage of all-out elections is that it gives scope for different arrangements in different parts of the borough. Where appropriate, single-member wards would strengthen the links between borough councillors and their communities, as well as increasing accountability. Elsewhere, communities will be better served by two or three-member wards.

However, in HPC's opinion the advantages of moving to all-out elections go well beyond the current issue of warding arrangements. The existing position of election by thirds can be complicated, and it is not necessarily clear to residents why only some councillors are up for election. Annual elections reduce the significance of the elections and can lead to voter fatigue. A move to elections every four years, will significantly reduce costs for the borough council. This is more important than ever in the current economic situation and must be one of the few areas where TWBC can reduce expenditure without it having a negative impact on its ability to deliver services.

A decision to move to all-out elections would allow longer-term planning and provide more opportunity for the Borough Council to implement policies and see these through to fruition. The present system, with elections three years out of four, means that Borough Councillors potentially only have nine months in which to focus on delivery, with the other three given over to campaigning. Surely, our Borough Councillors would be far more effective if they were able to focus on their role for 45 months before focusing on an election.

Consequently, Hawkhurst Parish Council strongly favours a move to all-out elections.

Yours sincerely,

Clare Escombe
Chairman, Hawkhurst Parish Council