



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Attn: Jane Clarke

Dear Jane

Further to the consultation response submitted by the Town Council via the consultation portal regarding changes to the electoral cycle the Town Council would like to submit the following additional comments to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Paddock Wood Town Council supports the holding of all out elections for the following reasons:

- Research from the electoral commission suggests that all out elections are fairer to the electorate and that this electoral system is clearer and easier to understand.
- It reduces the cost of elections, regularly highlighted as a priority during Budget consultations. There is a significant annual cost when voters are required to vote every year. The TWBC website states that over a period of 4 years all out elections would save approximately £200,000 and it would also reduce the amount of officer time being spent on elections.
- Holding elections in three out of four years makes it very difficult for the borough to achieve any stability or carry out long-term planning and implementation.
- Residents are already confused about the different tiers of Government and all out elections will allow for greater public awareness of who their representatives are as they will be with them for four years.
- All out elections rather than elections by thirds will hopefully lead to more flexibility in warding arrangements. The suggestion that part of Paddock Wood should be bracketed with Capel and Pembury to form a new electoral ward is totally unacceptable as the proposed boundary changes would sever part of Paddock Wood from the rest of the town.



- Both Pembury and Capel are rural areas and have very different issues to those experienced by residents of Paddock Wood. Potential candidates may be put off by having to represent a ward with such differing needs. Someone who is passionate about Pembury may not be keen to stand for election if they also have to represent part of Paddock Wood, an area in which they may have no interest or understanding of the local issues. One of the stated objectives of the Boundary review is to achieve equity and democracy through respect of communities – the splitting of towns and parishes or merging of disparate communities removes “communities” as a criterion. Members need to be able to focus on single communities' issues rather than being stretched across communities which may have conflicting interests.
- Electioneering within Paddock Wood is less time consuming than electioneering in a ward consisting of Paddock Wood, Capel and Pembury.
- All out elections may well mean that some Borough Councillors will be able to concentrate on their own area rather than having to attend three different parish council meetings. They may also face a conflict of interest between the needs of a village and a town. It is quite understandable that rural areas feel they will be forgotten if attached to urban areas due to disparity in size.

Regards
Mrs Claire Reilly
Deputy Clerk to the Council