

Residents' Association Group of Councillors  
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Castlefield Road  
Reigate RH2 0SH

18 December 2017

Mr David Owen  
Review Manager  
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
Layden House  
76-86 Turnmill Street  
London EC1M 5LG

Sent by email only to [david.owen@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:david.owen@lgbce.org.uk)

Dear Mr Owen

**REIGATE & BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW**

I attach the Residents' Association Group of Councillors submission to the Boundary Commission for the review of the number of Councillors on Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.

This submission is being made by email.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Nicholas Harrison  
Residents' Association Group

## **REIGATE & BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL - BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW**

### **COUNCIL SIZE - SUBMISSION OF THE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION GROUP**

#### **Introduction**

This document expresses the views of the 7 members of the Residents' Association Group of Councillors, who are elected as either representatives of the Nork Residents' Association and the Tattenhams Residents' Association (both registered political parties), or as independent councillors in the Borough. The Group is the main opposition party to the Conservative-led Administration.

The Council will be making its own submission to the Boundary Commission, which was approved at the Council meeting last Thursday, 14 December 2017. The Council's submission was supported by 31 members of council, but opposed by 10 members from 3 different political groups with 3 abstentions.

We support the continued election of councillors by thirds, with the necessary adjustment to make all wards represented by 3 members.

We oppose the reduction of the number of councillors to 45 and recommend that the Council remains with the current 51 members.

#### **Committee Structure**

The way the Council operates has changed since the last boundary review in 1998, significantly in the move away from the "committee-based" system. There is now a leader and executive model of governance, but scrutiny of that executive is an important counter balance.

There have been other changes. There is no longer a Council-owned housing stock, but the Council retains important housing responsibilities. The licensing function was moved to the Council from the magistracy. New since 1998 is the Surrey County Council Local Committee for Reigate & Banstead. The Borough Council appoints 10 councillors to sit on this committee, equal to the number of county councillors who also serve on it. This committee has executive authority in relation to the local highways and youth budgets, as well as a scrutiny role for the Surrey County Council services delivered in the borough. The Borough Council also has a greater role in health and in family support and early help which are new since 1998, providing local services with delegated funding from the County Council.

The Borough Council in its submission (section 5 on page 41) argues for 15 councillors, to provide "committee decision making capacity" and notes this is for the Planning Committee in particular. It is our submission that Planning, Overview & Scrutiny and the Surrey County Council Local Committees are substantial roles and demand more than the 15 councillors to be assigned. (This sets aside the Licensing and Regulatory, Standards and Employment Committees.) Retention of 51 councillors in 17 wards would argue for a Planning Committee of 17 (down from the current 19), based on the concept of retaining a committee size equivalent to the number of wards.

#### **Community Leadership**

The Council in its submission argues that 15 councillors are required to provide community leadership capacity. It is our view that retention of 51 councillors is needed to provide adequate capacity to support this important work.

The Council argues that the workload of councillors is reducing because of the use of IT and residents self-serving themselves through the Council's website. This may be true for simple missed waste bin collections. It is however, our experience that residents are now more demanding of their councillors, and quick to send an email requiring a rapid response, or make a phone call to their councillor. Residents seek help on what can be quite complicated issues, more than simple service requests.

One of the key measures for assessing community leadership capacity is the number of people served by each councillor, as this is a useful measure of workloads. The population of the borough has increased substantially since the last review, from 118,000 in 1998 to 143,000 in 2014 – a 21% increase. The Government predicts the population to be 161,000 in 2024 and 169,000 in 2029, which should be the minimum period we should expect the current boundary review to serve. This is a 43% increase in population from 1998 to 2029.

If on top of this, the number of councillors is reduced from 51 to 45 as the Council supports, this reduction of 12% in the number of councillors would give an overall change in the average workload of each councillor approaching 60%.

Comparison of electors per councillor for other boroughs and districts in Surrey is instructive (based on 2017 data):

Elmbridge	2,057	
Epsom & Ewell	1,519	
Guildford	2,085	
Mole Valley	1,642	
Reigate & Banstead	2,066	
Runnymede	1,427	(recent review has retained council size at 42)
Spelthorne	1,946	
Surrey Heath	1,650	(recent review has reduced council from 39 to 35 – 2,011 electors per councillor predicted in 2022)
Tandridge	1,527	
Waverley	1,603	
Woking	2,449	(after recent review)

If the number of councillors in Reigate & Banstead were reduced from 51 to 45 that would give 2,342 electors per councillor, higher than all Surrey boroughs and districts other than Woking. Woking is a very different and smaller geography, centred on a single large town. Reigate & Banstead is a much larger and longer borough stretching from London down to Sussex, with the four separate towns of Banstead, Horley, Redhill and Reigate plus a number of separate villages. Retention of 51 councillors is important to serve these distinct communities.

A Council of 51 members will keep the current workload manageable, and make it easier for the Council to attract new and younger people to become councillors - often at the stage of life when they have demanding work and family commitments to fit in with the life of a councillor.

## **Conclusion**

The Residents' Association Group acknowledges that there is a continuing need for councils to become more effective and efficient, so would not support any suggestions to increase the number of councillors beyond the current 51, but do not support any reduction. It is our view that our residents and their community interests will be better served by retention of a council of 51 members.