

## **Pendle Labour Party Submission – Electoral Review of Pendle Borough Council**

### **Summary**

The current administration of Pendle Borough Council (herein referred to as “the Council”) has made the decision to review the number of Councillors on the Council with a view to reducing from the current 49 Councillors representing the residents of Pendle.

Taking into consideration the current make-up of the Council, the way it operates using the “area committee” system and considering the Boundary Commission’s own advice that Councillors should ideally be at a ratio to electors of between 1:1500 and 1:1700 residents, our proposal would be to reduce the number of Councillors to **42**.

### **Rationale**

Based on current figures, Pendle currently has 66,626 people registered to vote on the electoral register. This figure is expected to rise over the next 10 years – indeed, the current Local Plan allows for an additional 5,662 additional households. Pendle is an attractive place to live and work, and with the potential improvements to rail and road connections in the coming years it is very likely these additional homes will come to fruition.

Whilst it is agreed that the role of Councillor is ever changing, with responsibilities evolving at a rapid pace this does not mean that their work has diminished. Whilst services are being handed over to town and parish Councils other responsibilities remain at Borough level as well as services being passed from County level too. Casework is also a big part of a Councillor’s duties and that is increasing year on year.

Council funding has also changed dramatically over the past few years, with local government budgets cut drastically and staffing levels at Councils being cut as a result. This has not, however, changed the workload Councils are dealing with, quite the opposite, and many Council departments are dealing with the added pressures as best they can. It is also worth noting that the Labour Party has recognised the funding problem and have committed to reinstating local government funding and services under a Labour government.

The area committee system has become an integral part of how the Council functions and ensures that local democracy is put at the heart of everything Councillors do. There

is a real danger to this system should the number of Councillors be reduced too far and it is our contention that the area committees should be preserved in as close to the current set-up as possible. Indeed, the numbers on some of the area committees at this time are low to begin with – 15 Councillors on Nelson Area Committee; 13 on Colne; 9 on West Craven; 6 on Barrowford and Western Parishes and 6 on Brierfield and Reedley – and any further reduction could see one or more area committee becoming unviable.

Councillors also have a number of internal and external responsibilities, with representation on external bodies including Pendle Leisure Trust, Burnley and Pendle Citizens Advice, Lancashire Police and Crime Commission, Nelson and Colne College Board amongst many others. Reducing the number of Councillors further than our proposal risks remaining Councillors having to take on more duties than they are able to do.

We also note the Council's submission and the current administration's desire to save money by reducing the number of Councillors. It should be, however, that the standard allowance for Pendle Borough Councillors is £3000, one of the lowest in the country. We would contend that any reduction in the number of Councillors will have the effect of increasing the remaining Councillors workload, and therefore any saving should be used to review this allowance going forward.

We note the Boundary Commission's instructions that any proposals must be in groups of three to ensure all wards and three member wards going forward. This will ensure that all residents have similar and adequate representation and we support this instruction fully. Our proposal of 42 Councillors would mean 14 wards across Pendle which we believe would be the right level and would mean a ratio of 1:1586.