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From: Jonathan Lord [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 November 2013 23:57
To: Buck, Richard; Reviews@
Subject: Consultation Response from Jonathan Lord MP - Woking Borough Council - Council Size

Dear Mr. Buck,

Re. ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WOKING - COUNCIL SIZE

I have served as the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Woking since May 2010. I have previously served in elective office in local government as a Surrey County Councillor from 2009 to 2011 and as a Councillor on Westminster City Council from 1994 to 2002 (Deputy Leader 1998 to 2000).

I was impressed with the arguments and evidence put forward in the detailed Woking Borough Council (WBC) submission to the Boundary Commission, concluding that a reduction in the number of elected councillors from 36 to 30 is the appropriate way forward for the Council. I therefore write in support of the WBC proposals on Council size.

I found the following arguments and evidence of the WBC submission particularly persuasive:

1. That the current and proposed Councillor workload is manageable.
2. That residents are able to communicate directly with the Council, and vice versa, in a number of formats, including email and online - thus reducing the need for residents to approach Councillors directly either for information or with regard to their individual 'cases'.
3. That the size of some Council Committees, Work Groups and Task Groups can be reduced with a view to achieving streamlined but effective governance and scrutiny, whilst maintaining roles for all Councillors.

4. That, at this point in Woking's development as a borough and taking everything into consideration, including Woking's adoption of the 'Strong Leader with Cabinet' model of civic leadership and governance, 30 Councillors is an optimal number to represent the interests of all the borough's communities, to provide both decision-making for, and scrutiny of, the Council, and to provide individual residents with advice and help from ward Councillors when appropriate.

As a former Councillor myself, and as someone who works closely with many current Woking Councillors, I believe that an electors-to-Member ratio of c. 2,500 will strike the right balance in terms of workload and representative function, and that an estimated future electors-to-Member ratio of 2,633 by 2023 can also be accommodated.

The Council also notes in its submission that there have been reductions in Council officer and workforce head count in recent times and that, in the light of this and the undoubted need for continuing effective stewardship of public money going forward, a small but significant reduction in Councillor numbers and associated costs will be seen as appropriate and welcome by both Council staff and residents alike. I concur with this view and I believe that it is, indeed, a view that will be shared strongly by local residents when it becomes more widely known and appreciated.

For all the above reasons, I congratulate the Council on its submission and I am happy to lend it my strong support in this consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Lord

Jonathan Lord MP
Member of Parliament for Woking
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