To: Local Government Boundary Commission

Fm: Cllr Alan Leaman, on behalf of the Sevenoaks District Council Liberal Democrat Group

2nd September 2024

ELECTORAL REVIEW – COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to this review.

We are aware of the Council's own submission; a leading Liberal Democrat Councillor participated in the working group that generated its recommendations.

Throughout this process, we have argued in favour of a significant cut in the size of the Council. We recommend that it be reduced to no more than 45 councillors and possibly further. We do so on grounds of cost, governance reform and accountability.

In our view, the Council's current governance structures fall short in significant ways. Decision-making in concentrated in only a few hands; debate and scrutiny is often superficial; accountability is frequently ad hoc.

A reduction in the number of Councillors to 45 or fewer would enable:

- more Councillors to be fully and meaningfully engaged in the work of the Council and its governance;
- improve the quality and value of Councillor engagement;
- bring the number of electors per Councillor more into line with our neighbours;
- reduce some costs in Councillor allowances and the work of Democratic Services;
- spark a review of Council governance, accountability and structures of scrutiny that could improve transparency and decision-making, and make the Council more streamlined and agile, able to move more quickly and efficiently;
- encourage members of the public to put themselves forward to become a Councillor because they can see that each member has an influential voice within their local community and contributes effectively to the strategic debate and decision-making about the future of the District.

A Council of this size would also remain easily able to represent the range of political opinion within the District, and the diversity and geographical spread of its population.

We would be happy to discuss these points in more detail if that would be helpful.

Thank you again for this opportunity.