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Submission on National Review of Local Electoral Areas 2018

Councillor Gerry Warnock on Behalf of The Elected Members of Longford Municipal District

A Chairde,

We welcome the opportunity to make this submission as part of a review of Local Electoral Areas in prospect of the Local Elections to be held in 2019.

We acknowledge that this work is perhaps necessary following the results of Census 2016 and towards addressing some of the challenges presented under The Local Government (Reform) Act 2014, most notably those pertaining to efficient and balanced local representation.

While we welcome a more urban focused objective, we are sceptical of just how this will be achieved in practice given that there appears to be no scope to increase representation in large urban areas or indeed to devolve additional powers to Municipal District level.

This exercise may be an attempt to solve the "Town Council Question", but without increased membership in urban centres and devolution of powers to Sub-County level we are of the view that there will be little or no impact towards narrowing the gap between what we had under the Town Council Structure and what we contend with under the Municipal District operating rules.

Notwithstanding, please consider the following observations:

Position following Local Area Boundary Committee Report 2013

Following the recommendations contained within the Local Area Boundary Committee Report 2013 (*Appendix 1*), County Longford was assigned three Local Electoral Areas mirroring the three Municipal Districts – Longford, Granard and Ballymahon - with each having six members (minimum allocation under the terms of LGRA14).

The Municipal Districts were configured more or less as a three way split of the then population of 39,000 (Census 2011).

Longford Municipal District with a population of 13,177 (Census 2011) was comprised of the Electoral Divisions of Longford Urban 1; Longford Urban 2; Longford Rural; Caldragh; Cloondara; Newtownforbes.

Changes following Census 2016

The findings of Census 2016 saw the population of County Longford rise from 39,000 to 40,873, a growth of 4.8% (*Appendix 2*)

The population of Longford Municipal District increase by 6.9% from 13,177 to 14,081.

Longford Town, which is an agglomeration of Electoral Divisions Longford Urban 1, Longford Urban 2 and part of Longford Rural, saw an increase of 407 people to bring the population to 10,008.

On the basis of the Census Results, The Members of Longford Municipal District now service 34.45% of the County Population with 71% of the Municipal District Population residing in Longford Town.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (*Appendix 3*) provided are clear in both intent and in the operating rules under which the Committee will make their recommendations.

They provide for the following:

- That you have regard to the population as ascertained at Census 2016 but should assume no change in the total membership of the local authority
- Strive to achieve variance of +/- 10% in terms of representation across electoral areas
- No change in configuration of Municipal Districts except in limited circumstances
- Municipal Districts may be divided into two or more electoral areas as appropriate
- The formation of urban focused electoral areas in respect of towns with a population of 15,000 and above with similar consideration given to county towns outside the scope

Observations pertaining to Longford Municipal District

It is the later provision that could potentially have a bearing on Longford Municipal District as it contains the county town.

Potentially consideration could be given to two electoral areas within Longford Municipal District, one servicing Longford Town (agglomeration as defined in Census 2016) and the other the remainder to the Municipal District outside of the Town (as defined).

Working on the assumption that there will be no change in the membership of the Municipal District as defined under LGRA14 as a minimum of 6 members, a split into two electoral areas could only see and allocation of three members to each as per your own minimum as defined within the Terms of reference.

Potentially such consideration could see three members representing a Longford Town electoral area with a population of 10,008 (Ratio 1:3336) and three members representing the rest of the Municipal District with a population of 4073 (Ratio 1:1358).

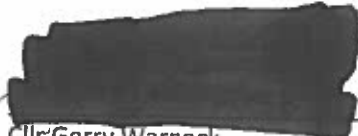
However, such a scenario would be completely contrary to Article 2 of the Terms of Reference which given the low population of the Municipal District, would see a representational variance far in excess of the 10% and would not achieve proportionate representation across electoral areas.

Recommendation

Having due consideration to all of the above we recommend that Longford Municipal District remain a single electoral area.

While we acknowledge the intent to provide more focused urban representation, the low population dynamic together with no possibility of increasing membership outside of the scope of what is already provided for under LGRA14, we would argue that it is practically impossible to achieve proportionate representation if there was more than one electoral area, as defined.

Yours Sincerely,


Cllr Gerry Warnock

On Behalf of The Members of Longford Municipal District


Dated: 14th February 2018

Appendix 1

Extract from Local
Electoral Area
Boundary Committee
Report 2013
Pertaining to County
Longford

County Longford

Overview of present position

The position at present is as follows:

Local Electoral Areas	Number of members	Town Council in Local Electoral Area
Ballymahon	6	
Drumlish	4	
Granard	4	Granard T.C
Longford	7	Longford T.C
Total	21	

Number of members and population variance

Based on the formula at paragraph 9 of the terms of reference of the Committee the new number of elected members to be assigned to Longford County Council is set out in the table below.

2011 Population	39,000
1 member for every 4,830 of the population $39,000 / 4,830 = 8.07$	8
Additional members: 1 per town council, subject to a maximum of 4 (except in merging councils)	2
New number of councillors (subject to a minimum of 18 and maximum of 40)	18

Having regard to the requirement that the number of councillors representing a local electoral area should be not more than 10 or less than 6, the 18 members have to be divided amongst either 2 or 3 local electoral areas.

Based on the new number of councillors, the population per member in Longford is 2,167. The terms of reference provide that "within any city or county the variance in representation of each local electoral area from the average for the city or county should, as far as practicable, be within a range of +/- 10%". For Longford, this represents a range of 1,950 to 2,383.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommending a configuration of three local electoral areas to be named Longford, Granard and Ballymahon, with each having 6 members. The location of the town councils in Longford and Granard and the distribution of population throughout the county informed the Committee's approach in this regard.

The recommended local electoral area for Longford town would include the electoral division of Newtown Forbes as part of its hinterland to the north.

The recommended Granard local electoral area would include the electoral divisions of Cloonee and Corboy which are to the east of Longford Town. Most of the electoral divisions that comprise the current Drumlish local electoral area would be incorporated into the new Granard local electoral area.

The electoral divisions of Meathas Truim and Ballymuigh, encompassing the town of Edgeworthstown, would be included in the Ballymahon local electoral area.

A summary of recommendations is contained in the table below:

Local Electoral Areas	Number of members	Population 2011	Population per member	Percentage variance from county average +/- %
Ballymahon	6	13,284	2,214	+2.2
Granard	6	12,539	2,090	-3.5
Longford	6	13,177	2,196	+1.4
Total	18	39,000		

The following is a detailed description setting out the electoral divisions that comprise each recommended local electoral area:

Ballymahon

Agharra, Ardagh East, Ardagh West, Ballymahon, Ballymuigh, Cashel East, Cashel West, Doory, Forney, Foxhall, Kilcommock, Kilglass, Killashee, Ledwithstown, Meathas Truim, Moundavis, Moydow and Rathcline

Granard

Abbeylara, Aghaboy, Ballinalee, Ballinamuck East, Ballinamuck West, Breanrlisk, Bunlahy, Cloonee, Columbkille, Coolamber, Corboy, Creevy, Crosagstown, Currygrane, Dalystown, Drumgort, Drumlish, Drummeel, Firry, Gelshagh, Granard Rural, Granard Urban, Killoe, Knockanbaun, Lislea, Milltown, Moatfarrell, Moyne, Mullanalaghta, Newgrove and Sonnagh.

Longford

Caldragh, Cloondara, Longford No. 1 Urban, Longford No. 2 Urban, Longford Rural and Newtown Forbes.

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013

County Longford

Electoral Area	—————
Electoral Division	—————
Recommended LEA Name and Number of Members:	
Granard	- 6
Ballymahon	- 6
Longford	- 6
ED Names: KILGLASS	
Town Names: Granard ■	



Appendix 2

Data following the findings of Census 2016 pertaining to Longford Town (including defined boundary map) and County



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The population development of Longford.

Name	Status	City	2016	2011	2006	2001	1996	1991
Longford	County	Longford	32,316	31,168	31,044	31,351	30,000	40,371
Longford (City)	Municipality	Longford	22,827	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000

TOWNS
 The population development of the towns in Longford.

Name	Status	County	2016	2011	2006	2001	1996	1991
Aughasheilly	Census Town	Longford	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ballycotton	Census Town	Longford	-	-	-	-	-	-
Braybrooke	Census Town	Longford	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clonsilla	Census Town	Longford	2,775	2,724	2,727	423	835	931
Clonsilla	Town	Longford	1,201	1,173	1,019	933	1,023	816
Clonsilla	Census Town	Longford	218	223	223	241	488	501
Clonsilla	Census Town	Longford	1,855	948	448	1,112	1,317	1,154
Clonsilla	Census Town	Longford	6,823	6,834	7,257	8,813	9,501	10,209
Clonsilla	Census Town	Longford	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clonsilla	Census Town	Longford	-	-	-	-	-	-

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Appendix 3

Local Electoral Area
Boundary Committee

No. 1

Terms of Reference

Review of Local Electoral Areas 2018

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee No. 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To review and to make recommendations on the division of each county, other than Cork, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Galway and South Dublin, and each city and county, into local electoral areas and the number of members of each county council and each city and county council to be assigned to each such electoral area.
2. For the purpose of the review, the Committee should have regard to the population as ascertained at Census 2016, should assume no change in the total membership of each local authority specified in the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and should endeavour, as far as practicable and subject to the other requirements of these terms of reference, to achieve variance from individual average local authority representation within the range of plus or minus 10%.
3. The number of councillors assigned to a local electoral area shall be not less than 5 and not more than 7 provided that in particular compelling circumstances 3 or 4 seat local electoral areas may be recommended, where otherwise the geographic size of the area would be disproportionately large.
4. Except in the case of Metropolitan Districts (Limerick and Waterford), a distinct urban-focused local electoral area or areas, as appropriate, shall be designated in respect of each town the population of which within the county as ascertained at Census 2016, when rounded to the nearest 1,000, is equal to or greater than 15,000. The number of members of the county council to be assigned to each such local electoral area shall not be less than 5, as far as practicable. Each such electoral area shall be based, as far as practicable, on the areas of the "census town" as defined for the purposes of Census 2016.
5. A distinct local electoral area shall be designated in respect of each county town which does not come within the scope of article 4. Each such electoral area shall be based, as far as practicable, on the areas of the "census town" as defined for the purposes of Census 2016.
6. Other local electoral areas should be designed, as far as possible, around urban centres, taking due account of local and community identities and linkages as well as natural boundaries and the need to facilitate the effectiveness of the governance and representational roles of elected

- members, including, in particular, the need to avoid designating local electoral areas which are territorially very large or extend over very long distances.
7. In making recommendations in relation to local electoral areas the Committee should take account of the following proposals in relation to the configuration of Municipal Districts:
- (i) Each town which was formerly a borough or the population of which within the county as ascertained at Census 2016, when rounded to the nearest 1,000, is equal to or greater than 30,000 shall be designated as a distinct Municipal Borough District; the number of members of the county council to be assigned to each such Municipal District shall not be less than five, and such Municipal Districts shall consist of one or more local electoral areas as the committee considers appropriate.
 - (ii) Subject to any changes arising from sub-article (i), there should be no change in the configuration of Municipal Districts generally, save in such limited circumstances where the Committee considers it necessary to recommend such a change.
 - (iii) Municipal Districts may be divided into 2 or more local electoral areas as the Committee considers appropriate, except where the terms of reference (particularly sub-article (i)) require otherwise, or where the Committee considers that it would not be appropriate.
 - (iv) The number of Municipal District Members for each district shall not be less than 6 save in the case of a district to which sub-article (i) applies or where, in exceptional circumstances (for example, related to population), the Committee considers that it is necessary that a district should consist of a single local electoral area, in which case the number of members shall not be less than 5.
8. The Committee shall have regard to Government policy in relation to local government, including any further reports, statements or decisions in that regard during the course of the review, and to any further guidance or requirements issued by the Minister.