



15<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Secretary,  
Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees 2017,  
Room 1.67,  
Custom House,  
Dublin 1,  
D01 W6X0.

By post and by email - [boundarycommittee@housing.gov.ie](mailto:boundarycommittee@housing.gov.ie)

**Re: Local Area Boundary Committees 2017-18  
Committee No.2  
Submission from Kildare County Council**

Dear Secretary,

I refer to the statutory notice advising of the work of the Committee and wish to make the following submission:

**1. Kildare as a county:**

Kildare County Council is the local authority for the county. In terms of area Kildare is the 24th largest of the 32 counties of Ireland, but in terms of population it is the seventh largest.

In Leinster it ranks eighth largest of twelve counties in terms of size, but notably is second largest in terms of population

**2. Demographics of County Kildare:**

Over the last 25 years, the population of the county has expanded rapidly and census 2016 recorded the population as 222,504.

2016 Census data released by the Central Statistics Office details as follows for the population of 17 towns in the county.

**20,000+**

Newbridge	22,742
Naas	21,393
Celbridge	20,288

**15,000+**

Leixlip	15,504
Maynooth	14,585 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> included in this band, as when rounded to the nearest 1,000, is equal to or greater than 15,000, as per point 4 of terms of reference.

**5,000+**

Athy	9,677
Kildare	8,634
Clane	7,280
Kilcock	6,093
Sallins	5,849

**3,000+**

Monasterevan	4,246
Kilcullen	3,710
Kill	3,348
Enfield	3,239

**1,500+**

Rathangan	2,611
Prosperous	2,333
Derrinturn	1,602

16 of the 17 towns show an increase in population from census 2011.

**3. Operation of the Municipal Districts since 2014:**

Following the review of local government administration, leading to the abolition of town councils, and the establishment of Municipal Districts, Kildare County Council, in 2014, had an increase in membership of the local authority of 15 members (from 25 to 40).

The Local Area Boundary Committee 2013 determined that the appropriate distribution of membership of the local authority was as follows:

<u>Municipal District</u>	<u>Number of members</u>
Athy	6
Celbridge Leixlip	7
Kildare Newbridge	9
Naas	9
Maynooth	9

Resultant changes necessitated a review of operating structures in the local authority and a realignment of the engineering districts, so that now the Council operates on a basis of Municipal Districts (MDs) and engineering areas being coterminous. Achieving this required considerable time, effort and resources but has proven to be very successful.

We note that the terms of reference of the Committee include:

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.*

Notwithstanding this, we would respectfully suggest that the committee consider retaining the current arrangement in Kildare, for the following reasons:

- a. Unlike most other counties, Kildare does not have one large populated town or city.

It has a number of very large towns: - Celbridge (20,288), Leixlip (15,504), Maynooth (14,585), Newbridge (22,742), Naas (21,393)

and other high growth towns Athy (9,677), Kildare Town (8,634), Kilcock (6,093), Clane (7,280), Sallins (5,849).

The current municipal district structure takes account of this, by including towns within their natural boundary areas.

- b. The maximum distance across MDs is approximately 37 km, therefore issues that occur in more rural counties in relation to accessibility are not as challenging in Kildare. The issues referred to at point 6 of the terms of reference of the committee *"the need to avoid designating local electoral areas which are territorially very large or extend over very long distances"* do not apply.

Road, rail and motorway networks are generally good throughout the county. Of the 10 towns with a population greater than 5,000, 9 have ready access to a train station, with Clane being the exception.

- c. Local Government reform heralded significant change in local government structures – e.g. the disbanding of town councils, the establishment of MDs, and the increase in elected members from 25 to 40. This change continues to bed down.
- d. It is important that the focus of the local authority remains on serving the public rather than re-designing and re-communicating change. It is important that the focus on service delivery established in the new MD's is not lost through unnecessary change at this juncture. Following the radical changes with respect to abolition of Town Councils and establishment of MD's it is too early to make significant change of this type again.
- e. The Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 - 2021 highlighted that service levels in Kildare are exceptionally low across all matrices. In addition the local authority staffing ratios are very low. Kildare County Council staffing has not expanded to meet population increases, and therefore the demands on staff are very high. Stretching this to serve more structures is not

in the broader public interest. Serving 5 Municipal Districts and an increase of 60% in member numbers is a significant commitment on the organisation. Further increasing the number of MD's will place greater demands on limited resources.

- f. There is no obvious disquiet regarding the existing structure from the local community through the PPN or elected representatives themselves. Strong relationships exist between local communities and the Municipal Districts which take due account of local and community identities and linkages (as identified in point 6 of the terms of reference of the committee)
- g. Point 2 of the Terms of Reference states that local authorities "should endeavour, as far as practicable and subject to the other requirements of the terms of reference, to achieve variance from individual average local authority representation within the range of plus or minus 10%". Retaining the five MDs will achieve this as can be seen from the table attached (Appendix 1)

#### **4. Terms of reference of the Boundary Commission**

We note that the terms of reference state

*"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."*

To comply with this requirement, any local authority with 40 members will require at least 6 Municipal Districts.

Should the committee not accept our submission for the retention of the existing 5 Municipal Districts in the county, we would suggest, in the case of Kildare that the two Municipal Districts that currently meet the requirements i.e. Athy - 6 members and Celbridge-Leixlip - 7 members, be retained as Municipal Districts, and that the Municipal Districts that do not currently meet this requirement (Kildare-Newbridge, Naas & Maynooth each 9 members) be reconfigured, noting the other terms of reference of the Boundary Committee.

We would further request limited change i.e, a maximum of one additional Municipal District, and would ask that the committee give consideration to community patterns (e.g. where local people shop, go to school, access services) in any proposed option.

We are available for further clarification on any matter, at the convenience of the Committee.

Yours faithfully,

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Tadhg McDonnell  
Director of Services, Housing & Corporate Services

Appendix 1

**Kildare County Council  
Average Local Authority representation based on 2016 Census figures**

	No of members	Population 2016 census	Pop per member	Percentage variance from county average	Percentage variance from county average
				2018	2013
				%	%
Athy	6	32,180	5,363	- 3.58	-2.70
Celbridge/Leixlip	7	37,486	5,355	- 3.73	-0.50
Maynooth	9	50,842	5,649	1.56	-2.70
Kildare/Newbridge	9	52,718	5,858	5.30	5.50
Naas	9	49,278	5,475	- 1.57	-0.06
	<b>40</b>	<b>222,504</b>	<b>5,563</b>		