

Boundary Change Proposals 2018. – Submission

Cllr Jim Moore, Wexford Borough District and Wexford County Council.

Introduction.

As an elected public representative I live in the rural area in a fishing port 25km from the offices of the Borough District.

I was elected to Wexford County Council in **2009** where the number of elected Councillors was 21. There were 4 electoral districts in the constituency / county and I represented the Wexford district which had 7 elected for the district. Also there was a Borough District which had 11 elected representatives. The total electorate was 36,473 for the electoral district, including Borough, at that time. Broadly speaking, the Borough area made up 60% of the electorate against 40% in rural area.

Following the Local Authority changes in **2014** the new Council has 34 elected representatives with 10 members in the new Wexford Borough District ie with no Borough Council. The electorate was reduced to 33,028 in 2014 and this was achieved by reducing the rural section which broadly speaking meant the electorate was 65% in the existing town area as against 35% in the new rural area. It is worth noting also that the turnout was less than 50%.

The elected members geographically represented approximately 50 / 50 though some contest this but the reality is that some parishes for example stretch into what is deemed to be an urban area.

Practice Changes

Following the **2009** elections the following points are worth noting;

- All district meetings were never attended by the press.
- There was lack of commitment by the executive principally because there were no budgetary issues to be considered. No power in the rural district.
- A dual mandate existed whereby members who were also elected to Borough Council were entitled to attend the District meetings. They had limited interest as they operated their own budget! But they had power to influence main Council budget.
- At that time only 2 to 3 elected representatives represented the rural electorate.
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Following the **2014** elections the following points are worth noting;

- Common budget for entire district (incl. town) was put in place.
- Discovered budget for matters of LA housing, housing estate maintenance, festivals, civic events were available previously **ONLY** in the town. This has led to accusations that previous system was unfair but un-democratic.
- The grants for housing for elderly were suspiciously weighted in favour of town locations and multiple applications in repeat years.
- Event management and supports only available to town not even to small outlying towns.
- Rate payers in rural areas paid **highest** rate with least services. In fact 3 out of the 4 county towns paid a lower rate across the county than the rural rate payer.
- Standard of maintenance and support services centralised and monitored for performance which is welcome development.

Summary.

I propose you avoid altering the present arrangement in the Wexford district area as a 'split' district as it impacts negatively to the social, economic and general well being of residents in the area. These are some of the reasons I believe are at issue;

- The town is strongly associated with the rural areas as they work, socialise, seek education and look to the town for many reasons.
- The people of the district gravitate and identify with their town.
- Identifying boundaries close to the town is difficult with heritage and identity issues.
- A split budget / resources allocation will drive division and impact negatively on the district and town 5 year economic development plan.
- Can be seen as a form of gerrymandering creating urban / rural divide.
- Integration of urban and rural settlements is taking place in social, sporting and cultural sectors and this development will be seen as contrary to cohesive developments.
- Parity of esteem for all members of the district where it is transparent that equality exists and is practised.

If this process is intended to assist better representation of the interests of the citizen then a more structured support system for LA representatives should be considered rather than a divisive structure.

I therefore oppose the proposal of a split or divided district