

Cllr. Fintan  
**Phelan**

Your Councillor. Our Carlow.

**FIANNA Fáil**  
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Secretary  
Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees 2017,  
Room 1.67,  
Custom House,  
Dublin 1 W6X0

18<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Submission: Carlow County Council

A chara,

It was with deep regret in 2014 that Carlow lost its Town Council. This was a completely retrograde step for our Town. With the stroke of a pen, hundreds of thousands in funding to Carlow Town was wiped out. Despite the best efforts of elected representatives, council officials and our community it is very difficult to make up for the loss of funding that Carlow Town suffered due to the abolition of the Town Council. I am aware that the restoration of Town Councils is not in your committee's terms of reference however I think it is important to have this point noted.

Since 2014 County Carlow has been divided into two electoral areas. A ten seat Carlow Municipal District and an eight seat Muinebheag Municipal District. Given the terms of reference, that the number of councillors assigned to a local electoral area shall not be less than five and not more than seven, that you must work within changes are inevitable in Carlow. It is also noted in your terms of reference that you should assume no change to total membership of each local authority. Given these parameters I am recommending that Carlow Town and its hinterlands be comprised of one seven seat municipal district.

Under point 4 of your terms of reference it is noted that *'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'*

Given the committees focus on creating electoral areas around urban centres, Carlow Town, as the capital town in the County should have its own electoral area. This electoral area should include the hinterlands of Carlow as the clear majority of people in the hinterlands of Carlow identify with Carlow Town.

Clinics held regularly right across the constituency.  
Private consultations and house calls are also available.  
Just get in touch to make an appointment or raise any issue.

I believe Carlow Town should be kept in the one electoral area and should not be sub-divided for the following reasons.

1. A subdivision would cause major confusion amongst the public as to what electoral area they are in and who represents them, we must do all we can to encourage individuals to participate in the democratic process and I believe an arbitrary line drawn through the town would only lead to confusion and lead to people being disenfranchised.
2. As noted above the loss of Carlow Town Council has negatively impacted Carlow Town. Unfortunately, the reality now is that Carlow Town is pitted against the rest of the county when it comes to funding. A further dilution of Carlow Town into two electoral areas will only exacerbate this problem and result in the needs of Carlow Town being downgraded as the Town will not have a united electoral area pursuing the one aim.
3. Although no substitute for the loss of the Town Council, the Carlow Municipal District has elected a Mayor since 2014. I had the privilege of serving as Mayor from 2016-2017. As Mayor I was able to focus on key projects that benefited the Carlow Municipal District. A united Carlow Electoral Area should elect its own Mayor. This will boost the status of Carlow Town. Creating a seven seat Carlow Electoral Area lends itself to retaining the role of Mayor of Carlow, elected from the seven councillors in the Carlow Electoral Area.

I would recommend to the committee that the following DEDs are included in the Carlow Electoral Area.

Carlow Urban – Population - 4,560

Carlow Rural – Population - 14,546

Graigie Urban - Population – 1,405

Johnstown – Population - 586

Burton Hall – Population - 525

Ballinacarrig – Population - 1,025

These DEDs have a total population of 22,647. The individual average local authority representation is 3,162. A new seven seat Carlow Electoral Area with a population of 22,647 would have a population of 3,236 per councillor. This is a variance of 2.3%, which is well within the range of + or – 10%.

In conclusion I strongly feel that Carlow Town and its hinterlands have been negatively impacted since the loss of the Town Council. Carlow Town and its hinterlands should be contained within one seven seat electoral area and this electoral area should elect its own Mayor.

I would like to thank the committee for considering this proposal and the very best of luck with your work.

Yours faithfully,

  
Cllr. Fintan Phelan

Carlow Municipal District