

18.301

## **LOCAL ELECTORAL AREA BOUNDARY COMMITTEE – SUBMISSION**

**Submission by Deputy Mary Butler TD**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Following the implementation of the 2014 Local Government Reform Act, the former 2 Councils Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council were amalgamated into one new Corporate entity Waterford City & County Council.

While I had some reservations about the amalgamation into the new entity at the time, it is my firm belief that the new unified 32-member City & County Council is functioning well and providing important linkages between City and County to enable Waterford to take it's rightful position as the driver for the Region.

I would therefore request that the Committee would retain the status quo as much as possible within the Terms of Reference in order to give the present arrangement time to bed down and flourish.

### **MUNICIPAL DISTRICT - DUNGARVAN/LISMORE**

The Municipal District of Dungarvan/Lismore presently has 8 Councillors representing a large vibrant rural district anchored with strong County towns including Dungarvan, Ardmore, Cappoquin and the heritage town of Lismore.

With due regard to population changes and taking into account the maximum Councillor representation allowed within the Terms of Reference I request that change would be minimal and that insofar as possible that the status quo would be retained. If this is not possible within the Terms of Reference I would suggest that the most simple and straightforward solution be found i.e. transferring one Council seat to Comeragh District which would create 2 Municipal Districts of 7 each in Dungarvan/Lismore & Comeragh.

### **MUNICIPAL DISTRICT - COMERAGH**

The Municipal district of Comeragh is presently served by 6 Councillors, covering a large geographical area straddling both sides of the Comeragh Mountains. It is hampered somewhat by not having a major town with a population comparable to towns within the other 2 Municipal Districts. However Kilmacthomas has shown great growth from a tourism and enterprise point of view since the opening of the Waterford Greenway with some small SME's up and running. Also Portlaoise with a population of approx. 2000 residents is a significant town in the region.

The villages of Ballyduff, Kilmeaden, Clonea, Rathgormack, Leamybrien, Kilrossanty , Touraneena, Ballymacarbry and Stradbally all form this Comeragh District. While I would again advise minimal change, if there is to be an alteration, that alteration, in my view, should not reflect a reduction in Councillor numbers. This is endorsed and based on my own experience as a former Councillor in the District, and appreciation of the challenges faced on a daily basis covering such a large geographical area, as a local Public Representative.

The Municipal District of Comeragh has undergone several changes in the last number of years. It has now developed it's own identity and it is important for the area to remain in its present configuration. I would strongly advise against the break up of this district.

### **METROPOLITAN DISTRICT**

The Metropolitan District is presently made up of 18 Councillors, encompassing 3 Metropolitan Wards of 6 Councillors each.

It is my contention that the inclusion of the coastal areas of Tramore, Dunmore East and Passage East into the new Metropolitan District in 2014 has been hugely beneficial to the areas themselves and has also provided Waterford City with the crucial, critical mass of population, bringing it from approx. 50000 people to over approx. 70,000 people as a new Metropolitan entity.

If the Government are serious about having balanced regional development and a more even population spread throughout the State, I believe it is essential that Tramore, Dunmore East and Passage East must retain their connection with the old City area. Again I would strongly advise stability and insofar as possible the retention of the existing Metropolitan structure.

However I do have concerns with the makeup of Waterford City East as I do not believe Ferrybank sits naturally with Tramore, Dunmore and Passage and also parts of the city including Hillview and the road out to Mount Congreve Estate.

I believe the status of Waterford City as being the oldest city in Ireland, coupled with the historical Mayoralty of 1100 years standing should in no way be further diluted but should instead be strengthened to its previous standing before the 2014 changes were implemented.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is my opinion, in relation to Waterford City & County that time must be allowed for the changes brought about by the 2014 Local Government Reform Act to properly take root and any change would be of a minimal nature in line with Census 2016.

The census of 2021 will show how urban and rural areas have developed under the National Development Plan and Project Ireland 2040. I think after the 2021 census has concluded this would be a more opportune time to revisit the boundary proposal for Waterford.

With the development plan for the North Quays, including The Michael St Development, and others a clearer picture will emerge. Waterford is unique as being the oldest city in Ireland and Waterford has coped extremely well with all the changes made in 2014 and credit has to be given to the newly amalgamated Waterford City and County Council for the smooth transition.

At this stage it's development Waterford needs, certainty and stability above all else to allow it to grow propulsively within the present structures.