

Submission to Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee No. 1

From Members of Roscommon County Council

Dated 19th February 2018

An information meeting for the members of Roscommon County Council took place on Friday 16th February. The opportunity to make a submission to the Local Area Boundary Committee was welcomed by all.

Currently Roscommon is served since 2014 by the three Municipal Districts (Electoral Areas) of Boyle, Roscommon and Athlone with six councillors elected to each area.

The terms of reference with regard to Committee No 1, and their relevance to Roscommon County Council are as follows:

- Consideration of the impact of changes in population as result of 2016 Census figures
- Assumption of no change in total membership of Local Authority
- Achieving the variance from individual average representation within +/- 10%
- The number of councillors in Local Electoral Area not less than 5 or more than 7 but in compelling circumstances 3 or 4 seat areas may be considered where otherwise the geographic size of area would be disproportionately large.
- A distinct Local Electoral Area for each County Town. Other electoral areas should be designed around urban centres and avoid designating LEAs that are territorially very large or extend over long distances.

In consideration of this submission, the members of Roscommon County Council are unanimous in their opinion that the current system of three Municipal Districts (Electoral Areas) is not working for a county the size of Roscommon. All of the members felt that the geographical distances to be covered by the members from one side of the Municipal District to the other is not practical.

The following is the breakdown of the current areas of the Municipal Districts:

	No Members	Population 2011	Area (SQ. KM)
Athlone	6	19,486	654.01
Roscommon	6	22,867	947.27
Boyle	6	21,712	814.86
	18	64,065	2416.14

Twelve of the eighteen members of Roscommon County Council attended the information meeting and agreed to submit two recommendations to the committee for consideration.

Recommendation No 1 – Change in Number of Municipal Districts

Option No 1:

The Members are unanimous that the following proposal be considered as their first preference for County Roscommon, notwithstanding that the terms of reference outlines the assumption that there is no change in membership:

That the number of Municipal Districts (Electoral Areas) be increased to four with five councillors elected in each Electoral Area and therefore the number of councillors be increased to twenty.

The geographical areas of the three existing municipal districts are disproportionately large. The average distance within each district is 52km and with a dispersed rural population. The large territorial areas, long distances and dispersed rural populations in the municipal district is challenging for members in their representational role and in the preservation of community identities and the objective to focus on towns and villages.

Option No 2:

In the event that the Committee recommend no increase in membership of Roscommon County Council, the alternative preference of the members is that there is an increase in the number of Municipal Districts or Electoral Areas to four, with two served by five councillors each and two by four councillors. The members' proposal is based on the following considerations:

- The geographical areas of the three existing municipal districts are disproportionately large. The average distance within each district is 52km and with a dispersed rural population. The large territorial areas, long distances and dispersed rural populations in the municipal district is challenging for members in their representational role and in the preservation of community identities and the objective to focus on towns and villages.
- That the Municipal District of Roscommon, that which serves the County town of Roscommon, in its current format, is unable to serve the local community who identify with Roscommon town. This is particularly evident in the workings of the Roscommon Town Team and is contrary to No.6 Terms of Reference :
“Electoral areas should be designed 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 the elected members...”
- That a parish should not be split in insofar as it is served by two Different Municipal Districts. This is also contrary to No.6 above with regard to taking into account natural boundaries and this situation currently exists in more than one parish in County Roscommon.

The following is the proposed revised new structure based on the above:

Proposed New Municipal Districts (Local Electoral Areas)	No of Members	Population 2016	Population per Member	Percentage Variance from County Average	Area Per SQ KM
Athlone	5	17,100	3,420	-4.6%	515
Boyle	4	15,545	3,886	8.4%	698
Roscommon	5	16,600	3,320	-7.4%	536
Proposed New Area	4	15,300	3,825	6.7%	667
	18	64,545	3,586		2,416

Note: the above are indicative figures based on a revised new 4 No. Municipal District Structure

Existing Municipal Districts based on 2016 Population Census Changes:

Local Electoral Areas	No of Members	Population 2016	Population per Member	Percentage Variance from County Average	Increase in Pop from 2011	Area Per Sq KM
Athlone	6	19,979	3,330	-6.4%	493	654
Boyle	6	21,831	3,639	2.2%	119	947
Roscommon	6	22,734	3,789	6.5%	-133	815
	18	64,544	3,586		479	2,416

Recommendation No 2 – Name Change of Municipal District

It was unanimously agreed by all of the members present that the name of the Municipal District of Athlone be changed to Athlone West.

The information meeting was attended by the following members and agreed to forward this submission:

Cllr. Valerie Byrne

Cllr. Paddy Kilduff

Cllr. Liam Callaghan

Cllr. Orla Leyden

Cllr. Domnick Connolly

Cllr. Michael Mulligan

Cllr. Michael Creaton

Cllr. John Naughten

Cllr Laurence Fallon

Cllr. Kathleen Shanagher

Cllr. John Keogh

Cllr. Tony Ward