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Local Area Boundary Committee Cork County

Submission by Karen Doyle.

On behalf of the Cobh Community for Change group I would like to make the following submission to the Local Electoral Boundary Committee.

In accordance with legislation section 24 of the Local Government Act 1994, Mr John Paul Phelan TD Minister of State for Local Government and Electoral Reform can divide a county or borough into local electoral areas and to fix the numbers of such members to be elected for each electoral area.

With this in mind and given the proposal to expand the Cork City boundary I believe it is imperative that The Minister and this Committee be fully committed to ensuring that the boundary areas that will now form part of the new extension are not going to lack in any publicly elected representation for the communities of those areas.

Given that the numbers of elected representatives is not to change under the new LEA proposal I am finding it difficult to understand how this will be achieved when Cork City will have an extra 85,000 people included in the new area.

According to the new LEA proposal Cork City will see a very significant rise in population however it is proposed that both City and County will retain their seats (Cork City 31 and Cork County 55)

My concern is in order to have the required number of elected representatives for the size of the new LEA then other LEA will lose out such as my hometown of Cobh perhaps not for the Local elections of 2019 but in future.

Since Minister Phil Hogan abolished all 79 town councils in 2014 the Local Electoral area has consisted of the Great Island, Carrigtwohill, Knockraha, Glanmire, Sarsfield Court, Monard, Glenville and all the way out as far as Mallow.

According to the 2016 census Cobh has a population of 12,800 and I would argue that as we are an Island community with an increasing growth in population every effort must be made to allow Cobh and surrounding areas such as Midleton, Carrigtwohill and Glounthaune to have its own electoral ward.

Together these areas would have a sufficient population to be within the terms of reference as set down by the Minister.

The other issue I wish to raise goes beyond the terms of reference but nonetheless is of such importance I am compelled to include it in this submission.

Having a properly functioning Town Council is vital to democracy. It is an essential component in local democratic functionality and given the population of Cobh, its prominent role in the tourist industry nationally but also now as vital component of the local economy I would strongly urge for the case for reinstating local Town Councils that were lost after 2014, a terrible loss to our democratic and civil rights in my opinion.

The communities of Cobh and indeed the large towns spread across East Cork should have local councils and representation that can be answerable and accountable to those who elect them.

It is vital to ensure that as our towns and cities grow so too our democracy and it is not lessened as a result of what may look good on paper or on a map for future LEA boundary changes.

Real people live, work and function in our towns, villages and City. Their voice and input should be at the heart of all decision making.

Their democratic and civil rights should at all times be strengthened by local governance because without that the very foundations and functions of the state will flounder.

Kind Regards,

Karen Doyle,

Cobh Community for Change.