

Submission to Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Regarding Cork City.

I would first like to say that the decision to keep the Cork City Council at 31 Councillors is so completely wrong as to be laughable, the population of the city will be increased by 64%, to think that this does not warrant any increase in representation belies either the complete ignorance of the minister and this government, or their wilful malignance to urban Ireland.

Since the abolition of all Town Councils & merger of several city and county councils we have seen a drastic reduction in elected councillors in populace, considering that Ireland had already the weakest local democracy in the EU, but what is noticeable in particular is not just the Fine Gael attack on local democracy but their complete disregard for City populaces, with Kilkenny, Waterford and Limerick cities and now it seems Cork all suffering a large loss of representation since 2014. It is also of note that Cork under these terms will now join the Dublin councils (bar leafy dun laoghire rathdown) as the highest ratios per councillor in the country, over 2000 people more per councillor than the national average and double the ratio of places like Sligo. It is nothing short of an insult and is an abuse of power on a shockingly partisan level. This committee should take the exceptional step of demanding that the number of councillors for Cork City be increased. If this was to be done proportionally, it would mean 20 new councillors for the city. The report last year suggested 8 more councillors, and if we were to keep in line with the national average of representation ratio, a minimum of 6 new seats should be introduced. This is in the committee's remit and it should demand nothing less or it will be party to what is a clear and naked partisan power play, Gerrymandering 2.0 for the 21st century.

I would like to state my total opposition to the creation of the 3 or 4 seater exceptional rule. I think it is disgraceful that in the last local elections in 2014, Cork was the only place in the country to have a 4 seater district and it had 2 of them! There is no grounds for this, at all.

Cork had 6 electoral areas, 1 x7 seater, 1 x6 seater, 2 x5 seaters and 2 x4 Seaters, if we notice the last and second last seats won in the last election, it added greatly to the diversity of representation. Due to the questionable parameters given of 5-7 seaters, this will almost ensure without a vote cast that the 2 large parties will gain seats, due to smaller seat constituencies and thus higher practical vote thresholds but also due to more constituencies a higher number of candidates & resources needed, another effective form of threshold that will favour large parties over small parties and independents and thus limit the electorates right to diverse representation.

Under generally accepted academic thought PR-STV only approaches acceptable proportionality when a minimum of 6 seats is the district magnitude. This leads one to consider the minister's parameters to consider constituencies as low as 5 and under exceptional circumstances 3 or 4, but not 8 or 9, as academically ignorant at best or politically motivated gerrymandering at worst.

I would like to urge the committee to consider keeping 6 electoral areas if they increase the number of councillors (which I cannot emphasise enough should happen) or else reducing to 5 constituencies/local electoral areas to ensure we have districts of at least 6 seats each. I have seen the leaked proposal from the CEO of the City Council regarding merging all current 6 city wards into one and gifting the other 5 to the incoming areas. It is not worth the paper it is written on, enough said about the state of local democracy that there is an unelected, unaccountable CEO more powerful than all the councillors put together of any council, but to make such a suggestion says a lot about their regard for representation of the people of the city they manage.

On the Premise that the committee accepts the expert body's recommendation for an increase of 8 councillors over the minister's partisan politically motivated parameters

I suggest that the 6 divisions be 3x7 seats and 3 x6 seats.
3 Divisions on the south of the river.

Using the N 40 once it crosses lough mahon and douglas river (merging with n28) taking in Douglas, Rochestown, Grange, the airport the whole way to curraheen on the boundary should comprise one EA.

South of the river from the whole blackrock/mahon island in through ballyphehane and into glasheen up to the R641 road, should comprise the next EA.

South of the river west of the R641 road, taking in bishopstown and ballincollig should be the next EA.

North of the River using the r635 everything to the east of it, and then to the north, as it intersects with the N20 following to the boundary should be one district, with glanmire as the bulk of it and taking in ballvolane, silver springs and large rural hinterlands.

The other southern and western side of those roads should comprise a north city EA, that will take in the rest of the north inner city, including blackpool, Mayfield, farranree, gurrabraher, Sunday's well, and knocknaheeney. Everything outside the city compact, once you hit the hills the remainder should all sit within the blarney EA.

Cork City and its population will be badly served if there is not an increase in councillors. Will the Dept increase the pay of Cork City councillors to allow them take more time out of work to deal with the increased workload of almost double the electorate? No, Then the only reasonable and sane remedy is to at a minimum for this committee to recommend and the minister to accept the proposals made by the expert committee last year that the city council be increased by 8 councillors. My hope is that this committee, notwithstanding the minister's hamfisted naked ploy for party advantage, will rectify this injustice in the coming boundary revision.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mark Khan, May 2018.