

Mid-East Regional Authority

Údarás Réigiúnach an Mheánoirthir

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Secretary,
Electoral Area Boundary Committee,
Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government,
Room 2.03,
Custom House,
Dublin 1.

Re Submission to Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees

Dear Secretary,

I refer to the establishment of the two Electoral Area Boundary Committees and to the recent Call for Submissions.

The Members of the Mid-East Regional Authority at their meeting on 10 January last discussed the recent announcement of the establishment of two committees to review local electoral areas. The Members of the Authority voiced their concerns that, with an increasing population in the Greater Dublin Area, especially in the Mid-East Counties of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, that no provision was included for a possible increase in the total membership of each County Council to reflect this population increase.

The Members were circulated with the Terms of Reference of both Committees, and again considered the matter at their meeting on 14 February 2008.

At that meeting, the Members reiterated their concerns that the population increase will not result in any increased membership of County Councillors in this Region. The Mid-East Region has shown the largest population growth of the eight regions in the Country under the last census returns, and this means that the voters are now underrepresented in terms of Councillor numbers in the three counties.

Thus there is an inherent disparity in the situation in which counties can have a huge population increase while other counties do not experience an increase and yet the total number of Councillors representing each county will apparently remain the same. This is undemocratic and does not reflect the need to change the numbers of representational Councillors as the population change demands.

The Members agreed that it would also be undemocratic to reduce the number of Councillors in counties which have a falling population, as this puts a huge burden of work on those remaining Councillors in representing their Constituents.

It was agreed to request the Area Boundary Committee, in light of the above, to recommend that the number of councillors in higher population areas be increased to properly reflect this change and to restore a representational balance.

May I also add that the Terms of Reference of the Committees make no reference to ensuring that the boundaries of the local electoral areas reflect the agreed Regional Development Policies as set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, and the National Spatial Strategy. The current County Development Plans of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, and associated Local Area Plans and Town Plans reflect these Development Policies, and it would be important that any changes to Local Electoral Areas would not disrupt any existing Development Plan Boundaries.

Yours sincerely,

John Byrne,
Director.