

From: <paul.gogarty@oireachtas.ie>
To: <electoralareacommittees@environ.ie>
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Subject: Electoral Area Boundaries, South Dublin County

To the Dublin and Cities Electoral Area Boundary Committee

Re: South Dublin County

Introduction

On the basis of the 2006 Census figures, some re-alignment of the ward boundaries will be necessary to provide for adequate representation within the terms of reference of the committee (+/-10% variation from the average ratio of councillors to population across the county as a whole, 26:246,935, or 1:9497.5. Thus ratios between 1:8548 (-10%) and 1:10447 (+10%) are possible).

The revision of boundaries obviously is not simply a mathematical exercise, but also requires the drawing up of electoral areas with a degree of social and geographical coherence, as indicated by the attention directed in the terms of reference to urban or neighbourhood focal points and the desirability of preserving natural communities or the hinterlands of population centres.

With this in mind, I wish to submit the following observations:

Lucan Electoral Area

At present Lucan has four councillors, representing the area including Lucan, Quarryvale and Palmerstown. The Electoral Area has a population of 49845 (1:12461), indicating serious under-representation. This population in fact merits 5.2 council seats. There are several ways in which the imbalance can be addressed. On the surface, the obvious solution would seem to be to increase the number of seats in the ward from four to five.

However, I believe retaining the current level of four seats, with realignment of the ward boundary, would provide a more effective solution in terms of geographical and community coherence.

Lucan, especially Lucan South, has seen huge levels of growth in recent years, leading to particular and pressing issues in the immediate Lucan area. Quarryvale, however, belongs much more naturally in the north Clondalkin hinterland. Palmerstown has its own identity, and is geographically somewhat separate from Lucan. While Palmerstown has had a councillor elected up to this point, the increasing shift in population towards Lucan makes it increasingly uncertain that this will continue to be the case.

I would therefore recommend moving the electoral districts of Palmerstown Village and Palmerstown West to Clondalkin ward. This would leave a population of 38351 in the new, smaller Lucan ward, which yields an acceptable ratio for four councillors of 1:9588. Running the east-west boundary along the Fonthill Road would include some small areas of Lucan South parish, such as Foxdene, in the Lucan electoral area, and would remain within the acceptable ratio for four councillors.

Clondalkin Electoral Area

At present Clondalkin has five councillors, representing the greater Clondalkin area, including Ronanstown and Neilstown, and the more rural areas in the west of the county around Newcastle. The Electoral Area has a population of 43991 (1:8798), a slight over-representation, but within the permissible 10% variation.

As noted above in relation to Lucan electoral area, I would recommend moving the electoral districts of Palmerstown West and Palmerstown Village to Clondalkin. This will increase the population of the Clondalkin electoral area to 55485, and would merit a sixth seat in the ward, with a ratio of 1:9248.

The Quarryvale area of Palmerstown West is a natural part of the north Clondalkin hinterland, and to move it to Clondalkin ward will serve greater community cohesion.

Palmerstown Village adjoins the north Clondalkin area and has as much coherence in the Clondalkin ward as in the Lucan ward. In a six-seat ward, there would be a greater assurance that under proportional representation, one councillor would continue to be elected from Palmerstown.

Tallaght Central/Tallaght South Electoral Areas

At present both of these wards have five councillors each. Tallaght South has a population of 55767 (1:11153), and Tallaght Central has a population 36536 (1:7307). Thus, Tallaght South is under-represented, and Tallaght Central is over-represented. I believe the best option to address this is to move the electoral districts of Tallaght Kiltipper and Tallaght Killinarden from Tallaght South to Tallaght Central, which will maintain community cohesion and retain the balance of five seats in each ward with a revised population of 45206 in Tallaght South (1:9041) and a revised population of 47097 in Tallaght Central (1:9419).

Terenure-Rathfarnham Electoral Area

At present, Terenure-Rathfarnham has seven seats (the only ward of this size in the Dublin area). With a population of 60796 (1:8685), this is over-represented by less a little less than 10%. Population growth in other areas, however, would make it necessary to reduce the size of this ward by one seat to six, in order to maintain the current total of twenty-six seats on the council.

In summary, this would give the revised representation of Lucan: four seats; Clondalkin: six seats; Tallaght Central: five seats; Tallaght South: five seats, and Terenure-Rathfarnham: six seats.

With thanks for your due consideration of this submission,
Yours sincerely,

Paul Gogarty TD (Dublin Mid-West)