



Secretary,
Dublin and Cities Electoral Area Boundary Committee,
Room 2.03,
Custom House,
Dublin 1.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Swords Branch of Fine Gael strongly recommends that the Committee disregard the second part of paragraph 3 of your terms of reference, which expresses the desirability of aligning local electoral area boundaries with Dáil constituencies, and not split Swords between two local electoral areas along the proposed new boundary between Dublin North and Dublin West as recommended by the Constituency Commission.

The Main Street of Swords, Pavilions Shopping Centre and Airside Retail Park provide an urban focal point for the citizens of Swords. To separate residents of the Swords-Forrest electoral division from an urban focal point which is within walking distance contravenes paragraph 2 of your terms of reference to have an urban focal point.

Unlike many suburbs of Dublin which do not have a distinctive boundary to neighbouring suburbs, Swords is separated from Dublin City, its suburbs and neighbouring rural towns and villages by several physical features, including Dublin Airport, the M1, M2 and M50 motorways, and green space. To detach one third of Swords along the proposed new Dáil boundary and include it with other suburbs of Dublin in another local electoral area would ignore these physical features and contravene the first part of paragraph 3 of your terms of reference to preserve natural communities.

Fingal has the worst ratio of people to county councillors in the country, with one councillor per 10,000 people. There are seventeen councils which have more councillors than Fingal, despite a lower population. Wicklow has the same number of councillors as Fingal, despite having only half the population. Galway city and county councils combined have a similar population to Fingal, but have nearly twice as many councillors. Clearly Fingal, and Swords as a consequence, is democratically

disadvantaged because of its lower local representation compared with other counties and towns.

Swords, with a population of 34,000 that is planned to grow to 100,000 by 2020, is the largest town in Ireland without a town council. The next largest towns in Ireland without a town council are Celbridge and Malahide, which have half the population. Indeed Swords is planned to have a population which will equal or exceed the population of Limerick, Galway and Waterford cities. Clearly, Swords is democratically disadvantaged compared with towns of equal size like Bray, Drogheda and Dundalk which have twelve town councillors to assist county councillors in ensuring that their town gets the necessary services and facilities.

Splitting Swords between two local electoral areas along the proposed new Dáil boundary would increase Swords' democratic disadvantage because it won't have any county councillors who represent the entire town. It will be more difficult to agree a coherent and coordinated message for Swords, as councillors in one local electoral area may have differing and competing opinions with councillors in the other local electoral area on the future development of Swords. The already heavy workload of county councillors would be increased as they would be sharing their representative responsibilities with other communities in their local electoral area as well as with a portion of Swords. Lastly, Swords doesn't have any town councillors to assist county councillors in their work, or ensure that Swords' voice is heard.

In summary, it is vital for the future development of Swords, that the entire town be included within one local electoral area so that the citizens of Swords collectively can elect councillors that best serve the needs of their rapidly growing town.

Best Regards,

Swords Branch, Fine Gael.