REPORT OF ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
EILEEN BRADY B.L
ON THE
DISTRICT ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER’S
PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR
LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH DISTRICT

OCTOBER 2013
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1. Introduction

The new Northern Ireland Local Government Districts

1.1 Following a review of local government wards and districts in 2008/9 the Local Government (Boundaries) Order (NI) 2012 was made on 30 November 2012 establishing the boundaries and names of 11 new local government districts for Northern Ireland and their constituent wards. The new districts, as set out in the 2012 Order, are:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon
- Belfast
- Causeway Coast and Glens
- Derry and Strabane
- Fermanagh and Omagh
- Lisburn and Castlereagh
- Mid and East Antrim
- Mid Ulster
- Newry, Mourne and Down
- North Down and Ards

1.2 The Belfast local government district comprises 60 wards; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district and Newry, Mourne and Down district both contain 41 wards; and the remaining 8 districts have 40 wards each.

Review of District Electoral Areas

1.3 The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. Theresa Villiers MP, appointed Richard Mackenzie, CB, as District Electoral Areas Commissioner for Northern Ireland with effect from 21 January 2013. His task was to make recommendations for the grouping together of the wards in each of the eleven new local government districts into District Electoral Areas (“DEAs”) for the purpose of local government elections.
1.4 The legislative provisions concerning the appointment and function of the Commissioner, the procedures to be followed in reviewing DEAs and the rules in accordance with which recommendations are to be made are contained in the District Electoral Areas Commissioner (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 (“1984 Order”), as amended by the District Electoral Areas Commissioner (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Orders of 2007 and 2009 and the District Electoral Areas Commissioner (Northern Ireland) Order 2012.

1.5 Schedule 3 to the 1984 Order, as amended, prescribes four rules in accordance with which recommendations of the Commissioner are to be made. These are:-

1. No ward shall be included partly in one electoral area and partly in another.
2. Each electoral area shall consist of not less than five, and not more than seven, wards.
3. Each ward in an electoral area shall have at least one boundary in common with another ward in that area, except where the ward consists of an island.
4. A name shall be given to each electoral area.

Other factors

1.6 In publishing his Provisional Recommendations in May 2013, the Commissioner noted that the 1984 Order does not provide any guidance as to the factors which could or should be taken into account in formulating proposals for DEAs or whether the number of wards to be included in any electoral area should be 5, 6 or 7. In the absence of such guidance, and for the reasons set out at paragraphs 3.2 to 3.8 of the Provisional Recommendations Report, he considered it reasonable to establish a range of factors which would inform his approach to the grouping of wards as DEAs. The approach which he adopted was, where possible, to have regard to the following:
the use of physical features such as loughs, estuaries, rivers, hill ranges, and major roads as DEA boundaries;

- the creation of distinct urban and rural DEAs;
- the inclusion of complete settlements within a DEA;
- the creation of geographically compact DEAs;
- the creation of DEAs where the ratio of electorate to each councillor is not more than 10% from the overall ratio for the district as a whole.

1.7 The Commissioner also felt that it would be unreasonable to ignore the existing DEA framework altogether, since it has been in place for many years. However, he recognised that there has been a substantial change in the ward architecture of Northern Ireland as a result of the Local Government (Boundaries) Order (NI) 2012.

Naming of DEAs

1.8 The approach adopted by the Commissioner to the naming of his proposed DEAs is set out at paragraph 3.9 of the Provisional Recommendations Report. He has often used existing DEA names with which people are familiar. Where the difference between the old and new DEAs is significant, he has proposed a new name which has a resonance with the locality concerned, by reference to place names or geographical features.

Public consultation

1.9 The procedure to be followed in a review of District Electoral Areas (DEAs) is set out in Schedule 2 to the 1984 Order, as amended, and provides among other things for:

- an eight week public consultation period for the submission of written representations with respect to the Commissioner’s provisional recommendations for electoral areas in a district; and
• the holding of a public inquiry where representations are received objecting to the Commissioner’s provisional recommendations for a district. If a district council or not less than 100 electors make an objection, an inquiry must be held, otherwise inquiries may be held at the Commissioner’s discretion.

Provisional Recommendations

1.10 The Commissioner’s provisional recommendations for the grouping of wards into District Electoral Areas, together with his recommendations for their names, were published on 2 May 2013 for an eight week public consultation period ending on 27 June 2013. A total of 30 representations were received in relation to his proposals. The Commissioner’s provisional recommendations, including maps, and the representations received may be viewed on his website.

Public Inquiries

1.11 On the basis of the representations received, the Commissioner decided that nine public inquiries should be held to consider objections to his proposals. No representations were received in relation to the Causeway Coast and Glens district and the only objections to the proposals for Derry and Strabane district were to the proposed name of the Rosemount DEA. No public inquiries were deemed necessary in those districts. Details of the nine public inquiries were published in advance in a number of daily and provincial newspapers as well as on the Commissioner’s website.

Appointment of Assistant District Electoral Commissioners

1.12 The legislation provides that the Commissioner may ask the Secretary of State to appoint one or more Assistant Commissioners to inquire into, and report on, such matters as the Commissioner thinks fit. Accordingly, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. Theresa Villiers MP, appointed me as Assistant Commissioner on 2 July 2013.
1.13 I was directed by the Commissioner to preside over the public inquiry into objections to his provisional recommendations for the DEAs for the Lisburn and Castlereagh District. The inquiry was held in the Ramada Plaza Hotel, Belfast on 9 September 2013. 3 people made oral representations, all of whom had already submitted views in writing during the consultation period. A list of the written representations received is at Appendix A of this report and details of those who made oral submissions are at Appendix B. A transcript of the inquiry can be viewed on the Commissioner’s website.

Site visits

1.14 I have been to view those areas of greatest concern within Lisburn and Castlereagh district. This included Belmont Drive and Young Street, Lisburn and Granville Avenue, Hillsborough.

Content of the report

1.15 This report considers the written and oral representations received in relation to the proposed groupings of wards into DEAs for the Lisburn and Castlereagh district and on the recommended names for the DEAs. It details support for, objections to and counterproposals made in relation to the Commissioner’s provisional recommendations and presents my conclusions and recommendations.

1.16 I have considered all of the representations made (both written and oral) concerning the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I have taken them all into account in arriving at my conclusions and making my recommendations in this report. I have taken account of all of the rules set out in Schedule 3 of the 1984 Order and the full range of factors identified by the Commissioner. My recommendations are based on my judgement of the balance of these factors in light of the need to compose DEAs in accordance with the statutory requirements.
2. **DEA ward groupings**

2.1 The SDLP made both a written submission with an accompanying petition in addition to an oral presentation in district electoral areas of:

- Culcavy
- Killultagh
- Boardmills
- Lisburn North
- Lisburn South

Mr Conor Quinn, branch member of the party, made a detailed oral and visual presentation to the public inquiry. In addition, Mr Patrick Catney, SDLP Councillor for Killultagh appeared and made an oral submission.

2.2 In summary, the first matter highlighted was the Culcavy DEA and suggested deficiencies it contained such as;

- The inclusion of the Moira ward (which is tied to Lagan ward due to statutory limitations) in the Culcavy DEA. Points were raised that Moira in particular should remain within the Killultagh DEA, in keeping with the existing DEA framework and due to it being in a rural setting. The long established ties of Moira with Killultagh were raised.

- Secondly, the splitting of the settlement of Hillsborough at Granville Avenue into two separate electoral areas was highlighted as being incongruous. This was seen as a great deficiency. It was proposed that this split could be addressed if Hillsborough ward was transferred into the electoral area of Boardmills.

- Thirdly, that the inclusion of Blaris ward in the Culcavy electoral area is not appropriate as Blaris is a significant urban settlement and more properly belongs to a Lisburn DEA. Details were given as to the nature of and extent of the Blaris
ward. It was expressed that this urban ward was identifiable with Lisburn and that the use of the River Lagan as the most identifiable boundary feature was not the best available and that the M1 Motorway serves as a better boundary.

2.3 The issue of the provisional recommendations proposing that the Whitemountain ward be included in the Killultagh DEA as opposed to a Lisburn DEA was raised. Emphasis was placed on the area of Belmont Drive in Lisburn. It was suggested that this area of Lisburn is an urban district and identifies itself as such. Furthermore, if the Whitemountain ward was placed into the Lisburn North DEA this, although not addressing the issue of Belmont Drive being part of two distinct electoral areas, would serve to allow the Belmont Drive area to be associated and part of an urban Lisburn DEA.

2.4 As a result of the issues raised concerning DEA compositions and the suggested transfers, the proposed reconfiguration of the wards in Lisburn and Castlereagh District were as follows:

- The transfer of Moira and Lagan from Culcavy to Killultagh
- The transfer of Whitemountain from Killultagh to Lisburn North
- The transfer of Hillsborough and Maze from Culcavy to Boardmills
- The transfer of Blaris from Culcavy to Lisburn South
- The loss of the Culcavy DEA.

2.5 Although the Culcavy DEA would no longer exist, it was submitted that the redrawing of these DEAs would be in line with the original DEA framework, of which the Commissioner had indicated he would take account in his considerations where possible. Furthermore, it was suggested that these proposals resulted in a better councillor/electorate ratio and would lead to a better informed electorate and greater participation. It was also requested that the Commissioner should give weight to the impact the significant change to the original DEA framework had on misinforming citizens about the electoral area they live and work in.
2.6 The provisional recommendations for Castlereagh and Four Winds DEAs were considered reasonable for encompassing the centre settlement around Dundonald and the conurbation of Carryduff, Beechill and Four Winds.

2.7 A written submission was received from Mr Morriarty which in the main echoed the previous objection. It was emphasised that the original DEA framework could be adhered to, in order to allow Moira and Maghaberry to continue their close identity to and associations with Ballinderry and Glenavy. Furthermore, the wards of Maze and Hillsborough could retain their close associations with the Boardmills DEA. No additional information or evidence was provided to support these proposals.

Conclusion

2.8 The evidence submitted was not convincing enough to merit the transfer of Moira and subsequently Lagan, from the Culcavy DEA into the Killultagh DEA. Both Culcavy and Killultagh are mainly rural in character and, in the absence of verifiable evidence to support the general submissions on community identity and ties of Moira with Killultagh, I consider there should be no change to the provisional recommendations. The inclusion of these wards in the Culcavy DEA allows for a more compact electoral area compared to the suggested enlargement of the Killultagh DEA.

2.9 It was highlighted in the provisional proposals that the aim was, where possible, to include whole settlements in a DEA and to produce geographically compact electoral areas but that could not always be achieved. Looking at the situation in Hillsborough I do not consider the degree of split in the settlement at Granville Drive, to be sufficient enough to warrant the proposed transfer. The evidence presented at the inquiry was anecdotal in nature, accompanied by a general petition which was non specific and as a result difficult to establish the true level of support for this particular proposal.

2.10 In terms of the proposal submitted that Blaris should be transferred into Lisburn South DEA, I am not convinced that the River Lagan
does not represent a strong and identifiable boundary. The reference to the original DEA framework in this submission does not enhance the argument as there is no mention of the adjoining, approximate and similar ward of Hillhall, which, having the River Lagan used as a boundary feature, is similarly no longer placed in a Lisburn DEA. A generic submission was made in terms of local and community ties and the how the M1 Motorway was a better placed boundary. The submission of a non specific petition was of little value in establishing the true level of support for this proposal. I do not consider that Blaris should be placed in Lisburn DEA.

2.11 The proposal that Whitemountain ward should be placed in Lisburn North as opposed to Killultagh to ameliorate the impact of the bisection of the Belmont Drive area into two distinct electoral areas lacks force as the result will always involve this particular street being split between separate DEAs. The reference to the original framework, which is a consideration by the Commissioner in his provisional recommendations, is of little value due to changes arising from the increase in residential development in the outskirts of Lisburn since 1992. Furthermore, I do consider Boomers Way as an identifiable boundary, having been acknowledged by this proposer, that it is a ‘significant feeder road’. In general, I considered that the evidence presented to support the contention that this area has strong Lisburn links, which may have added some weight to the statutory and policy considerations during the exercise of the grouping of electoral wards into DEAs, was too generic and created a difficulty in establishing the true level of support for this contention.

2.13 Finally, it was raised that it was not inappropriate for the Commissioner to attach weight to the impact on citizens due to misinformation arising from a significant change from the original DEA framework. I am not in agreement with this assertion. The provisional recommendations had to consider statutory parameters and the Commissioners own guidelines were to be considered. It is highlighted in the provisional recommendations that the task of balancing all the considerations may limit the use of the original DEA framework, and I consider the additional element as proposed here would not assist the process in any constructive way.
Recommendation

2.14 I recommend no changes to the electoral areas as contained in the Commissioner’s provisional recommendations.
3. DEA Names

Lisburn DEA names

3.1 The public inquiry received submissions from the DUP and Lisburn City Council, which although agreeing with the provisional recommendations for Lisburn and Castlereagh Local Government District, did express concern at the proposal to rename the DEAs of Culcavy as Downshire West and Boardmills as Downshire East. Emphasis was placed on the long established links with Hillsborough to the Downshire name.

3.2 The SDLP in their proposal submitted that any enlarged Boardmills DEA should be renamed Downshire.

Conclusion

3.3 I consider that there is merit in the case to rename the DEAs of Culcavy and Boardmills to Downshire West and East respectively. The newly formed Culcavy and Boardmills are geographically compact and sit side by side, and this change would serve to provide a degree of commonality between the residents of Granville Drive who are placed in two separate DEAs.

Recommendation

3.4 I recommend the names should be changed to Downshire East and Downshire West.

Castlereagh DEA names

3.5 A written and oral representation was submitted by Castlereagh Borough Council. At the outset there was agreement with the provisional recommendations however, there was concern at the proposed name change of Four Winds DEA to Castlereagh South
and Castlereagh DEA to Castlereagh East. It was submitted that the
name Four Winds was too specific to the Cairnshill/Newton Park
area and recognised as a well known local establishment. It was
epressed that the name Castlereagh South was more suitable as it
has more local resonance and reflected the historic geographical
connection with Castlereagh. Furthermore, the name for
Castlereagh DEA should be amended in light of the above to
Castlereagh East, to maintain geographic links to the Castlereagh
Hills and the former Borough Council.

3.6 The DUP submitted a written proposal accepting the provisional
recommendations concerning the DEA boundaries for Lisburn and
Castlereagh Local Government District but did request
consideration to be given to changing the name of Four
Winds DEA to Castlereagh South and the Castlereagh DEA to be
renamed Castlereagh East or Castlereagh Hills. It was contended
there was no justification for naming the Four Winds as it
represents too small a part of the DEA, and it was believed the
common practice of using place names with geographical markers
should be adopted.

3.7 The Alliance Party made a written submission which included
broad agreement with the provisional recommendations but
requested Four Winds DEA be renamed Castlereagh South and
Castlereagh DEA be renamed Castlereagh East. No further
information was provided.

Conclusion

3.8 I have considered the issue of the renaming of Four Winds and
Castlereagh DEAs but I am inclined not to support such proposed
changes. The Commissioner’s provisional recommendations
outlined factors he took into account when naming the DEA’s.
These included using existing names, if appropriate, but, where
there was significant difference between the old and new DEA it
was felt a new name which had a resonance by reference to place
names or geographical features could be used. In this particular
case I consider that the creation of a distinctly new DEA in the
form of Four Winds DEA merits a new name and I consider the
name of Four Winds to have appropriate resonance.
Other matters

3.9 The Ulster Unionist Party made a submission that parts of Belfast City Council should contain parts of the current Castlereagh, Lisburn and Newtownabbey Councils areas. These are considered as not relevant to the scope of this particular public inquiry as the composition of the local government districts has already been established by the Local Government (Boundaries) Order (NI) 2012.
4. Summary of Recommendations

DEA ward Groupings

4.1 No changes

DEA names

4.2 That the DEA’s of Culcavy and Boardmills be changed to Downshire West and Downshire East respectively.

Acknowledgements

4.3 I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all those who submitted written representations and attended the Public Inquiry Hearing for the effort which they put into preparing their evidence and for the helpfulness with which they engaged in the proceedings.

4.4 My thanks go also to each of the members of the DEAC secretariat who supported me in conducting the public hearings and administratively in preparing this report.

Eileen Brady
Assistant District Electoral Area Commissioner
6/10/13
Appendix A

WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

Alliance Party NI
Castlereagh Borough Council
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
Lisburn City Council
Michael Moriarty
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
Appendix B

ORAL SUBMISSIONS

Councillor Patrick Catney (SDLP)
Conor Quinn (SDLP, Lisburn Branch)
Stephen Reid, Chief Executive Castlereagh Borough Council