

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
DR W.B. SMITH
ON THE
COMMISSIONER'S PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR
INNER EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICT**

6 MARCH 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1** The current review of local government boundaries in Northern Ireland was announced in a public notice on 9 June 2006. This explained the role and remit of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, and indicated that he would in due course publish provisional recommendations and cause a public hearing to be held in each of seven proposed new districts. The notice also explained the process of public consultation on the provisional recommendations.
- 1.2** The terms of the review are set out in the Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. A copy of the Order is available on www.lgbc-ni.org/index/legislation.htm or from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- 1.3** The Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the boundaries and names of the new local government districts and in respect of the number, boundaries and names of their constituent wards were formally announced at the Ramada Hotel, Belfast on 7 November 2006 and simultaneously published on the Commissioner's website, www.lgbc-ni.org/index/publications.org. Summaries of the Provisional Recommendations and details of the planned public hearings were published on 8 November 2006 in a number of daily and provincial newspapers. Copies of the Provisional Recommendations with detailed maps were made available for public inspection at district council headquarters, public libraries, Electoral Offices, the Office of the Electoral Commission and the Office of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner.
- 1.4** The public notice of 8 November 2006 invited written representations on the Provisional Recommendations within an eight-week public consultation period. The closing date was 5 January 2007.
- 1.5** The Commissioner received 92 written representations from a range of interested parties including political parties, political representatives, district councils, community organisations and individual members of the public. All were acknowledged giving details of the public hearings and have been published on the Commissioner's website. They were available for viewing at each of the public hearings.
- 1.6** On 2 January 2007, I was appointed as an Assistant Commissioner by the Minister of the Environment, David Cairns MP. The Commissioner subsequently assigned me to the proposed Inner East District, incorporating the present Antrim, Carrickfergus, Lisburn and Newtownabbey Districts. My brief was to consider written representations on the Commissioner's provisional recommendations; to conduct a public hearing in order to ascertain local views; to assess the

material provided during the consultation period and at the hearing; and to submit a report to the Commissioner with my conclusions and recommendations within four weeks of the hearing.

Written Representations

- 1.7** Appendix A lists the written representations received relating to the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the Inner East District. I considered all of these representations carefully in advance of the public hearing, and again in preparing this report.
- 1.8** In addition, a number of representations expressed opposition to or support for the seven-council model stipulated in the 2006 Order. While I am happy to acknowledge the breadth of opinion on this matter, it is not within my remit to consider or recommend any other model.

Public Hearing

- 1.9.1** The public hearing into the Provisional Recommendations for the Inner East District started in the Templeton Hotel, Templepatrick on 8 February and concluded the following day. Three people registered attendance at the hearing and two oral submissions were made. In both cases, the participants had already submitted views in writing during the public consultation period. Details of those who made oral submissions are attached at Appendix B, and a transcript of the hearing can be viewed on the Commissioner's website.

Content of Report

- 1.10** This report covers the views of interested parties on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the proposed Inner East District. It addresses local information and opinion on the boundary and name of the district; and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which the district has been divided. It details support for, objections to and counter proposals in relation to the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations. Finally, it presents my conclusions and recommendations.
- 1.11** In preparing this report, I have been guided by the legislative framework for the review and in particular the statutory rules set out in Part III of Schedule I to the Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

2. DISTRICT NAME AND BOUNDARIES

Name

- 2.1** Six respondents suggested alternative names for the district, as follows:
- Miss K B Cunningham – Antrim (with boundary changes)
 - Mr Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA - Dalariada
 - Green Party - Central (with boundary changes)
 - Mr Paddy Mills - South Antrim
 - Mr Patrick G Murphy - Lagan Valley
 - Mr David S Tweed - Antrim (with boundary changes)
- 2.2** Mr Donaldson objected to the name "Inner East" on the ground that it would reduce the identification that people would feel with the district. Offering one example of a possible alternative name, Mr Donaldson explained that "Dalaradia" is the name given to the ancient territory that comprised the southern part of County Antrim and the northern part of County Down.
- 2.3** Whilst I am attracted to the idea of reverting to a name traditionally associated with the area, I am concerned that (a) it is not clear how closely the proposed district and the ancient territory overlap, and (b) that this particular name would be easily confused with "Dalriada", the ancient kingdom spanning the North Channel.
- 2.4** The Green Party's suggestion depended on boundary changes which I will consider later.
- 2.5** Mr Mills called for the names of the new districts to be based on traditional county names, yielding "South Antrim" in place of "Inner East" and "North Antrim" in place of "North East".
- 2.6** My concerns about this proposal are (a) that it could create confusion with the Parliamentary constituencies of the same name, which have very different boundaries; and (b) that Inner East extends well beyond the traditional County Antrim to incorporate a substantial chunk of County Down. A similar difficulty would apply to many of the other proposed districts, rendering the general application of such an approach across Northern Ireland problematic.
- 2.7** Mr Murphy suggested "Lagan Valley". My concerns about this are (a) that the proposed district extends far beyond the valley of the River Lagan; and (b) that it would create confusion with the Parliamentary constituency of the same name, which has very different boundaries.
- 2.8** Miss Cunningham and Mr Tweed proposed that the new councils should have broadly the same names and boundaries as the old county

councils. As far as the boundaries are concerned, this would be inconsistent with the Order. In theory, the name "Antrim" could reasonably be applied to the district which includes Antrim town, but this proposal could not be applied across Northern Ireland on this basis since the same coincidence of name and county does not apply to all the other proposed districts. Moreover, Inner East extends well beyond County Antrim to the south.

- 2.9** In addition to these specific proposals for names, Antrim Borough Council proposed that the new council should have the legislative authority to establish its own name. Banbridge Borough Council suggested that wider consultation was necessary. Mr Jeffrey Donaldson MP suggested that local referenda should be held on suitable names to coincide with elections for the new shadow councils in 2008. I am pleased to acknowledge and record these proposals, which however fall outside my remit.
- 2.10** The public hearing produced no further representations on the name of the district. I accordingly recommend no change for the present, in the hope that elected representatives may in due course take advantage of the legislative provision which exists to agree on a new name which captures the public imagination.

Boundaries

- 2.11** In representations focussing primarily on Belfast, Ms Carmel Hanna and Mr Robert Stoker called for the district boundaries and the boundaries of Westminster Parliamentary constituencies to be aligned, or aligned as closely as practicable. The Parliamentary boundaries are currently under review, and I expect that this will be for consideration by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in due course.
- 2.12** Sinn Fein supported the Commissioner's proposal to transfer Collin Glen, Poleglass, Lagmore, Twinbrook, Kilwee and Dunmurry from Inner East into Belfast. Mr David Ford, in an oral presentation on behalf of the Alliance Party, supported the provisional district boundary as the best available in current circumstances.
- 2.13** Mr Jeffrey Donaldson reported that he had received a number of representations from residents of Dunmurry village who were concerned about the transfer of the proposed Dunmurry ward to the Belfast District. Since no reason was given as to why they were concerned, I am unable to formulate a recommendation.
- 2.14** Mr Donaldson welcomed the transfer of the Lagmore Housing Estate to form the new ward of Lagmore in the Belfast District, on the basis that its residents identify with West Belfast, while the residents of Derriaghy/Milltown look towards Lisburn.

- 2.15** Mr Donaldson reported a letter from a constituent, Mr Michael Ingleston, proposing that the wards of Dromore, Gowdystown and Kinallen should be transferred from South to Inner East District, on the grounds that their residents looked towards Lisburn rather than Newry for public services. This would produce an Inner East District of 63 wards and a South District of 57.
- 2.16** The issue of where people look to for public services is not a criterion that I can take into account, and I am not persuaded that there are sufficient grounds in this instance for me to recommend a deviation from the normative presumption that there should be 60 wards in each district, as set down in the Rules.
- 2.17** The Green Party proposed a completely different configuration of districts, whereby Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey would be included in a new Antrim North and East District together with Ballymena, Ballymoney, Larne and Moyle, while Antrim and Lisburn would be combined with Craigavon to form a new Central District. I have not considered this proposal in detail since it is inconsistent with the Order.
- 2.18** Colin Neighbourhood Partnership expressed concern about the Provisional Recommendation to incorporate the localities of Colin Glen, Poleglass, Lagmore, Twinbrook, Kilwee and Dunmurry into Belfast District, in advance of any assessment of the impact on the local community in the context of the Review of Public Administration.

3. WARD NUMBER, NAMES AND BOUNDARIES

Number

- 3.1** The Commissioner received no specific representations to change the number of wards from the 60 proposed in his Provisional Recommendations. However, the Alliance Party made a number of representations relating to boundaries which could have resulted in increasing the number of wards, and these will be considered in the following paragraphs.
- 3.2** The Order establishes the normative presumption that the number of wards in each district should be 60. While the Commissioner has discretion to vary this figure, I am not persuaded that there is sufficient weight in any of the representations which have been made for me to recommend that he should do so.

Names

- 3.3** Mr Jeffrey Donaldson proposed changing the name "Racecourse", on the grounds that it was "rather bland" and could as easily apply to the

area near Downpatrick, which also has a racecourse. He indicated that his preferred alternative "Down Royal" was well known and had been associated with the area for over three centuries.

- 3.4** I agree, and recommend the name "Down Royal" on the basis of its traditional association with the locality.
- 3.5** The Alliance Party and Cllr John Smyth both objected to the name "Rathenraw", on the grounds that the Rathenraw Estate was the smallest of the three housing areas included in the proposed ward. At the hearing, Cllr Smyth proposed that a traditional townland name be used instead, such as "Bleerick". Alliance proposed "Stiles" after the most central of the three housing areas, pointing out that this had been used as a ward name since 1973. I note that "Stiles" is also a traditional townland name.
- 3.6** In light of these representations from local elected representatives, I recommend that the name "Rathenraw" should be changed to "Stiles".
- 3.7** I received no other proposals for changing the Commissioner's provisional ward names.

Boundaries - Lisburn area

- 3.8** Mr Jeffrey Donaldson welcomed the Commissioner's provisional recommendations for Seymour Hill, Ballinderry and Maghaberry.

Boundaries - Antrim area

Stiles (Rathenraw) / Steeple / Muckamore wards

- 3.9** Cllr John Smyth wrote to express concern at the proposed incorporation of the Birchill Road area of the Steeple estate in the Rathenraw ward. The area is bounded by Parkhall Road, Oaktree Drive, Fountain Hill and Stiles Way. At the hearing he argued that this would split up an estate with an established community identity. He proposed that the entire Steeple estate should be included in the Steeple ward. This argument was supported by Mr David Ford at the hearing.
- 3.10** Mr Ford also argued against the division of Brantwood Gardens estate - an area of some 200 houses - between Stiles and Muckamore wards. He proposed instead that all of Brantwood Gardens should be included in Stiles ward. Numerically, this would compensate for the removal of the Birchill Road area from Stiles to Steeple ward.
- 3.11** I consider that these two changes would result in more readily identifiable and coherent boundaries, while together respecting the requirement to ensure substantially the same number of electors in each

ward. I accordingly recommend that the Steeple estate should be united in the Steeple ward; and that the south-eastern end of Stiles' boundary with Muckamore should be moved eastward to unite the entire Brantwood Gardens estate in Stiles ward.

Randalstown / Toome wards

- 3.12** In a written submission, the Alliance Party argued that the western boundary of Randalstown ward should be moved westwards from the town, as it was drawn very tightly to the current development limit of the town; and that an area to the north of the ward should pass to Toome ward in compensation. I am satisfied that there is a relevant consideration here in the desirability of determining boundaries which are readily identifiable.
- 3.13** I accordingly recommend that the Randalstown ward boundary be moved westward to run from the Portglenone Road along the Craigmore Road and Church Road, then across field boundaries to the M22; and that the northern part of Randalstown ward should pass to Toome ward in compensation, with the boundary running across Clady Road and then on to the River Main. The revised electorates for the wards of Randalstown and Toome are 2966 and 3092 respectively.

Shane's Castle ward

- 3.14** The Alliance Party, in its written representation, argued that there was no logic in this ward including part of the Ballymena Road area and Springfarm as well as dividing Oriel Road. It proposed that a better boundary would be the railway line, leaving all of Springfarm in the Steeple ward. This would bring both sides of the Ballymena Road and the Oriel Road population together in Shane's Castle ward.
- 3.15** I am satisfied that this would be an appropriate adjustment in line with the Rules, and accordingly recommend moving the boundary at the south east corner from Ballymena Road to the railway line and the natural break south of the Parklands development.
- 3.16** To the north, the Alliance Party proposed that Shane's Castle ward should absorb part of the western end of Tardree ward in the interest of community coherence; and that on the same ground the boundary should be adjusted between Shane's Castle and Randalstown wards.
- 3.17** I accept the case made by the Alliance Party and accordingly recommend extending the northern boundary of Shane's Castle ward northward along the A26 (Lisnevenagh Road), taking in a chunk of Tardree ward; and moving Shane's Castle's ward boundary with Randalstown to Craigstown Road, then south of Station Road taking in

the housing developments of Shane's Court, Beechmount Park and Ashdale.

- 3.18** These changes would provide for a more readily identifiable and coherent boundary for Shane's Castle ward, while respecting the requirement to ensure substantially the same number of electors in each ward. The revised ward electorate for Shane's Castle is 3008.

Tardree ward

- 3.19** The Alliance Party described this ward as including parts of at least three identifiable communities and maintained that the M2 east of Rathbeg was an inappropriate boundary to the south-east in that it divided natural communities. The Alliance Party proposed that the use of the Six Mile Water as a boundary would provide greater coherence: Tardree ward would thus shed the area south of the Sixmilewater around Ballymartin to Templepatrick, to be offset by taking in the area north of the Sixmilewater near Dunadry. Mr Ford developed the Alliance Party's case at the hearing.
- 3.20** I accept these arguments, and accordingly recommend that Tardree ward's boundary with Templepatrick be moved southwards from the M2 east of Rathbeg to follow the Six Mile Water from the boundary with Muckamore through Dunadry to Doagh ward. This would transfer the Ballymartin area (south of the river) to Templepatrick. Taking account of all the changes I have recommended, the revised Tardree ward electorate is 2691.

Templepatrick ward

- 3.21** The Alliance Party argued that Templepatrick's southern boundary should be removed from the Seven Mile Straight, which it said was a line of contact rather than a dividing line. At the hearing, Mr Ford proposed that it should return to the current boundary between Aldergrove and Clady, based on townlands.
- 3.22** I have examined various scenarios using townland boundaries, but each of them reduced the electoral population of Templepatrick wardwell below the average for the district. I am not persuaded that the case for avoiding the Seven Mile Straight is sufficiently strong to justify such a deviation.
- 3.23** The Alliance Party also proposed that the Umgall/Craigarogan area should be transferred to Templepatrick ward from the south-western part of Mallusk ward. At the hearing Mr Ford explained that this would create a more readily identifiable boundary, improve the electoral balance in Templepatrick, and respect the existing townland boundary.

- 3.24** I agree, and accordingly recommend transferring Umgall/Craigarogan from the south-west part of Mallusk to Templepatrick ward, using the Sealstown Road and Mallusk Road as boundaries.
- 3.25** The Alliance Party proposed that the Carnanee area to the north-west of Mallusk ward should be transferred into Templepatrick ward. At the hearing, Mr Ford explained that the people of the area looked towards Templepatrick and that the use of the M2 as a boundary had created an unnatural and unnecessary salient.
- 3.26** I accept that this would create a more readily identifiable boundary, and accordingly recommend transferring into Templepatrick ward the long salient to the north west of the Mallusk ward along the M2. The new boundary would be adjusted as far as practicable to follow the established townland line.
- 3.27** I am satisfied that my recommendations in relation to the ward boundaries of Templepatrick are in keeping with the legislative requirement for electoral equality. The revised Templepatrick ward electorate is 2532.

Boundaries - Newtownabbey area

Ballyclare ward

- 3.28** In its written representation, the Alliance Party noted that the creation of two tight urban wards in Ballyclare had left the Ballycorr area to the east of the town in Doagh ward and urban housing on Mill Road being in Ballyrobert. The Party suggested that it might be preferable to reconfigure the town and its hinterland three (or even four) ways on a sectoral basis.
- 3.29** I have looked at various possible permutations, but am not persuaded that any of these would produce an outcome significantly better than that in the Provisional Recommendations.

Knockagh ward

- 3.30** The Alliance Party objected on the grounds of coherence to combining Knockagh Hill with upper Woodburn, upper Greenisland, an “almost detached part of Monkstown” and “a totally detached part of Jordanstown”. The Party suggested instead that there should be one ward based on the western fringes of Carrickfergus and the Knockagh ward, and another based on Greenisland. It argued that this would also make it possible to address the tightly drawn boundaries of the five Carrickfergus town wards.

- 3.31** In terms of concrete proposals, the Party suggested that as a minimum the area between the two railway lines should be transferred to Jordanstown ward and that an area of new housing on the Old Carrick Road in Monkstown should transfer to Knockagh ward. I am sympathetic to this suggestion. However, to make the proposed transfer in full would create an imbalance in the electoral populations of Jordanstown (at 2311) and Knockagh (3615).
- 3.32** I have accordingly worked out a compromise. I recommend that the triangle between the two railway lines should be transferred from Knockagh to Jordanstown ward; and that that part of the new housing area along the Old Carrick Road in Monkstown which lies to the west of the Pound Burn should be transferred from Jordanstown to Knockagh ward. The revised ward electorates for Knockagh and Jordanstown are 2948 and 2978 respectively.
- 3.33** In relation to the wider problem with Knockagh ward as depicted by the Alliance Party, I have considered various permutations in consultation with my expert advisers in the Ordnance Survey, but our efforts have confirmed that it is difficult to find better boundaries while respecting the principle of electoral balance. In the absence of stronger arguments and more specific proposals, I am accordingly unable to recommend any change in the Provisional Recommendations.

Carnmoney Hill ward

- 3.34** The Alliance Party argued that the population of Carnmoney Hill ward was scattered entirely around its edge, creating incoherence. Its written submission proposed that Ballyduff, Carnmoney and Glengormley wards should each absorb their side of the Hill, leaving the ward centred on Rathfern and Fernagh. It would then be renamed “Rathfern” or “Fernagh”.
- 3.35** Since the vast majority of the population lives at the eastern side of the ward, I am not persuaded that it is correct to describe the population as scattered around the edge. In any case, I am not persuaded that there is a compelling case within the Rules for changing the Provisional Recommendations.

O'Neill ward

- 3.36** In its written submission, the Alliance Party contended that it was illogical to combine the Elmfield area of Glengormley with the Derrycoole area of Rathcoole.
- 3.37** I acknowledge that in terms of community coherence the proposed ward configuration is not ideal. However, since I have not received any specific proposals, I am unable to formulate a recommendation.

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Boundary and name of district

4.1 No changes.

Ward names

4.2 Change "Racecourse" to "Down Royal".
Change "Rathenraw" to "Stiles".

Ward number

4.3 No change.

Ward boundaries (changes are shown at Appendix D)

4.4 Steeple / Stiles wards

- Unite entire Steeple estate in Steeple ward.
- Unite entire Brantwood Gardens estate in Stiles ward.

4.5 Randalstown / Toome wards

- Extend Randalstown boundary westward to run from Portglenone Road along Craigmore Road and Church Road, then across field boundaries to M22.
- Transfer northern part of Randalstown to Toome, with boundary running across Clady Road and on to River Main.

4.6 Shane's Castle ward

- At the south-east corner, move the boundary from Ballymena Road to the railway line and natural break south of Parklands development, taking in a chunk from Steeple ward.
- Extend northern edge to district boundary along the A26, taking in a chunk of Tardree ward. The new boundary between Shanes Castle and Tardree wards would then be the A26 (Lisnevenagh Road).
- Move boundary with Randalstown to Craigstown Road, then south of Station Road taking in the housing developments of Shanes Court, Beechmount Park and Ashdale.

4.7 Tardree / Templepatrick wards

- Move Tardree / Templepatrick boundary southwards from M2 east of Rathbeg to follow Six Mile Water from the boundary with Muckamore through Dunadry to Doagh ward. This would transfer the Ballymartin area (south of the river) to Templepatrick.

4.8 Templepatrick / Mallusk wards

- Transfer Umgall/Craigarogan from south-west part of Mallusk to Templepatrick ward, using Sealstown Road and Mallusk Road as boundaries.
- Transfer from Mallusk to Templepatrick ward the Carnanee salient to the north-west along the M2, following townland boundaries.

4.9 Knockagh / Jordanstown wards

- Transfer the triangle between two railway lines at south-eastern corner from Knockagh to Jordanstown ward.
- Transfer from Jordanstown to Knockagh ward part of new housing area along Old Carrick Road in Monkstown (west of Pound Burn).

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all who submitted written representations and attended the public hearing for the civil and helpful manner in which they presented their evidence and engaged in the proceedings.

5.2 My thanks go also to the staff of the Office of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and of the Ordnance Survey for Northern Ireland for their invaluable advice, support and efficiency in helping me to conduct the hearing and prepare this report.

Dr W. B. Smith
Assistant Local Government Boundaries Commissioner
6 March 2007

APPENDIX A: WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
Antrim Borough Council
C Atkinson
Banbridge District Council
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership
Miss KB Cunningham
Mr Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA
Green Party
Ms Carmel Hanna MLA
Mr Paddy Mills
Mr Patrick G Murphy
Sinn Fein
Councillor John Smyth, Chairman, Steeple Community Association
Mr Robert Stoker
Mr David S Tweed

APPENDIX B: ORAL SUBMISSIONS

Mr David Ford MLA

Councillor John Smyth, Chairman, Steeple Community Association