

Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland

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	Assistant Commissioner		Patrick Good		
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Transcript begins on following page.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would now wish to open the second day of this enquiry into the proposed Local Government District of Lisburn City and Castlereagh. I made some introductory remarks yesterday; I am just going to repeat some of them, not all of them. My name is Patrick Good and I have been appointed by the Department of the Environment to conduct this hearing. The purpose of the hearing is to consider oral representations concerning the Provisional Recommendations of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for the Local Government District of Lisburn City and Castlereagh. If you have a view on the Commissioner's recommendations, this is your opportunity to be heard. I should, however, emphasise that you cannot reserve your position to await my report and it will not be possible for you to make any written or oral submissions after the hearing is concluded.

I think it might be helpful just to identify some of the issues which are outside the scope of this hearing and I mentioned those again yesterday. These have already been determined either by Government or because they are matters for the new councils, the Department of the Environment or the Secretary of State to address and the issues which are outside the hearing are: the number of new District Councils to be delineated; the groupings of current Councils from which they will be constituted; the location of headquarters; the financial constraints of boundary changes; the district electoral areas into which the proposed wards will be combined; and the City or Borough status of the new Councils.

People have been kind enough to register their interest and their desire to speak and I will seek to call those people in an order which was determined yesterday. In terms of the procedures that we intend to follow, you will be called to the table just in front of me. I would be grateful if you could speak into the microphones and, in making your submission, could you state your name and whether you are speaking in a personal capacity or in a representative capacity and if so, for whom. Please speak clearly and try not to use abbreviations or colloquialisms, as they may cause difficulties for the transcribers. Also I would be grateful if you could state whether you have already made a written submission. Your oral submission will be of particular assistance if you are able to explain the reasons why you have taken a particular position, any counter-proposals which you wish to make to the Commissioner's recommendations and the reasons for those

counter-proposals. When you have finished your submissions, other people may wish to put questions to you and I may also have some questions or points of clarification. Those questions would be put through myself. The hearing will be informal, there will be no cross examination which is inappropriate for a public hearing of this nature, and therefore that is the manner in which we wish to conduct the matter. Please give me just a moment until I determine the finalised proposed order of speakers.

ADJOURNMENT

Thank you, ladies and gentleman. As is the custom I would intend to call elected representatives first, commencing with Mr Donaldson who is a Member of Parliament. Mr Donaldson, would you care to come forward?

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

Good Morning. I am here this morning representing the Democratic Unionist Party and refer you to our written submission which included proposals in relation to Lisburn and Castlereagh, which is the subject of your enquiry this morning. In beginning, Mr Deputy Commissioner, I would draw your attention to the general approach that is outlined by the Commissioner in the document that was published containing the proposals for the boundaries of the eleven new Local Government Districts. In that general approach it states that the Act requires that the proposed eleven Local Government Districts should incorporate the whole or the major part of the existing Local Government Districts as set out in paragraph 1.1 of this report and the reason I mention that is because I am aware that some of the proposals that have been made to vary the Commissioner's recommendations would mean that Castlereagh Borough Council, as it is currently constituted, could not reasonably be described as transferring to the new Council either in whole or a major part thereof. I refer specifically to the proposal that the Dundonald area should be removed from Lisburn and Castlereagh and transferred into Belfast. The effect of removing the Dundonald wards from Castlereagh into Belfast would mean that by no reasonable description could you conclude that Castlereagh Borough Council as currently constituted was transferring into the new council, either in whole or a major part thereof and I appreciate there are different interpretations of what major means, but I think any reasonable interpretation would conclude that the remnant of Castlereagh that would be left following the removal of Dundonald would effectively render that Council, or that part of the council, quite small. It would

also leave the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council the smallest council in Northern Ireland with a much lower rate base and smaller population. I think this may be outside the scope that the Commissioner has set in terms of trying to ensure that, apart from Belfast, the Councils outside Belfast are broadly equal. Although there is a disparity in the proposals at present, I accept that has to do with geography and demographics but, nevertheless, to make such a significant alteration from the current proposal by the Commissioner by removing Dundonald, I think would go way beyond the bounds of reasonableness in terms of the size of the council that would be left. We would therefore be opposed to the removal of Dundonald wards from Castlereagh and into Belfast, because it would create a very significant disparity.

In relation to the proposals that the party made in its written submission; first of all, in relation to the Dunmurry ward, it is our belief that the Dunmurry area has a very long history of linkages to Lisburn and I think that is reflected in the very strong representations that the Commissioner has received from the Dunmurry area from many hundreds of local people who have indicated their opposition to the transfer of Dunmurry into Belfast. I represent the Dunmurry area as a Member of Parliament and a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly. I am aware that many of the children in the area go to schools in Lisburn. I am also aware that people in Dunmurry tend to do their shopping in Lisburn rather than in Belfast, that many of the social links are between Dunmurry and Lisburn rather than Dunmurry and Belfast. Historically, Dunmurry has been linked to Lisburn in local government terms, going back many decades, the old Lisburn Urban Council initially and then, on the re-organisation of local government in 1972, Dunmurry became part of Lisburn Borough Council and subsequently Lisburn City Council. It is interesting to note, for example, that in a recent review of post offices in Northern Ireland, Dunmurry post office was grouped with the Lisburn post offices rather than with West Belfast and that was a tacit recognition by the Post Office that that community has a greater affinity with Lisburn rather than with West Belfast. In terms of the boundary for the Dunmurry area, we believe that there is a natural boundary which could be utilised by the Commission to delineate the boundary between Belfast and Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council. That boundary would be the major road that runs along the edge of Dunmurry village locally known as Creightons Road becoming Old Golf Course Road and terminating at the Blacks Road junction with the M1 motorway. We believe that all of the electors who are located to the south and west of that natural boundary comprising Dunmurry village

should be retained within the City of Lisburn and Castlereagh and that would leave a small portion of the proposed Dunmurry ward in the Blacks Road area which we acknowledge looks more towards Belfast and therefore should be redistributed into the Belfast wards that form the boundary with Lisburn and Castlereagh. So we are not suggesting that all of the proposed Dunmurry ward should transfer back to Lisburn, but the Dunmurry village as bounded by the major roads that I have referred to. I would also say that this would be of assistance as well because the numbers involved in the smaller Dunmurry ward would be more consistent with the ward sizes in Lisburn and the numbers transferring back to Belfast or remaining in Belfast could be easily redistributed amongst the wards there.

Turning then to the boundary between the current Castlereagh Council and Belfast, we have included in our submission a proposal that the Castlereagh Council offices and the associated Forestside site should be retained within Lisburn City and Castlereagh. This would require only a minor change to the boundary of the Galwally ward but it would make a significant difference in terms of providing additional rates income for the new Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council. I think it is also important that the existing Council headquarters of Castlereagh should be retained within the new Lisburn City and Castlereagh boundary. This would not necessitate the transfer of many electors, in fact the number of electors transferring back to Castlereagh and Lisburn would be quite small but the impact on the rates would, we believe, represent a more equitable distribution of the rate base between Belfast and Lisburn City and Castlereagh.

The only other issue that we touched on in our submission, and that I would want to refer to in my initial remarks, is the question of City and Borough status. We believe it is very important that existing cities should be able to retain their City status and we acknowledge that there is a question that will need to be addressed in time as to the boundaries of the city as opposed to the boundaries of the district. We would also be supportive of the view that councils that have been traditionally designated as Borough Councils should also retain Borough status. This makes a difference in terms of the ability of a district council to have a Mayor and so on and we feel these things are important in terms of ensuring continuity from the old system to the new system, so we would ask that the Commissioner makes arrangements for those councils that have either existing City or Borough status to have that reflected in their new status under the revised local

government arrangements in Northern Ireland. That really is the crux of the submission that we made that specifically relates to Castlereagh and Lisburn but I am happy to take any questions that you may have.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you. There was just one point on the Castlereagh aspect, Mr Donaldson. I am mindful that, in determining the boundary in Castlereagh, your party identifies the boundary as put forward by the Commissioner as being probably appropriate. I think this is your position in terms of the southern boundary line being the Outer Ring road, would that be right?

**Jeffery
Donaldson**

Well we are aware that there is an argument, particularly in relation to the Belvoir ward, for the boundary to be the Lagan Valley, to include the River Lagan and the Lagan Valley Regional Park, and that that boundary should be respected. The party does not take a formal position on this. We are neither opposed to nor supportive of representations in relation to Belvoir. We are prepared to leave that to the local representatives to make the submission in the case either way and we are remaining neutral on it, so I would not want that to infer that we are supportive of the boundary being the ring road in relation to the Belvoir ward. We acknowledge that there are local issues there and local concerns about the inclusion of that community within Belfast City. There are also issues that arise in relation to the Lagan Valley Regional Park but we will leave it to others to make those arguments.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Then in terms of the headquarters at Castlereagh, am I correct in interpreting your view, or your submission rather, that that should be regarded as an exception to the boundary? Is that an implicit appreciation of the rules under which the Commissioner operates and is required to consider matters?

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

It is indeed, Mr Deputy Commissioner, and we believe there is a strong argument for the exception to be made on this occasion. There was reference made earlier to the issues about headquarters of Councils and so I appreciate that is in relation to the new, rather than the old, but nevertheless we do feel it is important that both Forestside and the existing Council Headquarters should be incorporated within Lisburn City and Castlereagh because of the impact that would have on the rate base for the new Council. It would not require a great

exception being made in terms of adjusting the boundary, nor indeed in terms of the transfer of electors.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much, Mr Donaldson. Might I just ask if any members present wish to pose any questions to Mr Donaldson while he is available? Yes, if you would care to come forward and give your name and if you would like to sit there and switch on the microphone if that is alright. Thank you.

**Ronnie
Crawford**

Thank you very much Deputy Commissioner. I am Ronnie Crawford, Ulster Unionist Councillor in Lisburn. I heard my colleague's submission there with some interest. There is just one point I would like to mention. There are six of the seven Dunmurry wards proposed to be transferred into Belfast. Two of those make up two of the four wards of deprivation in Lisburn. If those two wards were transferred into Belfast, they will be competing with seventeen areas of deprivation. I have also learned that this will also affect the funding for the regional college which will be reduced if these wards go out, although the college will still have to provide services for the students of that area. I would be interested to learn Mr Donaldson's response to that, thank you.

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Commissioner. I accept the points that the Mayor of Lisburn has made. I would say that that is an issue that we may wish to raise with the appropriate department, namely the Department of Employment and Learning. However, I think in all of this, what is paramount is the wishes of local communities and, whereas we accept that it is the overwhelming wish of the community living in Dunmurry village to remain within Lisburn, we equally accept that it is the overwhelming wish of the communities represented in the other wards that comprise the Dunmurry area, which fall into Lisburn at present, to transfer to Belfast. Whilst there are technical arguments that the Mayor has rightly made that have an impact in terms of funding and so on, nevertheless I do not believe they override the wishes of the people in a democracy and it would be contradictory for me to argue that the Commissioner should respect the wishes of the people of Dunmurry village and their desire to remain within Lisburn but not at the same time respect the wishes of the people who live in the other Dunmurry wards and who clearly have indicated support for a transfer to Belfast.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you Mr Donaldson. Sorry there is a question, if you would like to come forward and perhaps identify yourself and if you make use of the microphone on the table.

**Ray
Kennedy**

Good morning, Assistant Commissioner, my name is Ray Kennedy and I would like to ask Jeffrey Donaldson, is the argument for the rates of Forestside and the Galwally area equally as valid for going into Belfast as for going into Lisburn, because Belfast will be taking in significant areas of social need? It has very high levels of areas of social need and obviously needs the rates just as much, if not more so than Lisburn.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I understand your question, Mr Kennedy, but I am sure you will equally appreciate that the issue of financial implications and more particularly the rate base is not a matter falling within the rules for the Commissioner and therefore, while I am clearly going to allow Mr Donaldson to respond, it is in that context.

**Ray
Kennedy**

I accept that. Can I just make one other point and he can respond to both of them at the same time? The other one is; he suggested that the democratic wishes of the people, presumably in the area of Lagmore, Twinbrook and so on, to go into Belfast should be upheld. Likewise, does he not accept that the democratic wish of the people in the five wards of Galwally, Beechill and Newtownbreda and around there should equally be taken into consideration? I know that is outside the remit of your findings as well but as he made the comment I thought I would give him an opportunity to respond to those questions?

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Mr Donaldson.

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

Thank you very much indeed, Mr Deputy Commissioner. I am not aware that those wishes have been expressed in a public way. If I were, I would certainly be happy to take account of them. I do know that in the Dunmurry area there have been very clear expressions made about where people would wish to go in terms of their local government membership but I am open to receive evidence that in the five wards mentioned surveys have been conducted or polls have been carried out that indicate that is the wish. I would also make the point that,

if Belfast does not want to take in the wards where there is a high level of social deprivation, then it is for Belfast to argue for those wards to be excluded in terms of them going back into Castlereagh and yet I do not notice that that has occurred. I think that there is a very strong argument in favour of the Forestside area and the Council headquarters remaining in Castlereagh, because Lisburn City is taking in a considerable amount of Castlereagh Council and yet a lot of the commercial areas actually fall within the Belfast boundary which means that there's a disproportionate transfer of commercial rates from the old Castlereagh into Belfast rather than from Castlereagh into the new Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council. I would also make the point that people tend to pay higher rates in Belfast than they do in Castlereagh and therefore I think that Belfast will do very well out of the transfer of electors from Castlereagh to Belfast because those people will end up paying higher rates in Belfast than they would have done if they had remained in Lisburn City and Castlereagh. I think if we are going to get into an argument about rates, I have no doubt there is a very strong argument to support the Forestside and Council headquarters being transferred back into Castlereagh and since there are not many electors involved we believe that it is prudent to do so.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I am grateful for both of your input but, as I say, rates are not an issue for me and I think they rather may be a point that would be determined at another day in another place and I am happy to leave the argument and the debate as it stands in that regard, gentlemen.

**Ray
Kennedy**

Okay, Assistant Commissioner and if Jeffrey Donaldson wants copies of the results of the survey, they are on the Local Government website as part of Alasdair McDonnell's submission. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr Donaldson. The next speaker I intended to ask to make a submission is the Mayor of Lisburn, Councillor Crawford. If you would care to come forward, Councillor. Thank you.

**Ronnie
Crawford**

Thank you very much Deputy Commissioner. I am Ronnie Crawford, Ulster Unionist Mayor of Lisburn but I am here today in a capacity as an individual Councillor in Lisburn and the reason that I am making an oral presentation is simply because

there has been some change of ground in the decisions taken by the Council. In the August meeting of the Council, on the proposal of the Deputy Mayor, Alderman Poots, the Council voted unanimously to support the complete merger of the entire Castlereagh Borough Council area and the entire Lisburn City Council area. The Strategic Policy Committee was then given the task of looking into that and given delegated authority and by a majority decision they came up with the submission that is now in the name of Lisburn City Council, which has amended that view slightly to concede the loss of the six Dunmurry wards. The Castlereagh Borough Council has submitted a paper in relation to their views on it and I entirely concur with those views as far as it affects the Castlereagh area.

The party to which I belong, the Ulster Unionist Party, has also made a submission. I would point out that at no time were any consultations carried out with the Ulster Unionist councillors in Lisburn and whilst I sent in an uninvited submission, it was totally ignored and consequently I disassociate myself from the views of my party on this particular issue. I feel that the proposals as they exist are detrimental to the character of the new Council area and I think that the Commissioner has got to ask himself the question of whether we need diversity in a city because, if these proposals are implemented, you will lose the four Sinn Fein seats and two SDLP seats which will, I think, dramatically alter the balance within the new Council area. Now there was a time when many people would have said "yes, we would be glad to see those areas disappearing" but over recent years, improvements have been taking place in community relations. When I was Chairman of the District Policing Partnership, I instigated talks with some of the community groups there which resulted in the reinstatement of police foot patrols in that area after an absence of many years. There are a number of groups in Lisburn, the Old Warren estate for instance, who are in regular contact with people in the Twinbrook/Poleglass area and indeed one of those groups in one of the loyalist estates actually built a wooden structure for use by the Catholic church in the Poleglass area. I think that if we were to lose that, we lose the opportunity of furthering community relations in that area.

I have also made the point in my question about the deprivation issue. I have not heard a cogent case being made for the increase in the size of Belfast City Council. In October of 2006, Belfast City Council commissioned a paper, a development brief called the State of the City and in it, it is suggested that the Belfast Local Authority should include a

much wider area than at present and possibly the whole of the Belfast Metropolitan area, so I think that is an ambition of Belfast City Council. I think we also need to look at the fact that the wards in Belfast City Council are approximately 50% larger than the wards anywhere else in local government. They make the point about the need to expand in order to consolidate themselves as a city, but where does that leave Lisburn if we want to consolidate as a city, where do we go with all these wards being taken off us? Do we ask for Dromore to be included? Do we ask for Saintfield and Kilmore, because we too need to consolidate as a city? The problem is that with Belfast being the size it is at the moment, and I think it has been mentioned in the submission by Castlereagh Council, it is a rather large cuckoo in the nest of local government and does not fit in well with the local government structures at present. The fact of the matter is that Belfast, being the size it is at the moment, debilitates surrounding councils and if you ask me for evidence of that, the fact is that Belfast City Council funded two court applications against the John Lewis proposal for development at Sprucefield. That has resulted in a delay of four years and a new planning application going in which has cost the ratepayers of Lisburn something in the region of four million pounds, so there has been economic damage brought about by the activities of Belfast City Council. It is also clear that they oppose the erection of a national stadium at Maze, which would be another big boost for rates and for development in Lisburn.

There is also the question of the influence of Belfast City Councillors upon the Assembly. Forty percent of the Ministries belong to Belfast City councillors, two thirds of the Unionist representation in those Ministries belongs to Belfast City Council and so Belfast City Council has a big influence beyond the bounds of the City Hall. I feel if Belfast was to be extended any further it would exacerbate that influence in the Assembly.

Finally I just want to say that the issue of equality must be considered by the Boundary Commissioner because electorates outside the City of Belfast must have a vote which is equal in power and influence to any other councils. Now I do not feel that will be achieved by these present proposals and I am asking that attempts to expand the boundary of Belfast be abandoned. Thank you very much, Deputy Commissioner, that is my submission.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you. Councillor Crawford, may I just clarify, you have been speaking in part to your submission that you provided to us on a personal basis, that of 12 November?

Ronnie Crawford That is right.

Assistant Commissioner And you concur with the submission put in by Castlereagh Borough Council, but not that as put forward necessarily by your own party?

Ronnie Crawford Certainly not.

Assistant Commissioner That is the position, okay. Thank you very much now. Would anybody have any questions for Councillor Crawford before he concludes his submission? Thank you very much indeed Councillor.

Ronnie Crawford Thank you very much.

Assistant Commissioner I now have a grouping of three people, members of the Ulster Unionist Party; Alderman Dillon, Councillor Copeland and Mr Barr. Would they care to come forward as a group, if that is convenient to them? We have three seats at the front. Good morning, gentlemen.

Stephen Barr Mr Commissioner, thank you for having us here today. We wish to make some generic points first of all which are mainly made in our written submission.

Assistant Commissioner If you could maybe just introduce yourself to the transcribing system and to the hall.

Stephen Barr No problem. My name is Stephen Barr and I represent the Ulster Unionist Party. The party has made a written submission which I believe you have.

Assistant Commissioner I do have, yes.

Stephen Barr

Our points today will be majorly contained within that and expanding upon it in some way. As you will see at the outset, we had originally supported a proposal of fifteen Councils. We realise that that argument has been lost but we will still put on the record that we believe that fifteen would have been a better solution across the province but we are working with the model we have and that is the eleven that we have today. We had also made attempts within Stormont back in April and May, when the Local Government Bill was going through, to try and amend it to basically alleviate two major problems which we saw arising. One was the potential lack of flexibility for the Commissioner which related to a point which was raised by Mr Donaldson regarding the idea of "major part". We tried to get that clarified at Stormont but neither the DUP nor Sinn Fein were prepared to accept our arguments on that. We also attempted to amend the legislation to take account of the English legislation which would also require you to take account of local community identity. Indeed it was heartening to see Mr Donaldson's views now saying that he believed that what is paramount are the wishes of local communities. That is exactly what we tried to get the DUP to agree to in Stormont in April and May so it may have moved on. That was in relation to Dunmurry, but we will be using exactly the same principle in relation to our proposals for Dundonald. With regard to the notion of the idea of major and a "major part", the previous Commissioner made it clear that it was a spatial term rather than population. We tried to clarify that and the Commissioner made it clear in his own publication on page 5 that Section 1 of the Act does not define the meaning of the "major part". He took the view this was essentially a spatial term rather than a reference to population or electorate and therefore we believe that our proposals that the Dundonald area should transfer into Belfast is entirely within keeping with the Act, with the Commissioner's power and we would strongly urge close scrutiny of Section 4.3 on page 5 to that effect. We believe that local community identity is paramount. It is something which you just cannot get away from, in any shape or form, when it comes to deciding electoral boundaries because local representatives represent the electorate rather than territory. If the local people who live in an area do not identify with the electoral boundaries which are proposed for them then we are heading for a democratic deficit and heading for difficulties. We have pointed out that the fact that it is not in the legislation is a major flaw which is quite curious. It is in the legislation governing Parliamentary boundaries in Northern Ireland that the Commission can take account of any local ties and indeed in the last Parliamentary Boundary Review, which was only as recently as March 2008, it was stated that the Commission's

recommendations reflected the concerns with the need to maintain a fair balance between the aim of achieving electoral equality and, where possible, to preserve long established ties. We believe that they are both key points and that long established ties must be regarded and that not to do so is obviously a major problem. I will now defer to Councillor Dillon, who will deal with a few points regarding Lisburn, particularly the Dunmurry area, and lead off on that.

Assistant

Commissioner

Yes if it is suitable. Then what I would normally do is ask for questions in respect of the submission that you have made at this stage.

Stephen Barr

Okay, I will be returning when Dundonald comes up again with Councillor Copeland but that is fine.

Assistant

Commissioner

I think in the circumstances if you feel it is a collective approach. Perhaps you could do it on a subject basis insofar as that might be helpful?

Stephen Barr

Whichever suits you, sir.

Assistant

Commissioner

Well, we will see how it develops because I do not wish to have too long a submission and then people forget the questions they may wish to pose. That would not be helpful. Councillor Dillon.

Jim Dillon

Alderman Jim Dillon, Lisburn City Council, I am representing the Ulster Unionist Party this morning. By and large we are satisfied with the draft proposals of the Boundaries Commissioner, with the exception of Dunmurry and Dundonald.

Dunmurry has a long history of connection with Lisburn. There is a clear expression from the people there to stay in Lisburn. I have not met anyone in that community who wants to go into Belfast. There are numerous reasons for this, the higher rates in Belfast perhaps being one of them which garnishes their thoughts but they are naturally people belonging to Lisburn, have been for generations and we think the natural place for them to stay is Lisburn. I have listened with interest to the natural boundary that is proposed which I concur with, and I do not want to go over that again. It is most important that we keep that there.

As far as Dundonald is concerned, there are absolutely no ties between Dundonald and Lisburn whatsoever. There is not even a semblance of a major link. Anyone wishing to travel between the two urban areas will have to travel into Belfast to do so. This fact alone highlights the absurdity of the proposal contained in the Provisional Recommendations and that is the part I referred to at the beginning. This is the one part that we do not agree with. It is curious that the Provisional Recommendations go halfway to addressing the problems in the east by recommending the existing wards of Hillfoot, Lower Braniel, Upper Braniel, Gilnahirk and Tullycarnet be transferred into Belfast, thereby creating a more appropriate boundary in this part of the east, but it is inexplicable as to why Dundonald should be left out. The question I ask again is why has it been left out? It is immediately obvious to anyone with even a basic knowledge of the Dundonald area that it is an extension of East Belfast, comprised mainly of people who have migrated along the main arterial route of the Newtownards Road, so we think for these reasons Dundonald should be put into Belfast. That is basically my submission on those two major parts. As far as the rest is concerned, I am reasonably happy with it.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you. Could I therefore at this stage perhaps invite people who have heard the points that have been made by Mr Barr and by Alderman Dillon, if they have any questions for either of them? Mr Donaldson.

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

Thank you very much. I will share the microphone with Alderman Dillon here. First of all, in relation to Dundonald, Mr Barr made the point that the wishes of local communities should be reflected in the conclusions, yet presents no evidence whatsoever of what the wishes of the local community in Dundonald are. There is no evidence from the Ulster Unionist Party that they have surveyed the area, that they have done polls in the area or that they have presented any evidence that supports the contention that the people living in those five wards want to be in Belfast. There is no evidence of dissatisfaction in the Dundonald area of their previous and long association with Castlereagh Council. I am not aware, and my party is not aware, of any rebellion that has taken place or revolution in the Dundonald area where they have sought to extract themselves from Castlereagh in the past and move to Belfast. I am curious as to why now in 2008, having been in Castlereagh since the re-organisation of local government in 1972, the people in Dundonald area suddenly feel they have

no affinity with Castlereagh whatsoever and have an affinity with Belfast.

Secondly, in relation to Alderman Dillon's contention that there are no ties whatsoever between Dundonald and Lisburn, that is not true. The headquarters of the South Eastern Education and Library Board, which includes Lisburn, is in Dundonald. The headquarters of the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust, which includes Lisburn, is in Dundonald. The Dundonald and Lisburn areas are bound together in educational and health terms. If you look at the day to day lives of people, education and health have a major impact on their daily living. I would suggest to you that that represents a very strong tie between Dundonald and Lisburn in terms of the civic life of the people who live in those areas.

In relation to Dunmurry, I am seeking clarification on the UUP's position. Their submission does not give any support to the inclusion of Dunmurry within Lisburn; it makes no mention of it. The only mention of Dunmurry in the UUP submission is on page eight, to acknowledge the transfer of the Dunmurry ward along with Twinbrook, Kilwee, Poleglass, Collin Glen and a part of Seymour Hill into Belfast. Now I am not clear whether the mention of that is a tacit acceptance of the transfer of Dunmurry to Belfast and if they are now supporting Dunmurry being in Lisburn then I am curious as to why that was not mentioned in their submission.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Ultimately the presentation of the evidence before me is a matter for those who provide that evidence and therefore I will deal with it as it is presented in that sense, but I certainly feel, Alderman Dillon, if you would like to respond briefly in terms of the points that are made by Mr Donaldson and I think are directed towards your submission.

Jim Dillon

Yes, as far as Dunmurry is concerned, obviously the Ulster Unionist Party perhaps inadvertently failed to mention Dunmurry and it ought to have been mentioned and as far as the Ulster Unionist Party is concerned they are fully behind the submission that I am making this morning to retain Dunmurry in the Lisburn area.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

So to that degree, is that an addition or supplement to the submission which has been made hitherto by the party?

Jim Dillon

Yes and it is a submission we made in the Belfast review last Friday. We made the same point that Dunmurry should be retained within Lisburn.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I think that clarified the point raised by Mr Donaldson. Thank you very much.

Jim Dillon

With regard to the other points, if I may, first of all the argument that Castlereagh has no affinity with Belfast or has more affinity with Lisburn, or the people of Dundonald and so on, I would defy anyone to go to Dundonald to actually show me the boundary between Castlereagh and Belfast in any meaningful way on the ground. There is no realistic boundary between the urban parts of Castlereagh which are basically an extension of East Belfast. When one looks at the proposed Stormont boundaries, the people of Dundonald will be represented by the East Belfast MP and by the East Belfast MLAs. The Parliamentary Boundary Commission found absolutely no difficulty in adding those parts of the City and they did not add them to Lagan Valley, they were added to East Belfast. I think there was a good reason for that because they are an extension of East Belfast and I think if you go to the very points made as to why Dunmurry village should remain within Lisburn, highlighted were educational links, social links, local government links. I think certainly, regarding the educational links, shopping links and the social links of the people of Dundonald, they are East Belfast people. They are basically people who have migrated a long way up the Upper Newtownards Road. In many cases, the large estates on the fringes of East Belfast are people who have come from within the inner east. Look at sporting ties, you will find more Glentoran fans there than you will find Lisburn Distillery supporters. You will certainly find people go to Forestside shopping centre. They will also go into the Connswater Shopping Centre and they will see the Newtownards Road churches as where their families came from, where their families worshipped and we would say there is a community of identity which extends from the Newtownards Road right along it. They may have some ties with Lisburn. Lisburn is a fine city and we all have shopping ties and social ties with Lisburn but I think ,if you ask people in Dundonald and in Castlereagh, that urban part of Castlereagh which fringes East Belfast, as to where their identity is strongest, I think I would be very surprised if most of them do not say it is to Belfast and I know Councillor Copeland who represents part of Castlereagh maybe wants to come in at this point just to reinforce that.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I think maybe Mr Donaldson's point was more on the empirical evidence that is available, rather than what are genuinely held views that you have expressed. I think the point is about putting that into firm evidence and none has been received by me as yet in terms of that. Therefore I must give such weight as is appropriate in the circumstances to what you say and will do so. Councillor Copeland, would you care to make your submission at this stage, unless there are any other questions? Sorry, can I hold you for a moment please? Councillor Crawford again.

**Ronnie
Crawford**

I just have some questions for Alderman Dillon. He will recall at that full Council meeting in August that we unanimously voted for the entire Castlereagh Council and the entire Lisburn Council to be merged and he was present at that meeting. He was also present at the Strategic Policy Meeting in which the majority voted for the present submission which ceded six of the Dummurry wards and looked for the recovery of Belvoir and Forestside. He is now backing this proposal on page 7 of the Ulster Unionist Party submission which contains a bit of a Viking raid here on Castlereagh, because they are asking for Dundonald, Carrowreagh, Graham's Bridge, Enler and the urban portion of Ballyhanwood in addition to what has already been given to Belfast. Does Councillor Dillon recognise that if those wards were ceded, Lisburn may very well become the smallest Council in the whole of Northern Ireland and can he tell me if he is here representing the Ulster Unionist Group on Lisburn City Council or whether he is here in an individual capacity? Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I will allow Councillor Dillon to come back on those points. I am mindful not to delve into the area of what may be differences between members of the same party because that does not necessarily help.

Jim Dillon

Thank you, Mr Deputy Commissioner. As far as the so called unanimous vote, I think Councillor Crawford mentioned in August in Lisburn City Council, it could have been unanimous and it may not have been unanimous. Sometimes things go through Councils and because someone sits without making a hullabaloo about it does not mean you necessarily agree with it. It could not be construed in any way that I did agree with what went through. I was not at the Strategic Policy Committee and I did not agree it there because I am not a member of the Strategic Policy Committee. I am definitely not

representing the Ulster Unionist Group on Lisburn City Council, I am representing the Ulster Unionist Party and that is my submission this morning. Thank you very much.

Assistant

Commissioner

Thank you. May I move on to Councillor Copeland to make his submission?

Michael

Copeland

Thank you very much Mr Deputy Commissioner. Could I begin by handing you a letter which clarifies the position of the Ulster Unionist party within Castlereagh Borough Council regarding other submissions that you may have received.

Assistant

Commissioner

Unfortunately written submissions were meant to be ...

Michael

Copeland

This is not a submission, it is a clarification.

Assistant

Commissioner

It would have to be read into the record so that all others may hear it and be able to comment upon it, Mr Copeland.

Michael

Copeland

Well with your permission, it is a copy of a letter that was submitted to the Chief Executive of Castlereagh Borough Council after the Special Council Meeting that decided the methodology of Castlereagh Borough Council's response. It reads as follows:

'Dear Adrian, (that being the Chief Executive of Castlereagh Borough Council) reference response by Castlereagh Borough Council to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioners, I am writing on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party Grouping within Castlereagh Borough Council. As you may recall a delay was encountered prior to the start of the Special Council Meeting held on 10 November 2008 which resulted in a substantial number of Councillors from other parties leaving the Chamber. After the meeting a resolution was passed and the Ulster Unionist Party agreed that a robust response would be prepared by yourself (that is the Chief Executive) and we believe that after consultation and comments from the party whips it would be approved by the Mayor prior to delivery to the Boundaries Commissioners (yourselves). On Wednesday, 12 November 2008 an emailed copy of the response was sent to my place of work at four thirty pm, 30 minutes before the time which I understood to be the deadline for the receipt of the

submission by the Boundaries Commissioner. I did not physically receive that email copy until Thursday, 13 November 2008 when I returned to my place of work. I had been out on a Disability Living Allowance Appeal that afternoon. I did, however, obtain a copy from the Mayor very kindly after the meeting in the Council Offices which was held on the evening on 12 November, some hours after what we presumed was the deadline. I have checked with my party colleague regarding the wording of the resolution and his recollection is the same as my own, i.e. that the whips were to see the document prior to its submission to the Boundaries Commissioner, the premise being that we could not possibly be associated with the document, the contents of which were unknown to us. The Ulster Unionist Party neither imparts nor inculcates any responsibility towards yourself for the material concerned and fully accepts that the meeting was held at the end of a very long day and that the councillors who remained at the meeting may have left with differing interpretations of the resolution. I am, however, instructed by my group that the response provided by Castlereagh Borough Council, whilst it does and can be said to represent the views of Castlereagh Borough Council, however, does not accurately reflect the views of the Ulster Unionist Party Group within Castlereagh Borough Council'.

Assistant

Commissioner Right, thank you very much, Mr Copeland.

Michael

Copeland

Mr Deputy Commissioner I have been privileged for a term and a half to represent the people of the Castlereagh Central electoral area on Castlereagh Borough Council. I have always tried in council to maintain consensus and I am proud of my membership of that council and proud of its record of service delivery. I am proud of its record in setting rates and I hope I could count most, if not all, the members of Castlereagh Borough Council, above and beyond the plane of politics, as colleagues and indeed in many cases friends, even those from different parties. The current proposals effectively see Castlereagh Borough Council decimated, for want of a better word. Approximately 26,000 of its citizens, 11,450 of its households and 15,700 of its electorate are to be transferred to Belfast. That is the current proposal and I do not believe personally that a great deal will be said that will change it. In attempting to establish the parameters by which decisions have been made, and I would draw attention to the eloquent defence of Dunmurry and Lisburn provided by the member for Lagan Valley, the case was well put and the case was to me

perfectly logical but the same case can also be applied to Dundonald.

Dundonald is a man made, to a degree artificially constructed, conurbation on the fringes of East Belfast. The people who live there, largely in formerly Housing Executive estates, were drawn largely from the redevelopment of the Woodstock and Newtownards Roads. For every 100 houses that were demolished for redevelopment, 40 new houses were built in their place and that naturally led to an outward migration towards the fringes of the City. The people who live in Dundonald consider themselves to be part of East Belfast actually rather than politically. The family ties are real and present and if the argument can be made and as it was made eloquently by Mr Donaldson, then the same argument can be applied to Dundonald. The basic building block of all politics, the foundation that everything is laid on in terms of administration, in terms of the connectivity that people feel with those who affect their lives by enacting legislation, is local councils. To travel from Dundonald to Lisburn is as onerous as currently travelling from the Braniel to the health centre at the top of the Newtownards Road; it takes nearly two hours and you have to get two buses. There is no direct transport link. Of the 189 constituents that I have met in the last ten working days in Sir Reg Empey's Constituency Office, 60 were from Ballybeen. That represents almost 30%. I have spoken to the purveyors of taxi companies, as taxis are basically the form of public transport that most people use in this area of Belfast and no-one could recall ordering a taxi to travel from Ballybeen to Lisburn. They could not find a single citizen who would profess to support Lisburn Distillery although I would take exception to the preponderance that everyone who lives right there supports Glentoran, as there are a substantial number of blue men about the place as well. Ballybeen and Dundonald are in effect an extension historically, socially, politically, religiously and educationally of the city of Belfast and if arguments can be put for other places, they must surely be applied to Ballybeen and Dundonald with equal volition. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Would anybody have any questions for Mr Copeland? Mr Donaldson?

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

Thank you very much indeed, Mr Deputy Commissioner. It is interesting to note that Councillor Copeland talks about Castlereagh being decimated but then recommends the further decimation of the borough by removing another chunk

of it from its current construction into Belfast. The evidence that he presents, Mr Deputy Commissioner, is anecdotal whereas the evidence I presented in relation to Dunmurry was factual. I am aware that you've had over 1,000 letters from local residents in Dunmurry seeking or opposing the move to Belfast. I would be interested to know how many letters were received from Dundonald supporting a move into Belfast. Having looked at the website I am not aware of there being very many. There has been no evidence presented to date by the Ulster Unionist submission to quantify the extent of support within Dundonald for a move into Belfast and I think that is important because if we are basing this primarily on the wishes of people then we need to present evidence to back that up and I have heard no evidence so far apart from anecdotal evidence to that effect.

In terms of migration from Belfast, I would like to ask Councillor Copeland, does he accept that, for example, you can go into many of the estates in Antrim or Lisburn and you will find people who have migrated from Belfast? As someone who canvases the estates in Lisburn regularly, I often meet people who have come from Sandy Row, from Shankill and from other areas - yet that is hardly an argument for Lisburn being in with Belfast. People migrate all over the place. You will find in Antrim many people who moved from Londonderry many years ago. I do not think anyone is suggesting that Antrim should become part of the new city council in Londonderry and I do not think therefore migration, even though it is not quantified in any way by this submission, is of itself necessarily an indicator of where people would want to see their local government run from. I would say, a far stronger viewpoint and a far stronger influence on the way that people see things is the amount of rates that they pay and I would be interested in knowing from Councillor Copeland what surveys he has carried out in Ballybeen or any other part of Dundonald as to whether people in that area are happy to accept paying a much higher level of rates for the privilege of going into Belfast City than they currently do in Castlereagh or would do in the new Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council. If he has carried out any surveys, can he please present us with the results?

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I think before you respond Mr Copeland, I have your point in the sense that you are giving to me an impression of your experience in dealing with people who you represent throughout the area and I do not believe, subject to correction, that you are putting forward any empirical evidence, but you are putting forward your genuinely held

views in terms of that. I do not believe an answer to Mr Donaldson's question is firm evidence of an empirical nature, is that right?

**Michael
Copeland**

The views are genuinely held and based on discussions over the last ten days and previously, but I thought the last ten days were the most accurate when keeping records. I did put the questions to people and I did ask them about the issue of rates, although I am aware that rates are not an issue and it is not a matter of concern for the Commissioner and that is why I have studiously tried to avoid the issue. Mr Donaldson also repeated comments about Dundonald being shifted into Lisburn. Dundonald is in effect in Belfast geographically. Now the other areas that he talked about are miles and miles separated. With Dundonald, there appears to be some reference to a green wedge between Dundonald and the City of Belfast. That green wedge, I have concluded, is a current golf course that is about to be a building site and a graveyard that lies under the control of Belfast City Council.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Yes I can see that there is a debate here. I have really received quite a lot of evidence in terms of both, yesterday and today. I can therefore take away the points and perhaps dwell on them and give them consideration and I fully appreciate the competing arguments that exist on this issue.

**Jeffrey
Donaldson**

I would also say, Mr Deputy Commissioner, that I do not think it is fair or correct to say that people in Dundonald are going in with Lisburn. The new Council is not Lisburn; it is Lisburn City and Castlereagh. Dundonald has been a part of Castlereagh for a long time and I have not heard Mr Copeland disassociate Dundonald from Castlereagh. I simply make the point that this is a spurious argument when in fact the new Council under the Act is a combination of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I am interested that Councillor Copeland disowns himself from Castlereagh in that sense, because surely Castlereagh has an identity? I would also make the point that the Member of Parliament for East Belfast, Mr Robinson, who has represented the Dundonald area for a long time, is strongly of the view that Dundonald should remain in Castlereagh because that reflects the wishes of the people in that community. So I would make the point that not all elected representatives hold Councillor Copeland's view that Dundonald should transfer to Castlereagh. I am sure that those elected representatives are equally as in touch with the people in Dundonald as is

Councillor Copeland. It is important to remember that this is Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council we are talking about, therefore it is wrong to argue that because people live up one end of that Council they cannot have an affinity with it. I could equally argue that people living in Glenavy have very little affinity with Moneyreagh but it does not mean that Moneyreagh and Glenavy cannot be part of something called Lisburn and Castlereagh Council. You could apply that argument to Killadeas in County Fermanagh and ask the question what connection does Killadeas have with Mountjoy in Omagh and yet the two are together. When you are dealing with eleven Councils, inevitably you will find areas on the periphery of all Councils that do not necessarily have an affinity with another part at the far end of that Council. That in my opinion is not a substantive argument against that area transferring to a new Council.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much. I do have an appreciation of the arguments, gentlemen. Rehearsing them in front of me is helpful to a degree and I will allow one point if it is possible and then I would like to progress on to other submissions.

**Michael
Copeland**

The question to which I responded was put by Mr Donaldson regarding Ballybeen going into Lisburn, the phrase was his not mine.

Jim Dillon

Alderman Jim Dillon, Ulster Unionist Party and the small point that I want to make is the Ulster Unionist Party strongly believes that no matter what proposals are adopted, Lisburn must retain a City status and we all feel that.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you. Mr Poots, if you would like to come forward.

Edwin Poots

I wanted to pose a couple of questions to Mr Copeland. It is Edwin Poots, Lisburn City Council. Mr Copeland, are you suggesting that the Dundonald area be removed and that there are no other areas that are currently being drawn into Belfast put back into Castlereagh?

**Michael
Copeland**

I do not think that anything I could say or do here would encourage them to put anything back into Castlereagh. The area I represent, Castlereagh Central, is going almost in its entirety into the City of Belfast.

Edwin Poots Well do you realise in that case that you are asking the Commissioners to act in an *ultra vires* manner in that what is put in the Act is that it is to be the whole area or the major part of the area. What you would be proposing would actually be ensuring that the minor part of Castlereagh would go into the new Council and, as a consequence, what you are actually asking the Commissioners to do is act illegally.

Michael Copeland We have dealt with that point.

Assistant Commissioner Sorry, we need to get a bit of structure onto the matter and I think if I allow Mr Copeland to come back on that again briefly so that I have his point on it?

Michael Copeland It is my view that the current proposals fall within the category that you have just stated.

Assistant Commissioner Very well.

Edwin Poots In the decimation of Castlereagh, you are saying?

Michael Copeland The current proposals envisage not the transfer of Castlereagh in its entirety into Lisburn Castlereagh.

Edwin Poots Or the major part?

Michael Copeland There are 26,000 already being put into Castlereagh and my view is that if a thing is dead, it is dead.

Assistant Commissioner Gentleman, I do not know that a debate of this nature necessarily helps me in determining the points that I am required to. Mr Barr?

Stephen Barr Could I just point out, as we have said earlier, the Commissioner dealt with this in Section 4.3 on page 5. It was also dealt with in the Assembly when the Ulster Unionist Party tried to make this point very clear. Section 1.2 of the Act does not define the meaning of the major part. This is from the Commissioner. *'I took the view this was essentially a spatial term rather than a reference to population or electorate.'* Even with the Dundonald wards being removed, if you look at the size of the

proposed Lisburn City and Castlereagh on a map and you look at the old Castlereagh this is still, in terms of territory, not the major part of Castlereagh being moved into Belfast. The major part of Castlereagh, even under our proposals, will still be going into Lisburn and Castlereagh because it is still the major part of territory - which is exactly what the Commissioner has said.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you gentleman. I will take a view of all the points that have been made and I am grateful for your participation this morning in this process.

Stephen Barr

There is just one final point. We are aware of some proposals that Irish ward names should be applied across the province, you may have come across this. The Ulster Unionist Party is opposed to this. We would prefer English ward names to be used in their entirety across Northern Ireland and obviously throughout the City of Lisburn and Borough of Castlereagh.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you. Thank you gentleman. I would now call on Councillor Jack Beattie.

Jack Beattie

Councillor Jack Beattie, Castlereagh Borough Council. Deputy Commissioner at this time of the day, all of the points that I would wish to make have already made, and very eloquently made, especially by the first two speakers. I am speaking on behalf of the proposal put forward by Castlereagh Council itself, of which you have a copy, and I speak in support of that. I would also make the point that maybe on the last issue that it was stated that Castlereagh and Dundonald - from this point to Dundonald - you have to go into Belfast and back out again. That is not true. You take the Hillsborough Road, you go through Moneyreagh and you are into Dundonald. You do not have to go into Belfast - that is just a point I wish to clear.

With regards to the areas that are being taken into Belfast, I would make a submission that an area of Belvoir at one time did belong to the Hillsborough Borough Council area. The people of that area do not wish to belong to Belfast, even though there has been a survey carried out, which I am not quite sure how well that was carried out by the SDLP. In some of those submissions I feel that there may be, and maybe I should not mention it this way, a bit of gerrymandering going on here. I know the Commissioner has said that in no way did he take into account the different voting patterns, but I do think that for those areas that are supposed to go in by the SDLP from Castlereagh, the additional areas to go into Belfast

completely upset the balance in Belfast and in the Castlereagh and Lisburn area.

I do support the submission that our Council offices, if you want to call them that, at Forestside and that area, need to stay within Lisburn and Castlereagh. It was removed from us and I know you have made the point earlier that rates were not what you were speaking about, but as someone who has chaired Finance and General Purposes within Castlereagh for about six years of the last sixteen years, it would be a major dig in the face to Lisburn. If I was a Lisburn ratepayer, I would be saying "why do I want to take in Castlereagh when the main part of its rate base is going into Belfast, and what we are left with are areas that will not bring in that rate of base?". It will mean that Lisburn will have to, in fact, increase its rates because of this and I can see that the people of Lisburn would say "well why do we want that?". Lisburn and Castlereagh will be a very big area and therefore the people living in the area where our headquarters are will need some sort of offices there, because it is a very large area and for us to replace those offices, in my estimation we would be spending about ten million pounds. I think it makes sense that those offices should remain within the Lisburn and Castlereagh area. It makes sense that the shopping centre should also remain within Lisburn.

I have major concerns with the proposals that were put forward by the Ulster Unionist Party of taking further areas of Lisburn and Castlereagh into Belfast. If you continue to stretch the area in that way, you may as well forget about Castlereagh. You will have torn it completely apart, and short of any unique position, the way these boundaries are proposed, we have been torn asunder. It is an area in which I take great pleasure in saying that we have kept rates down. I have played a large part in that and we have provided excellent services at the same time, but also I am concerned about our staff the way this is going to be drawn. Lisburn will keep whatever staff it needs and what they are going to be left with will not create so much trouble for them. Belfast will hold on to what it has got. We have excellent staff that I think will lose out in this whole transfer and they do concern me. Maybe that is not something that councillors usually speak about but I do concern myself about the effort that they put in and the services they provide.

I also want to speak about the Tullycarnet area, because we have put a lot of effort, in Castlereagh, into a social economy project there and that is going to go into Belfast. That

programme and that project will need continuing support. It is a wonderful project and I am quite sure people will come from all over the world to see it. I do concern myself that when that goes into Belfast it will not receive the same support from the Belfast City Council as it has done from Castlereagh. There was also a survey carried out in the Cregagh area just over a year ago, and I must say it was by my own party, and the people in the Cregagh area, contrary to what Councillor Copeland has just said, did not want to go into Belfast. They wished to remain with the lower rate base that they see themselves in and do not forget Castlereagh, even people in Dundonald, see themselves as Castlereagh people and they wish to remain within Castlereagh.

We also run risks with some of our areas where the leisure centres and community halls will go into Belfast and some of those facilities do need support at the moment. Some of them are old and I and people from that area feel that some of those things will be knocked down and not be replaced by something else. Belfast City Council, I repeat, will not have the same meaning to the people of the Cregagh or Braniel areas as well. You have our submission, and I fully support the submission. Councillor Copeland also said - or more or less implied - that it was a *fait accompli*, but he did say the Mayor, who happens to be my wife, had given him a copy of that submission so it was not as if he was left out on a limb. He had it and it was there to be seen by all the different whips, and it was agreed by the Council at the time and had they have stayed to the end of that meeting and compared the full course of that day, they would have know what was actually proposed and there would have been no shock to them. On that I really complete my submission except to say that the people of Belvoir do not want to belong to Belfast, they wish to remain in the Castlereagh area and they would see themselves as being part of Lisburn.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much Councillor. Might I just raise one query with you? You refer to a survey last year, I think it was in the Cregagh area. Can I ask who conducted that survey?

Jack Beattie

It was carried out by the DUP, and one Councillor in particular who took charge of it was Councillor John Norris. Now again, when I look at that, maybe there was no documented evidence which may have come from McDonnell's survey. Nevertheless, that survey was carried out and should that survey be carried out again, they would find exactly the same thing.

Assistant Commissioner Do you know what the results were of the survey were?

Jack Beattie Off the top of my end, it was about 80%, I think, of people wished to remain within the Castlereagh area.

Assistant Commissioner The survey was door-to-door so it really required a response. It was either no or yes or not responding?

Jack Beattie It was, yes.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much, any questions from members? Yes Mr Poots if you would care to come forward, thank you.

Edwin Poots Edwin Poots, Lisburn City Council. Can I just ask Councillor Beattie about the Hanwood area that he referred to, the Social Economy Project. Would he agree that it would make a lot more sense for that to remain as one unit along with the Ice Bowl and so forth and that the current boundary that has been drawn is not a particularly strong boundary; that you could actually create a better and stronger boundary to the outside of that particular development?

Jack Beattie Yes, I agree - we have put a lot of effort into the Ice Bowl as you know. We have striven to develop that area over many years and we were held back by a green wedge, but we have now got over that problem. We now have a new cinema being built there at the moment. There are outlets alongside the cinema and there is the Hanwood Project sitting in the Tullycarnet area. What this has done is divide that right down the middle. You can see that here is a whole complex and part of it is going into Belfast and part of it is remaining in Lisburn/Castlereagh. It does not make sense.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much. Thank you very much indeed Councillor for your participation this morning.

Jack Beattie Thank you.

Assistant

Commissioner

We have a representative from Belfast City Council Mr Walsh, I think, maybe? Yes. Good morning, Mr Walsh.

John

Walsh

Good morning, Commissioner. John Walsh, Principal Solicitor, Belfast City Council. Commissioner, you have been provided with a speaking note this morning which I think encapsulates the main things that I wish to say on behalf of the Council. It is a submission that was made in essence at the hearing last Thursday in respect of Belfast, however, I thought it prudent to make essentially the same submission to you this morning.

At the outset, Commissioner, can I say that the Council has no adverse comment to make in relation to the methodology used by the Commission to arrive at the current proposal. By way of explanation and clarification, this is the Council's first corporate response to the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations. This is because to date the Council considered that it was prudent to leave the input into this process to the individual party/political groups. However, from inspection of submissions on the web, it emerged that certain submissions have proposed changes which could have negative implications for the Council. Indeed, one submission has actually recommended that the extent of the existing Belfast City Council area - not the larger area recommended in the Provisional Recommendations - should, in fact, be reduced. This is of concern to the Council as there is political consensus and a corporate opinion against any reduction in the extent of the existing Council area. It is in this context Belfast City Council wishes to make its views heard on a number of points at this public hearing. These views can be categorized into general points pertaining to broad issues concerning the Commissioner's approach to the identification of boundaries; and specific points in response to certain submissions.

Commissioner, if I may look at the general points first. A number of general points on the approach to boundary delimitation can be distilled under the headings of (a) statutory parameters and (b) additional factors. Statutory Parameters: please note from the outset that we understand how the Commissioner has arrived at his recommendations, having regard to the statutory parameters within which he has to work. In this regard, we understand that Belfast has to be equipped with a certain number of wards that falls within the range of 55 to 65. We appreciate that the Commissioner,, in the desire to appear

even-handed, would have a tendency to advocate the medium of that range, namely the 60 ward figure. We also accept that a degree of interpretation has to be made in respect of what constitutes "readily identifiable boundaries", in terms of the importance attached to physical features on the ground – whether they be man-made or natural features (rivers, lakes or uplands, roads, railway lines, and so on). To this end, we recognise that the existing urban footprint and Development Plans, such as the Belfast Urban Area Plan and Draft BMAP, can act as reference points for deciding what constitutes 'readily identifiable boundaries'. This is because the Development Plans define settlement limits and apply land use zonings, particularly those relating to green spaces between built areas, which need to be respected when defining boundaries. Taking on board the foregoing points, it must be stated categorically that we are not here to dispute those features that are adjudged to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries'. Rather, one of the main reasons why we are here today is to inform the Commissioner that we have no issue with the principle of the expansion of the Belfast City Council area, as based on his interpretation of 'readily identifiable boundaries'.

Additional factors: having stated the above, we would, however, like to make the Commission aware of a number of additional factors that may help inform it of the need to facilitate the expansion of Belfast City Council's area. There are essentially two of these and obviously I am making these two in the context of the Lisburn submission.

Firstly, we are well aware that the definition of local government districts is very much premised on achieving greater efficiency in the delivery of services and in terms of securing better value for money and quality of service. With this in mind, it is to be noted that the Commissioner's approach to the definition of the Belfast Council area offers a degree of balance. It allows for the creation of a critical mass of population within the Belfast Council area upon which to sustain and improve upon efficiency in the delivery of services. We say this for the very good reason that Belfast has a disproportionate number of deprived wards in Northern Ireland. Indeed, 8 out of 10 are located in the council area. The existence of these wards and the Commissioner's recommendations to include other wards of similar socio-economic standing (Twinbrook and Collin Glen, which are ranked twentieth and the twenty-first most deprived) make it imperative that the council district should

be equipped with the optimum population size and geographical area capable of sustaining and improving services.

Secondly, we attach appreciable significance to the Regional Development Strategy; its aspirations to create a thriving Belfast Metropolitan Area based on a revitalisation of the City of Belfast. In this regard, we view Belfast as the regional driver for the economic growth of Northern Ireland and all efforts to promote this objective in the form of bolstering its population size should be welcomed. This is especially so when it is considered that, in recent times, Belfast has endured significant population loss to surrounding districts.

Against the background of the general points which I have outlined, we would like to make the following comments in respect of the submissions of Castlereagh and Lisburn.

The suggestion by Castlereagh and Lisburn to include the Galwally area (including Forestside) within their amalgamated District Council area flies in the face of logic governing the need to have regard to the 'readily identifiable boundaries' guideline. If permitted, it would amount to an irrational departure from those features that have helped to shape the delineation of the district boundary in this part of Belfast, namely the readily identifiable boundaries of the Outer Ring road and the upland topography in this area. Indeed, when viewed on a map, it would graphically stand out as an aberration in boundary demarcation.

Other observations, Commissioner, that I would like to make in relation to this morning. First of all, and this is in relation to Belvoir and Forestside, and I think it has direct relevance to the Lisburn submission - we say that the Outer Ring and surrounding topography is a sound way of defining a readily identifiable boundary. In this case, and in that particular area, Commissioner, the proposal uses a 4-lane carriageway, with in excess of 25,000 vehicle movements per day, and we say that is an appropriate way of drawing the readily identifiable boundary.

If I could then comment, Commissioner, on Dr Gordon's - what I have described as a contrived - boundary which goes to the rear of the Castlereagh civic offices. He, Commissioner, has explained this by reference to a change or a break in land use and he also uses the earlier proposals by the Commissioner which proposed to adopt the same boundary, of course,

without having gone through this formal process and the fact that historically it had been used. Commissioner, I am sort of in a position of advantage here, because I grew up in Galwally for 25 years, so I actually know the area very, very well and I can say, Commissioner, that the intensification of land use here over a number of years has markedly changed this. I do not know if you knew the area when it was Wally's Barn - a Wild West disco way ahead of its time many years ago. I do not know if you went there, Commissioner. The Cooke Rugby Club was there, a vast open space, Drumkeen Hotel and some very modest government offices and then to the rear of what would have been Supermac, there was a vast swathe of undeveloped land. So, in effect, what you had was a corridor of very limited land use or non-intense land use, so in that sense, historically you might have been able to define it as a boundary. The same cannot be said of it today. I also noted that Dr Gordon, when he addressed the Belfast hearing last week, did not make any reference to the actual residential use that lies to the rear of the civic offices. And I say that the boundary that he has in his mind, well, it is simply not there.

Commissioner, you have heard about the aspirations of Lisburn in terms of city status. Of course, I will make the simple comment that that is not relevant to your consideration and the issues that come into your statutory remit. Again, the issues that have been raised with you in relation to the civic offices at Castlereagh, I say again, do not come within your proper statutory field of consideration. Nor indeed does the argument made in relation to rates income that relates to Forestside come within your field of statutory consideration. I would simply say, in relation to Councillor Crawford's critique of the ambitions of Belfast City Council, that whilst I can fully understand why he holds those views, nothing that he expressed this morning should come within the field of your statutory consideration in drawing what are readily identifiable boundaries.

Assistant

Commissioner

Thank you, Mr Walsh. Might I ask if anybody has any questions they wish to pose? I suspect there may be. Dr Gordon?

Michael

Gordon

Michael Gordon, Turley Associates, for Lisburn City Council. Unfortunately, Mr Walsh is quite correct. I do not know anything about Wally's Bar.

John Walsh

It was Wally's Barn.

**Michael
Gordon**

Wally's Barn, apologies.

John Walsh

It was formerly a UVF hostel.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I think I know it, or did.

**Michael
Gordon**

Just picking up on a few of the general points. The Belfast submission talks about critical mass, about optimum population size, and a geographical area that is capable of sustaining and improving services. All I would say about that is that the same objectives are close to Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh. The same observations could be made about that new local government district. Also, reference was made to the Regional Development Strategy and the objective of improving and increasing the number of people that live within Belfast. We have been here very recently in relation to the public enquiry into the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and, from our perspective, those policy objectives really do not have any particular bearing on the enquiry that you are engaged in here and, indeed, will be achieved irrespective of the alternative boundary that has been proposed by Lisburn City Council. Our proposal would allow the 60 ward framework to be perpetuated within Belfast and also help address the problems that we see within the Lisburn/Castlereagh area about a very low average ward size.

In terms of the disputed boundary that we dealt with at length last week, obviously we stand by the position that we took then. There needs to be some way to connect the Lagan boundary across to Glencreagh Road and the observation that I made was that there is a break in land use between the Forestside district centre and the residential area in behind. That is the current boundary between Belfast and Castlereagh and there is no reason why that needs to be adjusted. It is also a boundary that the Commissioner used the last time this was reviewed. It is the one he actually brought into the public domain the last time, although I appreciate that was in relation to a different number of district councils, so it was a slightly different set of circumstances. My point is that the same legislative provisions in relation to readily identifiable boundaries would have been in his mind at that time as should have been in his mind most recently as well.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you Dr Gordon. Mr Walsh, might I ask you to respond?

John Walsh I do not think we are ever going to agree

Assistant Commissioner I suspect that might be the case.

John Walsh And having had the benefit of hearing Mr Gordon last Thursday - I think we locked horns - I think I really anticipated most of the points that he intended to make in terms of my submission, too. So obviously, in the context of outcomes I did not advance certain things to you in the sense that they had to be driven by the outcome, but that what was proposed would have an outcome which was positive in terms of where it would leave us. So obviously I come at it from the perspective of Belfast and looking after Belfast City Council's interest and I can understand why Mr Gordon might approach it slightly differently.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much, that is a very helpful point to make. Mr Poots.

Edwin Poots Edwin Poots, Lisburn Council. A couple of issues. Mr Walsh did refer to population and the necessity of Belfast to increase its population and then he also referred to deprivation. He seemed to be arguing against himself in saying we want the population but the people of Twinbrook and Poleglass happen to be deprived areas so we are not so sure about that. Do you actually want Twinbrook and Poleglass because we are quite happy to keep them in the Lisburn City Council area?

John Walsh Commissioner, what I was saying was that if the current proposals involved the transfer, obviously Belfast needed to have the additional resources available to it to provide appropriate level service to those wards; not only to those wards but having regard to the fact that it already has within its area a significant number of areas that fall very far down the scale of deprivation. Again, I come back to the point that whilst this is not something that is a statutory consideration for you in terms of your exercise, I do understand that, I do say that the current proposal will result in a positive outcome in terms of where we want it to be in terms of delivery of service and finance and everything else.

Edwin Poots I noted that you did not make any argument in relation to Lisburn's proposals on Dunmurry. Do you recognise that Belfast

City Council's area has been increased to the East and to the South and to the West and that it could increase to the North and the Commissioner's proposals could be changed in that respect? And you do also recognise that in terms of constituency boundaries it has actually exceeded West Belfast and moved into the Lagan Valley constituency whereas in North Belfast there is a huge tract of North Belfast which is not in Belfast City Council?

Assistant

Commissioner

I can see where you are coming from but you will appreciate I understand the different ramifications of the Provisional Recommendations and I am not sure whether that necessarily helps me in terms of Mr Walsh's view on that because I can appreciate the overall ...

Edwin Poots

Yes, but if the argument for Belfast is that it needs to expand and we are making the argument that there are two wards that we believe that Lisburn and Castlereagh need, in order to meet, first of all, the requirements in terms of the 'major part' of the legislation, then there is the opportunity for Belfast to make up additional population and rate base elsewhere.

Assistant

Commissioner

Mr Poots, you will appreciate the strictures under which my consideration must proceed, namely the rules as set out in the legislation and they do not allow me to go into the areas such as you mentioned of rate base. You appreciate, therefore, that is not going to fuel my consideration.

Edwin Poots

I understand. It was introduced by Mr Walsh.

Assistant

Commissioner

It was indeed, and I have allowed a latitude, but I think one must draw a line under it.

Edwin Poots

I have two or three more questions. Mr Walsh indicated the Outer Ring as being the boundary. Would he then accept that everything to the upper side of the Outer Ring of the Knock Dual Carriageway then should go into Lisburn and be redrawn?

John Walsh

Commissioner, I do not want to get into the specifics of that. What I said was that the use of the Outer Ring with surrounding topography was an appropriate way of drawing the line in that particular area. What Mr Poots must appreciate is that I do not want to get into the issues of specific areas or wards because those are issues that the Council has chosen to leave to party

political submissions, and therefore I am a little limited in what I can say.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I understand, that is consistent with the structure of your submission.

Edwin Poots

But if you are going to use the Outer Ring as a boundary then you should be consistent in it and the Outer Ring to the eastern side of the Outer Ring should all go one way or else the other - if you are making that case. The other thing is that, in terms of Knockbreda, given that you came from that area, you would remember that many people from Drumbo and from the Carr area would have attended the schools in Knockbreda area.

John Walsh

Is that question being asked in a personal capacity?

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I think it is and I am saying it is not really going to help me very much in terms of ...

Edwin Poots

... in terms of between the areas ...

John Walsh

I had many friends from many areas particularly drawn, I think, from the east and the south up as far as Carryduff and down to the middle of the Ormeau Road and over to the south and indeed into Malone.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you Mr Walsh and thank you Mr Poots. Mr Meredith, thank you.

**Desmond
Meredith**

Good morning, Assistant Commissioner, Desmond Meredith. I am here on a purely personal basis although I am a member of the Community Association of Belvoir/Milltown. Because I have not been able to get any basic survey work done in regard to general feelings of the population of the area, I will have to speak from a purely personal point of view.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I understand and you have kindly prepared a note. If you would care to read that note, Mr Meredith, that would allow others to consider it and if so raise questions.

**Desmond
Meredith**

I wish to raise an objection to the proposal to merge part of Castlereagh, specifically the Belvoir estate, into the Belfast City Council area rather than a more natural alliance with Lisburn

City Council. I raise my objection to that part merger by splitting Castlereagh Council between Lisburn and Belfast on the grounds that a more natural geographical association with Lisburn is both aligned through Lagan Valley Regional Centre and the Castlereagh Hills which stretch from the Belvoir estate right down to the Lisburn City Centre and the Island Centre. This follows the Boundary Commissioner's viewpoint that areas of natural beauty, tourism, for example, the Mourne, should be allocated to a single council area. The Lagan Valley area is being developed as a combined tourist attraction. To attempt to split or sub-divide this facility between two city councils would lead to a potential waste of resource, and submissions for funding for any future development of tourist activities would be competing and would have to be highly specific, potentially complex, in applications.

Also, from a purely demographic point of view, Belvoir estate would be lost in the much larger geographical area of Greater Belfast which is more aligned around the Belfast Lough area. Castlereagh, and Belvoir in particular, would be on the periphery of the Belfast region instead of aligned to its natural backdrop of Lisburn. The Lagan River has been a natural boundary between County Antrim and County Down. There has been significant greying of boundaries in recent times; for example, the postcode for Belvoir is BT8. This has been declared as County Antrim whereas it actually is physically in County Down, that is, south of the Lagan River.

Regarding nominations on man-made divisions, roads and particularly the ring road system, A55. It is not a permanent feature and could potentially be altered in future developments and traffic management. Whilst it can be appreciated that human demography may be used to relocate boundaries, it must be borne in mind that human demography is very flexible according to the cost of living in particular areas. To include Belvoir in Belfast City Council area, and I know this is outside your remit, would add a 30 % increase in rateable valuation to residents of Belvoir estate. In these times of financial constraints - I am talking about the credit crunch - placing a 35 percent increase in rates would be best avoided. What politician would be able to recommend this to his constituents? In summary, I feel that the attempt to merge Belvoir into Belfast is seriously flawed. For the reasons stated, any merger must be between Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Council because of the natural affinity and of similar rateable valuation, tourism and heritage aspects.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you very much Mr Meredith. Would anybody have any questions for Mr Meredith or points to put in terms of his submission? Mr Meredith, thank you very much for your contribution.

Assistant

Commissioner A name that is registered is Joris Minne. Mr Minne

Joris Minne

Joris Minne is my name. I am a local resident from Newtownbreda, and I am speaking in support of becoming part of Belfast City, currently in Castlereagh. These are my personal views, but I have been involved in our local community over the last number of years and I know that the feelings that I am expressing today are those of quite a large number of people who live nearby.

Much of the housing in Newtownbreda is less than 15 years old. Areas like Beechill, Royal Lodge, Greenwood, Best's Hill and Greer Park have existed, as many new residential areas do, without a sense of community identity. They do, however, sit geographically within the green belt. They therefore sit, these areas, very comfortably within the natural city demarcation which defines the area. We feel that we are looking towards Belfast.

In the last decade, in fact, in the last 5 years, two major events had an unexpectedly positive impact on the communities I have just mentioned. One was the proposed sale by Castlereagh Borough Council of Hazelbank playing fields to Safeway, which they actually secured for 12 million pounds. That was dependent on planning permission, and the second one was the then proposed development of the Tesco on the Newtownbreda Road. Both initiatives caused the new communities to join forces with older, more established ones like Belvoir to oppose and, in some cases, to support the development proposals. Public meetings co-ordinated by cross-party politicians attracted hundreds of residents, over a period of months, to public meetings and so on. In the end, the proposed development of the playing fields was turned down by the then Minister. It was an overwhelming opposition to that. It was not really the victory of a well-run opposition campaign that brought these new communities together and gave us a sense of belonging and identity. It was the fact that something at all had brought us all together which showed us that a community existed so the geographical basin, as it were, that we found ourselves in, in these new neighbourhoods, actually created a natural

meeting point for us. What we needed was this social interchange, which, by accident, the development proposals offered us. A strong and sustained campaign of objection to the Tesco ultimately failed. That was not a bad thing, as it happens, because the supermarket has had a very beneficial impact. We now see people walking to the shop. There are hundreds of houses within that Tesco area and neighbours are meeting; there is a social aspect to it. There are a few hundred jobs in there as well which are very important and we meet now in almost in the same way as any mature and established community might enjoy.

But this is all very delicate. It would not take much to shatter the beginnings of this community spirit which is very mixed, a very important factor in this. So few parts of Belfast are as mixed as this. One thing is for certain: to re-evaluate, to rename and to reconfigure such a young community, such a series of young communities, which actually cover all the socio-economic spectrum from social housing right through to quite expensive private housing, that community could be brought back to square one because of the loss of identity that the new configuration would bring. I appeal to the Commissioner to bear in mind the importance of social coherence, community spirit and local identity.

In the case of Newtownbreda, Belvoir and so on, these components are naturally nurtured and brought together by the geographical outline and the context of the area which includes it within the natural boundaries of the City of Belfast. That dual carriageway does not cut the community, it does not cut Belvoir from the Tesco side of Newtownbreda. They are very important- coherence, community spirit and so on - to creating a stable, responsible, equal and tolerant society. I think that these should be preserved and certainly should be considered when you decide where the map-makers pen will go. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much, Mr Minne. Would anybody have any questions or propositions to put in terms of what you have heard? Mr Beattie, if you would care to come forward?

Jack Beattie

Councillor Jack Beattie from Castlereagh. Can I just say that the argument that you just put, does that not mean that what is there now is functioning and should remain within Castlereagh?

- Joris Minne** Well, I think that Castlereagh's track record on this, which is to sell off what it owned, which was actually to dismantle the community by selling off Hazelbank lands which you would have done quite readily, would have left us with very little. It was because two Belfast City politicians, one UUP and one SDLP, actually stepped in and helped to introduce some coherence and some community spirit that we were able to oppose Castlereagh's self-destructive bid to sell off the green space.
- Jack Beattie** Can I bring some information to this? As I said earlier, I was the Chairman of Finance and General Purposes. The whole idea of selling that piece of land off was that we would develop other lands. We would then develop a much better facility and that is what we had intended to do.
- Assistant Commissioner** Can I just say before a response is made that a history of Hazelbank land is not going to be a point that I will necessarily take into account, because it is far removed from the rules that I have to consider and apply, gentlemen. But in that regard I can see that there may be a difference of opinion.
- Jack Beattie** To me it seems that the argument can be turned on its head the other way around
- Assistant Commissioner** I appreciate that. That is a debate which I do not have to enter and cannot enter into in terms of what I have to decide. Thank you very much for your contribution.
- Joris Minne** Thank you.
- Assistant Commissioner** The next person I would like to call upon is Theresa McVeigh, Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum. I also have under the same title of Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum, James Watson. And would you like Mr Watson to make the contribution? Thank you, Mr Watson.
- James Watson** My name is James Watson. This is a personal appearance. I am a member of Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum and on the committee there and that is a forum for older people. Where Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum operates they also have contacts with other fora, which are South Belfast and East Belfast. Under no stretch of the imagination would they ever be along with Lisburn or any of the rural areas. I just want to make a couple of points first.

On your statutory rules on page four, 2.4, you make the point that there must be proper representation of the urban electorate. In the case of Dundonald, Carrowreagh, Graham's Bridge, Enler wards and Ballyhanwood, there is no real representation in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area for this mainly urban area. We have 15 or 16 wards between these 5 wards and the Lisburn central area, and it is almost entirely rural between. Leaving out the Belfast part of it because we are only talking about Lisburn and Castlereagh, it is almost entirely rural and with the best will in the world, rural councils have rural matters and urban areas have urban matters. On page 8, 6.8, you make the point about Edenderry, which is included in the Belfast area and I quote 'the orientation of the road network in the vicinity of Edenderry points the settlement towards Belfast'.

I make the case here that Dundonald, Carrowreagh, Graham's Bridge, Enler and Ballyhanwood are positively directed towards Belfast. Under no stretch of the imagination have we any affinity with Lisburn. On Castlereagh itself, there was an unseemly haste here to pick over the bones of Castlereagh area between your political people. I am not a political person, but Castlereagh itself was only formed a few years ago. In spite of what Mr Donaldson says, it was only formed a few years ago and it was carved out of several other little urban and rural councils and named Castlereagh. But people living in Dundonald do not consider themselves to be in Castlereagh. They consider Castlereagh to be the Castlereagh Road, which is in Belfast East, but the actual Castlereagh name comes from the top of the Castlereagh Hills. I make the point that really what we are looking at is a re-carve up of an original botched job. I live in Dundonald and I have yet to meet anyone who wishes to be part of a Lisburn conglomeration. They do not consider themselves to be in Castlereagh, although in fact they are in Castlereagh at the moment. They do not see any point in having your council offices, which are obviously going to be in Lisburn City centre, about 14 miles away, but not as the crow flies. They have to travel into the centre of Belfast, which they would be doing anyway for most of their stuff, and then take another bus or train. It is illogical.

Mr Donaldson made a point about the South Eastern Health and Social Services Board offices being in Dundonald. They are actually on the Graham's Bridge Road, they are in Enler, I think. The Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum had a meeting with William McKee, who is head of the Belfast Trust and he said that as far as any future things are concerned the boundary of Belfast would be his boundary and the South Eastern Health Board will disappear, as far as I can see. So to draw the tenuous thread

that, because that office is on the Graham's Bridge Road, that that makes it part of Lisburn is absolutely crazy. We would worry about that; we have a hospital now, the Ulster Hospital, which is not part of the Belfast Board. It is nuts really, because it is at the very edge of whatever board would be decided for North Down and that area, and we would hate to see that because if a future Lisburn Council has any bearing on health cares, which they might do because they are getting their powers extended, then we would be right at the very end of the branch. The arguments that were forward, I am sure, they have been going for many years, by Collin Glen, Poleglass, Lagmore, Twinbrook and Dunmurry - their arguments in the past have been that they were demographically Belfast and their grandparents were Belfast and their children were going to Belfast. They all use that rule and they have been trying to get out of Lisburn Council for many years. They all want to be in Belfast and on the same grounds, the five seats in Dundonald should be in Belfast too. Mr Copeland made the point that the people in Belfast - and he is wrong about there being a large amount of blue men. There are some (*inaudible word*) people there, but they are mainly Glen men, and they are the wise men from the east, right?

Assistant

Commissioner

Thank you very much.

James Watson

On that particular point, he is right when he says there just is not any connection with Lisburn. I have nothing against Lisburn, although the rumours are that it is failing as a city, and you would not want us to be hung round the neck of something that maybe does not make the grade in the end. It just seems to be that the squabble seems to be over the corpse of Castlereagh and all I would say is, as far as Belfast is concerned, they raise the bogey bear of higher rates but the reason that Castlereagh had lower rates was because all the infrastructure was in place when they took over and they did not have to do any major construction work.

The Ulster Hospital is a worry because now it is not in the Belfast Trust Area. It can not be in any Lisburn Trust area - it has a hospital right in the middle of it, the Lagan Valley Hospital. So it has to move to some other Trust area as we see it and if it goes there, where do we go? We will end up not having the Ulster Hospital in our Trust and maybe having to go to Lagan Valley for treatment, which is extremely difficult, especially for the elderly and the infirm.

You have in Twinbrook and that area, 6 wards, going into the Belfast area, which throws in 16 to 17,000 extra voters. It would

not take a genius to work out what the voting would be there; it would be nationalist of one kind or another. Belfast would be out of kilter. At the minute it is very evenly balanced. I am not trying to make a political statement but if Dunmurry goes into Lisburn as they want to, there would be a potentially non-nationalist seat. In Belfast or Dundonald there would be probably five pro-unionist seats. You might find that putting Dundonald, Ballyhanwood East in would actually help the political health of Belfast.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Thank you.

James Watson I was a bit upset to see that you allowed Mr Donaldson to cross-examine these other people. We thought there was not any cross examination allowed. He did seem to be hectoring him, actually, at one stage.

**Assistant
Commissioner** I suspect they were well up to whatever the debate was.

James Watson It is just that, you know, he kept making these statements that everything they had was apocryphal or whatever, right, whereas his was the truth. And there was no evidence that these things ever took place, but it might have taken place in a caucus, you know, of his own political party. There is no evidence as such that I heard. It is just a statement.

**Assistant
Commissioner** I must go away and consider all of the evidence and will do so in terms of ...

James Watson Would that be evidence?

**Assistant
Commissioner** No. Today will conclude the evidence gathering exercise and what I have received I will take away and consider.

James Watson I just make the point that he is insisting on evidence.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Indeed, yes, and I must weigh up all the different arguments.

James Watson I have a bogey bear of the rates but I did say the reason that the rates in Castlereagh were so low was because the infrastructure was already there and that would conclude my thing.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you very much. Would anyone have any questions?

James Watson Just one final point, sorry. I suggested the five seats in Dundonald be merged into three. They could be subdivided into three to make up a city side seat which is 3 to 3.3 thousand per seat. At the minute there's about 10,000 electors there, so 3 would make it like a city side seat whereas at the minute, we are sort of limited to under 2,000 per seat, which is a rural seat, and they are not really rural seats.

Assistant

Commissioner Mr Beattie, I think you had a point that you wished to raise.

Jack Beattie Very briefly. Mr Jack Beattie, Castlereagh Council, once again. Can I ask the gentleman, Mr Watson, the forum of which you speak, I think, was established by Castlereagh Council?

James Watson That is right.

Jack Beattie And it has been very successful. It operates right across the borough of Castlereagh and beyond. Can I ask him, do you see any reason, when Lisburn and Castlereagh come together, that that forum should not operate in the greater city area?

James Watson Just a geographical thing, the distance. We hold some of our meetings in Castlereagh Civic Centre, but a lot of our meetings are held at Tullycarnet, which is more or less east of the Castlereagh seat, although people come in from Carryduff and places like that to meetings there. But I mean, Lisburn would not have any charm for us really.

Jack Beattie Again, these are feelings that the gentleman has but he also is as confused as some of us politicians to be quite honest with these boards and so forth. The health boards are a different thing, there are parts within Castlereagh, there are parts within Belfast, the South and East Belfast Trust is now gone and there are those issues. But those are issues which are outside of the Borough of Castlereagh and they will maybe be addressed by the Assembly and not by the establishment of the Lisburn/Castlereagh Council Area.

Assistant

Commissioner Thankfully, they are issues which are outside my purview as well.

Jack Beattie I take your point. The gentleman has raised some very big issues but he is right in saying that Castlereagh is diverse. It is made up of a series of, if you like, villages but in the middle of it

there is a rural area. That makes up the whole of Castlereagh and that establishes a community which is Castlereagh and it is not just set in one particular area and another. The whole thing is Castlereagh and Castlereagh Council has decided low rates and facilities and it established the forum of which you speak so highly.

James Watson Well, as far as the name Castlereagh is concerned, I made the point earlier that really the name Lisburn and Castlereagh Council is a sop to Castlereagh. Castlereagh will, in a sense, disappear. They are even arguing over the council offices and the rates in Forestside.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much, thank you. Mr Thompson I think you had a point that you wished to make to Mr Watson, thank you.

Billy Thompson Thanks very much, Deputy Commissioner. My name is Billy Thompson and I am a representative from Dunmurry Community Association based in Dunmurry. It is just in reference to what Mr Walsh had passionately said about his Dundonald area and his reference that he made to the Dunmurry area. I would just like to say that the Dunmurry area is not a predominantly nationalist area. The Dunmurry ward is not predominantly nationalist and the village area is committed to and wants to stay within the Lisburn area. I would also like to stress the fact that, in saying that, we are very connected to Lisburn as a village. I would also like to say that Lisburn has a very good community resource service, they supply free buses and stuff like that for community groups. I do not believe Belfast does something like that. I just wanted to make those points clear to Mr Walsh.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much

Billy Thompson Sorry, there is one other thing that I wanted to finish with just before Mr Watson says anything more on the fact of the matter. I have a little thing here just that I had with me. The parish of Drumbeg in County Antrim, it is 1837 and it says in it, in relation to Mr Watson talking about the longevity of Dundonald, it says in here that Dunmurry is a small village situated within 3 miles north of Lisburn, okay.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much. I will allow Mr Watson to come back.

James Watson Well, what I wanted to say was, I was actually saying that Dunmurry would be not a nationalist area, you know, he took

me up wrong there, you know. The other thing is, of course, if you want to go on longevity, Dundonald has a Norman motte and bailey right in the middle of it which is only 800 years old.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

We can feel your pride in Dundonald. Thank you very much, Mr Watson. The next name I have is Rosemary Lunn

**Rosemary
Lunn**

My name is Rosemary Lunn and I come from Dunmurry village. I am a resident. I am here purely on a personal basis.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you. You will have heard how the debate has raged over the last two days and the points that have been made and I have been able to appreciate and understand those points, if that assists you in terms of the submission you wish to make.

**Rosemary
Lunn**

Yes, well it is purely personal and everybody in here is sitting talking about our lives and I am a resident of Dunmurry. I would just like to put my personal opinion and point out the links we have with Lisburn and we have absolutely no links with Belfast whatsoever. For instance, my children went to school at Lisburn Grammar School. They did not go to Belfast. Our churches are linked; Drumbeg, which is going to be kept in Lisburn, and Seymour Hill, St Hilda's church, which is going to be kept in Lisburn is linked to the church that I belong to in St Colman's, Dumurry. Drumbeg is our mother church, St Hilda's is our sister church which we helped fund, but we are going to be taken out and put in Belfast. They are going to be left in Lisburn. That is just one link. For instance, the ladies in the village, the pensioners, look forward to going to Lisburn on a Tuesday for market day. Our children - their entertainment is in the theatres in Lisburn. All our social activities, work around Lisburn, our shopping, everything revolves around Lisburn. When I got married my first house was a Lisburn Council house in Dunmurry. It is purely personal.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I understand.

**Rosemary
Lunn**

I feel very strongly about it. I helped the Dunmurry Community Association deliver the letters that I think you have received. I did Edenvale, Credenhill, all round that area, Dunmurry Village. I know most of the people that I went to school with who are

still in the village and are the backbone of the village. I am talking about the village when there was no Seymour Hill, there was no Lagmore, there was no Twinbrook. There were not any surrounding areas except Dunmurry village and these are the people we are talking about here, and they do not want to be put in to Belfast. We do not have anything against Belfast either, we just have always been linked to Lisburn in every aspect of our lives from birth, from the Lagan Valley Hospital to death, our graveyards are all in Lisburn. My parents are buried in Lisburn. I have no speeches, it comes from the heart.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

It is appreciated that you have made that effort to make your submission this morning.

**Rosemary
Lunn**

This is the letter that you have got. It was already submitted, but I just wanted to let you see the letter we put through to the people so that everything was done fairly.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

That accompanied the letter that I received, Miss Lunn

**Rosemary
Lunn**

I can give you that. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you indeed. The final name I have on my list is Mrs Kate Mullan. Does Mrs Mullan wish to make a representation? Good afternoon.

Kate Mullan

Good afternoon. My name is Kate Mullan and I am a resident of Belfast and a member of the SDLP. I would like to endorse what Dr Alasdair McDonnell, the MP for South Belfast, has stated in his written response to the Proposed Recommendations by the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. I would also like to support the oral submissions of my colleagues Councillor Brian Hanvey, Councillor Rosaleen Hughes and Ray Kennedy which were made yesterday. I will not repeat what has already been said but would like to add that in relation to the five proposed wards of Beechill, Cairnshill, Galwally, Knockbracken and Newtownbreda, it is my contention that these wards should be included as part of the city of Belfast. They qualify as there is a natural boundary of open space to the south east of the Cairnshill Road through to Primrose Hill, and to the south west of Purdysburn down to Hydebank at the end of Milltown Road. They qualify also as they are part of a continuous development of both residential

and commercial buildings through from Belfast right up to Purdysburn. There is absolutely no logical reason to link it with Lisburn. Whilst some might argue, in fact have argued, that there is a tenuous connection with Castlereagh, no-one could argue that this area is in any way more closely linked to Lisburn than it is to Belfast. There is no question that, with Lisburn being the largest part of the proposed linking with a major part of Castlereagh, it will become not only the dominant partner, but also the main identity. There may be other reasons why this area is a contentious one, and I would suggest that motivations from some submissions are more to do with rate revenue than rational arguments over natural geographical or community boundaries. In fact, this is the main contention of Castlereagh Council's submission. Belfast already has a high concentration of areas of significant social need and with few areas of shared space. These wards should be part of Belfast to ensure that it is able to expand the shared space and help the balance with the level of areas of social need. This area, I would contend, is a natural expansion of the city to the South.

When one looks at identity, and I will refer to what my colleagues have already submitted, I would like to add that schools are part of a community, often at its heart. They define the identity and community aspects of a neighbourhood. In this whole area, when children from primary schools move to the secondary school sector, they do not go to Lisburn, to Friends or to Wallace or any other school in Lisburn. Why? Because they have no link whatsoever with the city of Lisburn. These children go to Newtownbreda, Knockbreda, Lagan College, St. Joseph's, Aquinas, Methody, Victoria, Inst. Why? It is not just because there are no transport links to Lisburn or because they are outside the three mile area for funded transport, but because it is natural for them. It is because they are part of the city of Belfast and their resulting sporting and social activities then reflect this. And I as a parent seem to spend a considerable period of my time transporting teenagers up and down the Saintfield Road from social and sporting events in Belfast city centre not travelling to and from Lisburn.

If I can refer to the actual survey delivered to householders, which is empirical evidence and not hearsay or anecdotal evidence and which people are continuing to respond to, they remain almost totally in support of being part of Belfast. This is not about political balance, it is about true identity, true community and true natural boundaries being used appropriately and not just to balance the numbers. The survey which was undertaken, and provoked responses from supporters of all the main political parties,

provides overwhelming evidence of what the people want, that is, being part of Belfast and not as part of some political interference.

While I appreciate that there are some tenuous arguments about the Lagan Valley or the Hills around Castlereagh being the only natural boundary, I would contend that from a geographical perspective the natural boundary is the open space, the fields, and the build line which are all to the South of Cairnshill and Purdysburn. And from a community or neighbourhood perspective, the very close family ties, the close parish and church connections and the community identity must make this the strongest argument of all that these wards should be part of Belfast. Just for the record, can I state my complete amazement and rejection of the bizarre claim by Castlereagh Council to bring parts of Finaghy and Upper Malone into Lisburn.

Finally, I believe in the need for Belfast to grow in status, not to be diluted. It is the shop window of Northern Ireland and the capital city and should be treated as such. Thank you for your time.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you, Miss Mullan. I wonder would you be so good as to perhaps furnish that statement that you have read into the record so that we can make copies of it, if that is convenient to you. Now, would anybody have any questions for Mrs Mullan?

Jack Beattie

Mr Jack Beattie, once more. Can I put the question to the lady? She says that the green fields are the boundary between Cairnshill and maybe heading towards Carryduff, but in times past the Inns area – it was called the Inns because that is where people came up out of Belfast. They stopped off there to change horses, believe it or not - Carryduff was a long way away. Is she making the argument that as the linear line develops and then moves out from the linear line, eventually reaches Carryduff and the green space disappears, is she then going to say that that too then becomes part of Belfast?

Kate Mullan

Although one could also argue that Carryduff should also be included, it is not as strong a case as including the area north of Purdysburn and Primrose Hill as part of Belfast. It is not completely separate from Belfast and it lies closer to Belfast city centre than either Tullycarnet or Lagmore, both of which are being considered to be included in Belfast.

Jack Beattie So, it is purely the distance in miles you are looking at really, and making the argument for the hinterland with the green belt, on which there are many people wanting to build on at the moment actually, and if it goes the way it looks it will be going some of that will disappear. So she still makes the argument that once that is built on then you look down into Belfast and you say that is Belfast. You know, I cannot understand why it is that you just believe that that land at Primrose Hill and forward should not be in Belfast, but below that it should be in Belfast simply because it has been built up.

Assistant Commissioner I think what we may have reached is a position where we have differing views, Councillor Beattie, existing between yourself and Mrs Mullan. We are not necessarily going to square those views but I can appreciate both points that are being made in terms of that and will take them into account.

Jack Beattie The natural boundary is the Lagan Valley. That is what it would have been years ago going back thousands of years.

Assistant Commissioner I think each side will appreciate that a debate exists on that point and I will deal with that.

Jack Beattie Can I say to her that the survey that was carried out in the Belvoir area and, you heard the speaker earlier, the Belvoir area is 100 percent opposed to this.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much.

Jack Beattie Thank you.

Edwin Poots Edwin Poots, Lisburn City Council, again. A couple of questions for Mrs Mullan. If you are to extrapolate the argument that Belfast should expand to where the break of actual development is, would you accept that the break of development to the North side would be Carrickfergus, to the East side would be Holywood, to the South side would actually be the Maze?

Kate Mullan Mr Poots, our survey actually covered the five wards that we were interested in terms of the Commissioner's recommendations. We did not really consider areas out that far along the Antrim Coast.

Edwin Poots But the argument that you are making is that the break should be where the houses break and that is where the houses break

in Belfast right out to Jordanstown and to Mossley and right round that ring of Belfast.

Assistant

Commissioner Mr Poots, thankfully I do not have to go to the north side of town.

Edwin Poots

No, you do not, but the basis of the argument is that it is where the houses break.

Assistant

Commissioner I can see that is a point that one could make but I am confining myself to the particular area which I am charged to consider.

Edwin Poots

I have a second question then that relates to the survey. The survey appeared to have about 667 returns out of around 5,800 houses, would that be right?

Kate Mullan

Approximately.

Edwin Poots

That would be about 11 percent return, whereas in Dunmurry you were looking at 1,100 returns for around 2,000 homes. I think that identifies the difference in the desire for people to move into Belfast in one case, where there was a little over 10 percent, and the desire for people in Dunmurry to remain within Lisburn, which was 50 percent.

Assistant

Commissioner I appreciate the contrasting elements of the survey. Thank you very much Mr Poots. Mrs Beattie, would you care to come forward.

**Ann-Marie
Beattie**

I am Ann-Marie Beattie. I am a councillor and Mayor of Castlereagh. You have said that the break in the houses at Primrose Hill should be in Belfast. Well, if you go to the other side when you come to Shaws Bridge, there are no houses there. Why are you insisting that Belvoir goes into Belfast? There are no houses in Shaws Bridge. There is a break in the road there and they used to belong to the old Lisburn Urban Council.

Kate Mullan

We concentrated on the 5 wards that we have mentioned – Beechill, Cairnshill, Galwally, Knockbracken and Newtownbreda.

Ann-Marie Beattie

Yes, but this takes in that. Belvoir takes in that area and we have already got a break there and, if that is your argument, then you have lost that argument because there are no houses on this road. There is a break. You go outside this hotel, which is part of those wards, and there are no houses.

Assistant Commissioner

Thank you very much, I have got that point. Thank you very much Mrs Beattie and Mrs Mullan thank you for your contribution. Yes, Ms Blair.

Karen Blair

Karen Blair, Cleaver, Fulton, Rankin solicitors for Lisburn City Council. I wanted to say that you already have our technical points from yesterday in relation to some of the evidence that has been put forward and so we would refer you back to it.

Assistant Commissioner

I am grateful. Thank you indeed, Miss Blair.

Karen Blair

Thank you.

Assistant Commissioner

Mr Heading.

Brian Heading

Councillor Heading, Lisburn City Council. Deputy Commissioner, it is just in relation to some comments that I heard earlier on in reference to Dunmurry Cross and the fact there are two wards out of the seven in Dunmurry Cross that are both areas of high social deprivation. I think one of the speakers giving evidence to you connected the two wards of social deprivation to the 17 that already exist in Belfast. To a layperson I would put it to you that somehow the Commissioner's proposals have become embroiled in taking the wards within Dunmurry Cross that are socially deprived and connecting it then to other wards that will somehow pay or subsidise these areas of social deprivation. I know it is not the hearing's remit to go into the financial argument, but I put it to you that a layperson may arrive at that conclusion that you are taking in wards and looking other wards to pay for it.

The other argument that I would reinforce to you is that I represent Dunmurry Cross. I represent the wards that are earmarked to go in to Belfast but I also have to represent those constituents that come from the Dunmurry area who do not feel that they should be going into Belfast. You can understand that I am riding two horses almost in this hearing. But I wish to put it to you again that there is a very clear line within the population, within the Twinbrook/Poleglass/Colin area which

culturally, politically, socially see themselves as part of Belfast because of the Stewartstown Road being an arterial route into Belfast. If I could use the example for the Commissioner of black taxis which are a West Belfast transport service. They run along the Stewartstown Road and deliver the population of Lagmore/ Twinbrook into Belfast city centre. That does not happen with Dunmurry. Dunmurry people use the bus service to get themselves in and out of Belfast or in and out of Lisburn. So again, there is a difference between the two populations and I would assume that, in hearing the evidence, that is taken into consideration.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much, Mr Heading. Now I believe that concludes those names which I have who registered an interest in making representations over the last two days and particularly today. Are there any other persons present who would wish to make a contribution other than those who have? Thank you very much. May I remind everyone, as I said yesterday, that once I have closed the hearing, I am not able to receive any further evidence. Before I formally close these proceedings, I would like to place on record my gratitude to everyone who has attended, particularly those who have made their representations. Everyone has given their views in a forthright and frank way and have kept to the point. I should like to thank my support team from the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's office, Land and Property Services, Morrow Communications and the transcribers and audio engineers who have given their assistance in preparing in the conduct of this hearing. I would also like to thank the management and staff of the Ramada Hotel for the facilities they have provided.

My task now is to consider carefully all the evidence that I have heard during the last two days, as well as the written submissions and representations that have been received in the consultation period, and to prepare a report for the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner within the next four weeks. This report will be publicly available, together with the Commissioner's Revised Recommendations report, if he decides to produce one, or with his Final Recommendations Report. My understanding is that my report will be sent to everyone who has requested a copy upon registration at the hearing. It will ultimately be a matter for the Commissioner to decide whether to accept or reject any of the recommendations that I make or to take whatever course of action he thinks appropriate. Should the Commissioner decide

to publish a Revised Recommendations Report, written recommendations will be invited within a specified period but there will no further public hearings. The Commissioner is required to submit his Final Report to the Department of the Environment by 30 June 2009. In closing the hearing I would like to thank everybody for their assistance and participation. Thank you very much.

ENDS
