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Simon Coveney TD
Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
Custom House
Dublin D01 W6X0

16 May 2017

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 5 May.

Having discussed the matters with colleagues on the Expert Advisory Group, I would respond as follows to the three matters raised in your letter.

- 1. Indicate the rationale for including in the proposed Cork City area some towns, (for example Ballincollig), which might be perceived as being outside of the city per se.**

Section 9.9.2 of our report states:

“It is proposed that the City Council area should be extended to include Ballincollig, Carrigrohane, Blarney, Glanmire, Carrigtwohill, and Cork airport, to reflect the existing development patterns and the planned expansion of the city along the east-west and northern transport corridors. However, we do not think that the city council area should include Passage West, Monkstown, Ringaskiddy, or Carrigaline, to allow the greater harbour area to be treated as a single economic unit. Equally, more rural parts of the hinterland of the city, such as Ballygarvan to the south and Dripsey and Greenfort to the west, should not be included in the city council area – this is because we do not feel that the medium- to long-term needs of the city require extension of the boundary to these areas, while a less extensive area could help incentivise higher density development within the city.”

As noted in section 9.9.3 of our report, the Group wanted to ensure that key urban parts of the immediate hinterland of Cork city should form part of the new City Council area, while areas of a more rural character and the harbour area should remain within the County Council area. The future development of urban areas should be guided by the Cork city development plan, which would provide for quality urban development at a density that will support the provision of enhanced transport and other infrastructure.

In the case of Ballincollig which you mention as an example, the settlement has rapidly expanded over the past 40 years from a population of just 5,169 in 1976 to 18,621 in 2016 (based on Ballincollig Electoral Division). This rapid expansion has been planned for (for example initially through LUTS and then CASP, and through Local Area Plans), with a view to developing Ballincollig as a metropolitan town and a major centre for population and employment growth in close proximity to Cork city. The high density development of Ballincollig town centre reflects a more urban development pattern, as compared to county towns. Furthermore, the expansion and development of Ballincollig aims to facilitate an east-west rapid transit corridor for Cork city. The CASP 2008 update identified a corridor for high quality rapid transit to link Ballincollig, the City centre, Docklands and Mahon, initially as a high frequency bus service with potential to upgrade to light rail in the future. Generally, similar considerations can be said to apply to other suburban towns such as Blarney and Carrigtwohill, in that both have been subject to planned development as metropolitan towns in close proximity to the city, and both can be said to form part of the east-west corridor for Cork city.

The starting point for any consideration of the appropriate city boundary would be the existing urban area. Ballincollig is also included within the contiguous area of the CSO 'Cork City and Suburbs'. The CSO define suburbs/environs as the continuation of a distinct population cluster outside its legally defined boundary in which no occupied dwelling is more than 100 metres distant from the nearest occupied dwelling.

Based on 2011 Census figures, and analysis by the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO), of the total workforce (6,753) enumerated in the Electoral Division of Ballincollig, 5,487 work in the current Cork City area. This equates to 81.2% of all workers enumerated in this Electoral Division (see interactive map [here](#)). AIRO Urban Commuting Catchments show that 62.5% of the workforce in Blarney Electoral Division (1,085 out of 1,734), commute to Cork City. Results for other Electoral Divisions in the immediate hinterland of the city are noted in the Table 1 below. A full profile on 'Commuting in Ireland' based on 2016 Census results, will not be published until 31 August 2017.

Table 1: Commuting patterns to current Cork City area, based on Origin/Destination 2011 census data analysis by AIRO.

Electoral District	Total Workforce*	Number of workforce working in Cork City	Percentage of workforce working in Cork City
Midleton	1117	329	29.4%
Cobh Urban	1894	726	38.3%
Carrigaline	4332	2413	55.7%
Carrigtwohill	2558	1502	58.7%
Blarney	1734	1085	62.5%
Monkstown Urban	1175	1142	66.5%
Douglas	8334	6561	78.7%
Ballincollig	6753	5487	81.2%
Leheneagh	3746	3068	81.9%

Source: AIRO

*Excludes workforce where destination was classed as 'Blank' or 'Mobile'.

Thus the Group feel that there are compelling grounds based on both housing density and commuting patterns for considering towns such as Ballincollig, Blarney and Carrigtwohill as forming an integral part of the *de facto* urbanised city area. That said, we also wish to point out that the boundary identified in Figure 9.1 of our report is a diagrammatic representation – the precise delineation of the boundary should reflect local communities, communities of interest, townlands and infrastructure.

As mentioned in the Report, the Group strongly feel that the greater harbour area needs to be treated as single economic unit, and should, as far as possible, remain within the County Council administrative area. For this reason, Passage West, Monkstown, Ringaskiddy, or Carrigaline should not in our view be included within the expanded city.

2. Incorporate data from the results of the 2016 Census in the various calculations and statistics in the report.

Section 2.5.2 of our report states:

“At the time the Group was carrying out its work, only preliminary results from Census 2016 were available detailing population at county and city level. The first summary results of the 2016 Census were released in mid-April 2017. They provide final population figures at county and city level, Dáil constituencies and urban areas, but not at local electoral level. Thus, for the most part, this report refers to population figures based on Census 2011. This facilitated comparison with submissions made to the CLGC and the report of the CLGC itself, which referred to 2011 population figures, as did the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee which analysed the ratio between the number of Councillors and population level in different local authorities in 2013 (see section 12). However, a Table comparing population figures in 2011 and finalised figures available to the Group for 2016 is presented below.”

Table 2: Population Figures, 2011 and 2016 compared

Area	Population 2011	Population 2016	Actual Change	Percentage Change
Cork City	119,230	125,657	6,427	5.4
Cork County	399,802	417,211	17,409	4.4
Cork City & County	519,032	542,868	23,836	4.6
Cork City & Suburbs (CSO definition)	198,582	208,669	10,087	5.1

Source: CSO

Census 2016 results are gradually being released throughout 2017. While 2016 population figures for towns and cities were released on 11 May 2017 following the submission of our report in April 2017, Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) will not be made available until 20 July 2017. A full profile on ‘Commuting in Ireland’ will not be published until 31 August 2017.

For the Group’s recommended option for a new boundary, it is not currently possible to formulate the precise population based on 2016 data. Firstly, the precise delineation

of the boundary is to be decided based on physical, social and natural borders. Secondly, Census data is not currently available at the appropriate geographical level (Small Area Population Statistics) in order to provide accurate calculations.

The Group arrived at a 2011 population estimate of 215,000 for their recommended option by combining the population of the City and Suburbs with the towns to be included within the extended area (e.g. Blarney, Tower, and Carrigtwohill). However, based on 2016 Census figures for towns and cities, released on the 11 May 2017, the main towns which are proposed to be included within an extended city, and their populations in 2016, are: Killumney (1,132), Blarney (2,539), Tower (3,421) and Carrigtwohill (5,080). However, taking the population growth rate of 5.1% in the City and Suburbs area between 2011 and 2016, the Group are reasonably confident that the 2016 population for the suggested new city council area would stand in the region of 225,000 – 230,000. A more specific figure would be available, once data on more precise levels of population growth within individual Small Areas (SAPS) become available on 20 July, and depending on the exact delineation of the boundary.

- 3. Elaborate further on the view that the introduction of an office of directly elected mayor would represent an undue risk to the stability of the system with regard to the role of elected members and the chief executive and, if possible on any reasons put forward by stakeholders for their lack of “appetite” for such an office. It would also be useful to indicate if the Group has considered whether such an office might have a potential role, either initially or at a future stage, in relation to leadership of the proposed metropolitan board.**

My own foreword (pages 6-7) and section 10.1.3 of the report state:

“In respect of a directly elected Lord Mayor, the Group considered this would represent an undue risk to the stability of the system with regard to the role of elected members and the chief executive. However, a Lord Mayor elected for five years by the city councillors is one means by which democratic leadership and external representation could be strengthened.”

“The Group is aware of proposals over the past two decades to establish an office of directly-elected mayor within Irish local government, particularly in the Dublin area. However, in our discussions with different stakeholders, we detected little appetite for an office of directly-elected mayor. Some stakeholders pointed to risks associated with such a move and suggested that there have been mixed experiences with directly-elected mayors. Ultimately, the Group took the view that a decision to establish an office of directly-elected Mayor is a matter to be considered in the context of local government reform in Ireland generally.”

We wish to emphasise that our proposals that the Lord Mayor and County Mayor be elected by their respective local council for a five-year term (and that the Chairperson of the proposed Cork Economic Development and Planning Board be elected by the elected members on the Board for a five-year term) are proposals which we see as being appropriate in the current context, pending further consideration at national level of the significant implications for local government of the potential introduction

of directly-elected mayors. We have also proposed that candidates seeking the office of mayor should be required to present a policy programme setting out a platform and policy priorities for their term of office, and have a role in policy initiation in terms of presenting the draft corporate plan, development plan, and annual budget to the council for approval. This would provide a greater degree of substance and continuity in political leadership at both city / county level and at metropolitan level, compared to the current system whereby the office-holder changes each year.

The implementation of the proposed new local government arrangements in Cork, which was at the core of what we were asked to consider, will present a number of challenges. We felt that the additional uncertainty that could arise with the establishment of a directly-elected mayor would not necessarily be helpful at this juncture – for example it could possibly delay and impede the implementation of the new structural arrangements which we regard as crucial and urgently needed for the future development and growth of Cork. The option of a directly-elected Lord Mayor and County Mayor, and indeed a directly-elected Chairperson of the proposed Cork Economic Development Board could be given further consideration as part of the local government reform programme more generally. We see our recommendation as an evolutionary approach to addressing the shortcomings of the present mayoral system, while avoiding any risk of delaying other necessary reforms of local government arrangements in Cork which we are recommending.

I hope that the response in this letter provides you with the additional information and clarification you require.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Mackinnon
Chairman, Expert Advisory Group on Local Government Arrangements in Cork