



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Minister of the Environment, Sammy Wilson MP MLA, appointed me as the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland with effect from 1 July 2008. My task was to review and make recommendations by 30th June 2009 to the Department of the Environment with respect to the boundaries and names of 11 proposed new local government districts, and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district should be divided. The terms of the review are set out in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 ("1972 Act"), as amended by the Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 ("2006 Order") and the Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 ("2008 Act"), which include provisions concerning the procedure to be followed and the Rules in accordance with which recommendations are to be made. These Rules are set out in Annex B.

1.2 At present there are 26 local government districts in Northern Ireland and the 2008 Act provides that the 11 new districts shall incorporate, respectively, the whole or the major part of the following existing districts :-

1. Antrim; Newtownabbey.
2. Ards; North Down.
3. Armagh City and District; Banbridge; Craigavon.
4. Ballymena; Carrickfergus; Larne.
5. Ballymoney; Coleraine; Limavady; Moyle.
6. Belfast.
7. Castlereagh; Lisburn City.
8. Cookstown; Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough; Magherafelt.
9. Derry; Strabane.
10. Down; Newry and Mourne
11. Fermanagh; Omagh.

1.3 On 28th July 2008, I announced the start of the review in a Public Notice which explained my role and remit, and advised that in due course I would publish Provisional Recommendations and cause a public hearing to be held in each of the 11 proposed new local government districts. The Notice also explained the process of public consultation on those Recommendations whereby interested parties would have the opportunity to contribute to the review.

1.4 Following the Public Notice, I held a meeting with the representatives of the main local political parties, to explain the purpose of the review, the statutory Rules, the review process and the proposed programme.

1.5 Following my assessment of the geographical areas which should be included in the new districts and the number of wards into which each district should be divided, I presented my Provisional Recommendations Report on 17th September 2008 indicating the proposed boundaries and names of the 11 districts and the number, boundaries and names of their constituent wards.

1.6 The Public Notice of the Provisional Recommendations invited written representations by 12th November 2008. Copies of the Report were made available for inspection at all district council headquarters offices, the Electoral Office, Area Electoral Offices, all public libraries, the office of the Electoral Commission in Northern Ireland and at my own office. In addition, copies of the Report were sent to MEP's, MP's, MLA's, all district councillors and interested bodies.

1.7 On 5th November 2008, Minister Wilson, at my request, appointed 11 Assistant Commissioners to assess and report on the written representations relating to my Provisional Recommendations and to conduct public hearings for the purpose of receiving oral submissions. Hearings were held before an Assistant Commissioner in each of the proposed new districts during November 2008. The Assistant Commissioners were asked to submit a report to me, in relation to their designated district, setting out their conclusions and recommendations on the representations made to them.

1.8 After consideration of the written representations and the reports of the Assistant Commissioners, I made a number of revisions to my Provisional Recommendations and published a Revised Recommendations Report on 27th February 2009. In that Report, I invited written representations in relation to the revisions to be submitted by 9th April 2009.

1.9 I received 133 submissions in response to the Revised Recommendations and they are listed in Annex A. I comment further about the representations in Section 3 of this Report.

1.10 This Report, along with the CD-ROMs which are attached to the inside of the back cover, set out my Final Recommendations. One CD-ROM provides an electronic copy of this Report (including a zoom facility); the other provides a list of street names and postcodes by ward within each local government district.



2. APPROACH

2.1 In this section I set out my general approach to the delineation of boundaries and the naming of districts and wards.

BOUNDARIES OF DISTRICTS AND WARDS

2.2 In my Provisional Recommendations, I drew attention to the provision in the 2008 Act whereby the proposed 11 local government districts should incorporate the whole or the major part of the existing local government districts which make up the groupings set out in Section 1 (2) of the Act. I indicated that in my view the term “major part” was a spatial term rather than a reference to population or electorate.

2.3 I received representations that this was too restrictive an interpretation of the term, and could lead to a situation where the major geographical part of a district contained a minority of the population. I acknowledge this possibility, particularly in the outer areas of the Belfast conurbation, but I do not depart from my view as to the spatial nature of the term. Consequently, in the composition of the new districts, no major geographical part of any existing local government district has been transferred to an adjacent proposed district.

2.4 I also received representations that, in defining district and ward boundaries, consideration should be given to matters of community identity and local ties. However, the Rules set out in Annex B do not include community identity or local ties as factors to be taken into account in the delineation of boundaries.

2.5 Paragraph 14 of the Rules provides that “Regard shall be had to the desirability of determining district and ward boundaries which are readily identifiable”. While it may be possible for social features and characteristics to contribute towards the task required under Rule 14 and the other Rules, I consider that this would only be so if community identity assumed or was accompanied by some material or physical form that made boundaries readily identifiable.

2.6 The concept of a readily identifiable boundary means a boundary that can be known or ascertained easily, or with relatively little effort. I took the view that the phrase included ground features such as road and railway lines; estuaries, lakes, rivers and upland areas; footpaths, cycle paths, garden and field boundaries, and walls; and the boundaries of open space such as parks, cemeteries and golf courses.

2.7 Paragraph 15 imposes a duty not to split townlands unless I considered this to be unavoidable. I considered the splitting of townlands to be unavoidable in urban areas, but in rural areas I have, with few exceptions, used townland boundaries in the delineation of districts and wards.

2.8 Paragraph 16 imposes a duty not to sever a district by the boundary of another district or encompass a district within the boundary of another district as far as practicable. The boundaries as delineated do not include any such severance.

2.9 Paragraph 17 imposes a duty, in determining the number and boundaries of wards within a district, to have regard to matters of size, population and physical diversity of the district; and the desirability to have proper representation of the urban and rural electorate within the district. It also informs the duties imposed under paragraphs 18 and 19. In determining ward boundaries, I have sought to take account of these Rules as far as possible. However, the requirement under Rule 19 to secure electoral equality means that it has been necessary in some instances, due to the distribution of population, to link urban and rural electorates in the same ward.

2.10 Paragraph 18 (1) presumptively sets the number of wards in each district at 60 for Belfast and 40 for the other ten districts, subject to sub-paragraphs 18 (2) and (3), which give me discretion, having regard to the factors in paragraph 17, to recommend that the number of wards be plus or minus 5. I have exercised this discretion (for reasons that are set out in my Revised Recommendations Report of February 2009) in respect of the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district and the Newry, Mourne and Down district where I recommend that there should be 41 wards.

2.11 Paragraph 19 (1) imposes an obligation (as far as is reasonably practicable having regard to paragraph 17) to have substantially the same number of electors in each ward within a district. Paragraph 19 (2) required me to use as the basis of my calculations the last published electoral register before my review was formally announced, namely, 1 July 2008. This principle of electoral equality has been fundamental to the way in which I have formulated my recommendations for ward boundaries.

2.12 As to the meaning of “substantially the same”, this term has not been precisely defined and depends on local context such as the geographical distribution of the electorate, the design and layout of housing developments and the weight to be given to the factors in paragraph 17. In considering this matter, I concluded that ward electorates within a variation of not more than 10% from the district electorate average should be regarded as “substantially the same”. In the event, all wards are within 10% of the said average.



NAMES OF DISTRICTS AND WARDS

2.13 The Rules do not provide guidance as to the naming of districts and wards. As regards districts, I decided that, where possible, the names should comprise the names of the existing districts. There are three exceptions where I recommend a composite name in districts where there were more than two existing councils, namely: Causeway Coast and Glens, Mid and East Antrim and Mid Ulster. In the naming of the wards I have, where possible, used current ward names but where this was not possible (due for example to amalgamations) I have sought to use names which have a relevance to the locality.

2.14 Under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, there is provision (section 51) to enable a district council to apply to the Department of the Environment to change the name of the council at any time. However, there is no similar provision enabling a ward name to be changed, which means that the issue can only be addressed in the context of local government boundaries reviews which are held every 10 years or so.

2.15 I received representations from a number of councils to designate some of the new councils as boroughs. The DUP encouraged me to include in my recommendations the suggestion that the new councils should have the opportunity to apply for borough status. My remit is restricted to making recommendations as to the names of the new local government districts and I have no authority over the question of “borough”, or for that matter “city”, status. Under section 2 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, a council may petition for the grant of a charter designating the district of the council as a borough.

2.16 I received representations that districts and wards should be named in Irish or bilingually with English. As indicated in my Revised Recommendations Report, I consider that further work needs to be done to provide evidence that the number of residents who are users of Irish is such as to justify bilingual names in particular areas. In the meantime, I consider that I am not in a position to recommend such a change.



3 FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Following publication of my Provisional Recommendations Report in September 2008, I received over 200 written representations in relation to those recommendations. A series of 11 public hearings, which were presided over by Assistant Commissioners, were held during November 2008 to consider oral submissions. After consideration of the representations and the reports of the Assistant Commissioners, I decided to make a number of revisions to my Provisional Recommendations. My Revised Recommendations Report was published on 27th February 2009 with a closing date for receipt of representations of 9th April 2009.

3.2 As indicated above, I received 133 representations following the publication of the Revised Recommendations Report, 8 of which were petition letters; the numbers associated with each petition letter are indicated in Annex A. However, a number of these responses related to Provisional Recommendations which had not been revised. The legislation provides that, at the Revised stage of the process, comments should relate only to the Revised Recommendations. This was made clear in my Revised Recommendations Report (Paras 4.1 and 4.4) and in the associated Public Notice. I have read all representations received but, in formulating my Final Recommendations, I have not taken into account any submissions which did not relate to revisions, other than in a few cases where my attention was drawn to mapping errors or recent development on the ground.

3.3 In its submission in response to the Revised Recommendations Report, the UUP opined that my Recommendations were fundamentally flawed on the basis that the legislative context for the Review excluded a requirement to take account of local community identity and required the new council configurations to include the major part of the former districts. However, the legislative context is not a matter for me to address.

REPRESENTATIONS RELATING TO REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS

3.4 The representations in relation to my Revised Recommendations are summarised in the following paragraphs, together with my views as to whether there should be any further change in terms of my Final Recommendations.

Boundaries of Local Government Districts

Boundary of Belfast district with Lisburn and Castlereagh district

3.5 The DUP asked me to review the revised district boundary in the Tullycarnet area of Gilnahirk ward having regard to new development on the ground in the nature of a business park and a leisure park. I carried out a site visit and am satisfied that the boundary indicated in my Revised Recommendation is readily identifiable and is therefore confirmed.

Boundary of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district with Mid Ulster district

3.6 In my Provisional Recommendations I proposed that the district boundary between the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district and the Mid Ulster district should follow the existing boundary of Dungannon and South Tyrone district with the districts of Armagh and Craigavon.

3.7 I received a representation suggesting that a more appropriate boundary would be the county boundary between Armagh and Tyrone – which is the River Blackwater. In considering this representation, the Assistant Commissioner noted that county boundaries were not a relevant consideration under the Rules, but she nevertheless came to the view that the River Blackwater was a more readily identifiable boundary than the current district council boundary and recommended a revision to my Provisional Recommendations. I accepted her recommendation and published my Revised Recommendation showing the River Blackwater as the district boundary of the Mid Ulster district with the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district.

3.8 The DUP has objected to this revision on a number of grounds, namely,

- Only one person made the representation;
- It involves a transfer of electors from one of the smallest districts to one of the largest;
- The use of the Blackwater as a boundary can only be achieved by breaching the Torrent river for adjustments to other ward boundaries;
- The Peatlands Park reinforces the current boundary;
- The revision has an unnecessary and unacceptable impact on 6 other wards;
- There is no significant support or demand for this revision from councils, political parties, community or civic organisations.
- The community is orientated towards Dungannon.

3.9 Councillor Roger Burton, of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, objected to the proposed revision on behalf of the constituents of the Blackwater District Electoral Area. He expressed his concern that the change was based on a single representation and contended that the change would have a detrimental impact on the residents of the area. He argued that the natural affiliation of the area was with Dungannon and expressed his concern that the change would lead to rate increases for residents and businesses in the area. He said that the Peatlands Park was a key tourist asset for the future Mid Ulster Council.



3.10 I received a petition letter signed by 42 residents from the area east of the River Blackwater objecting to the change indicating that their community ties were with Dungannon and that they were concerned with the potential impact on rates.

3.11 In considering these representations, I am guided by the Rules as set out in the legislation – which do not include issues of community identity or financial outcomes. My task is to define districts and wards by reference to readily identifiable boundaries while respecting townland boundaries and ensuring electoral equality. Further, it is not the number of representations which is important in relation to a particular matter but rather the substance of the submission in the context of the Rules.

3.12 In her report the Assistant Commissioner noted that while it was possible to identify the line of the Provisional boundary by following small geographical features, she did not consider it to be really readily identifiable. From my own site visit following the recent representations, I noted that there are parts of the boundary where there is no identifiable boundary feature at all.

3.13 The River Blackwater on the other hand displays all the characteristics of a readily identifiable boundary. It already forms a significant part of the boundary between the proposed Mid Ulster district with the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district from Bond's Bridge southward to Caledon and the border with the Republic of Ireland and in the north for a short stretch at Maghery. In the relevant stretch of the river it varies from some 40 to 50 metres in width. In the circumstances, I confirm my Revised Recommendations both in terms of the district boundary and the consequential changes to ward boundaries.

Boundary of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district with Newry, Mourne and Down district

3.14 Banbridge District Council welcomed the retention of the townlands of Annahunshigo and Drumlee within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district, but was disappointed that the remaining part of the Ballyward ward was moving to the Newry, Mourne and Down district. The DUP also considered that Ballyward should not transfer to the Newry, Mourne and Down district as it considered that the Assistant Commissioner's reasoning was flawed in recommending acceptance of the Provisional Recommendation.

3.15 I set out my reasons for including Ballyward in the Newry, Mourne and Down district in my Provisional Recommendations report, namely, that all of the Mournes AONB, including the totality of Slieve Croob, should lie within one district. The eastern side of Slieve Croob already lies in the Down district. Two Assistant Commissioners addressed this issue in their reports and having considered their recommendations and the written and oral representations, I consider that the move of the greater part of the Ballyward ward is justified. I confirm my Revised Recommendation as to the boundary between the two councils concerned.

Names of Local Government Districts

Causeway Coast and Glens

3.16 The DUP objected to the inclusion of the "Glens" in the district name as proposed in my Revised Recommendations on the basis that not all of the Glens of Antrim are contained within the district and that it created an eastern bias. Councillor Ian Stevenson of Ballymoney Borough Council also objected to the inclusion of the "Glens" in the district name. The UUP had no issue regarding the Revised Recommendation for the name. I consider that the revised name is a reasonable descriptor of the district council area and I confirm my Revised Recommendation.

Derry and Strabane

3.17 The DUP expressed its opposition to the recommended name of the district as "Derry City and Strabane" when other non-contentious options are available. Gregory Campbell, MP MLA submitted, on behalf of the Londonderry branch of the DUP, that the name of the new council should be one which would be acceptable to all communities. As examples, he suggested "Londonderry and Strabane", "Foyle Valley" or "North West Regional".

3.18 The UUP was strongly of the view that the council be named "City of Londonderry and Strabane" (or at the very least "Foyle") as a name which could command cross community support and recognise the city's historic heritage.

3.19 This matter was the subject of submissions in relation to my Provisional Recommendations and was debated before Assistant Commissioner Mark Orr QC at the Public Hearing in Londonderry on 20th and 21st November 2008. Assistant Commissioner Orr recommended that the name should be "Derry and Strabane Regional Council".

3.20 In recommending names for the new local government districts I adopted the approach of using the names set out in Section 1 (2) of the 2008 Act where the new district comprised one or two existing districts. On this basis, I confirm my recommendation that the name of the district should be "Derry and Strabane". In terms of naming a district the addition of the word "Regional" would not be appropriate.

Newry, Mourne and Down

3.21 Tomaí Ó Conghaile made a submission that the Newry, Mourne and Down District should include 'South Armagh' or 'Gullion' in the title. As I have explained, I have sought where possible to use existing district names and this proposal would not be consistent with that approach.



North Down and Ards

3.22 The Marketing Officer of Ards Borough Council expressed the view that the proposed North Down and Ards district should be named “East Down Council” bringing the existing councils under a new name.

3.23 As indicated in paragraph 3.19 above, I have sought to adopt a consistent approach to the naming of the new districts with the use of existing district names where appropriate. I therefore confirm my Revised Recommendation that the name of the district should be “North Down and Ards”.

Names, numbers and boundaries of wards

Belfast district

3.24 I received a representation from an individual who wished her name to be withheld in this Report. She proposed that there should be 65 wards in the Belfast district. She indicated that she had made a similar submission in response to my Provisional Recommendations but my office has no record of it being received. I have therefore given consideration to her submission.

3.25 She notes that the Belfast district has a larger electorate due to the transfer of part of the Lisburn and Castlereagh districts and points out that Belfast wards have the highest electoral average in Northern Ireland.

3.26 In determining the number of wards in a district, the Rules do not provide for comparisons with other districts. Rather, the assessment has to be made by reference to Rules 17 and 18 which, in the case of Belfast, means that the presumed number of wards is 60 and in considering a deviation of plus or minus 5, the Commissioner must have regard to the size, population and physical diversity of the district. Having regard to these Rules, I am not convinced that there is a case for 65 wards and I confirm my Provisional Recommendation that there should be 60 wards in the Belfast district.

Ballymurphy/Turf Lodge wards

3.27 I received 25 representations proposing an amendment to my Revised Recommendation relating to the boundary between the Ballymurphy and Turf Lodge wards, namely that Moyard Park should move from Ballymurphy ward to Turf Lodge ward to keep the Moyard estate together.

3.28 Moyard Park is separated from the other “Moyards” by the Vere Foster Primary School and I propose no change to my Revised Recommendation.

Beechmount/Clonard wards

3.29 I received 25 representations proposing an amendment to my Revised Recommendation relating to the boundary between the Clonard and Beechmount wards, namely that Beechmount Gardens, Beechmount Close and Beechmount Grove should move from Clonard ward to Beechmount ward to keep the Beechmount area together.

3.30 The street layout in the Beechmount/Cluain Mor area is such as to make the configuration of readily identifiable boundaries somewhat complex and the proposed change would not in my view lead to a more identifiable boundary than that in my Revised Recommendation. In the circumstances I confirm my Revised Recommendation for the boundary between the Beechmount and Clonard wards.

Blackstaff ward - Broadway Roundabout

3.31 Blackstaff Community Association submitted that all of the Broadway Roundabout in Belfast should be part of the Blackstaff Ward for historical reasons. The Rules do not include provision for historical ties to be taken into account. However, the Broadway roundabout has recently been reconfigured as part of a major road scheme and my Final Recommendations reflect a minor change to the ward boundary which has no electoral consequences.

Shaw’s Road/Collin Glen wards

3.32 I received 9 representations proposing an amendment to my Revised Recommendation relating to the boundary between the Shaw’s Road and Collin Glen wards. This was accompanied by proposals for consequential changes to other ward boundaries including Stewartstown. The proposed change and consequentials would not, in my view create more readily identifiable boundaries, and in their absence there would be electoral inequality between the two wards. I therefore confirm my Revised Recommendation.

Woodvale/Clonard wards

3.33 The DUP drew my attention to a small mapping error at Mayo Park on the boundary of the Woodvale and Clonard wards and indicated a more readily identifiable boundary. I agree with this and the relevant map in this report uses that boundary.



Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district

3.34 Banbridge District Council objected to my Revised Recommendation that this district should comprise 41 wards and proposed that it should comprise 45 wards. In support of this proposal, the Council submitted a representation from Professor Kenneth Benoit from the Department of Political Science, Trinity College, Dublin. Professor Benoit had made a written representation in relation to my Provisional Recommendations and appeared and gave evidence at the public hearing in relation to the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district.

3.35 In his further submission, Professor Benoit argues that the number of wards should be increased beyond my recommended 41 so that the numerical deviation from the electoral average within the district would be smaller. He considered that this would “seem a desirable and natural objective”. The Rules (see Annex B) do not include such an objective and the presumption in the legislation is that the number of wards shall be 40.

3.36 Professor Benoit argues further that the discretion given to the Commissioner to recommend up to plus or minus 5 wards to a district is designed to make representation across unequally represented districts more equal. However, comparison of electorates as between districts for the purpose of the exercise of this discretion is not included in the Rules. The number of wards is to be determined by reference to Rule 17.

3.37 I confirm my Revised Recommendation that the number of wards in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district should be 41.

Newry, Mourne and Down district

3.38 In consideration of my Revised Recommendation that this district should comprise 41 wards, Newry and Mourne District Council and Down District Council submitted that the size of the electorate in the district justified an increase in the number of wards to 45 or at least to 43 (as recommended by the Assistant Commissioner who presided at the public hearing). In support of this proposal, the Councils submitted a representation from Professor Kenneth Benoit. Professor Benoit had made a written representation in relation to my Provisional Recommendations and appeared and gave evidence at the public hearing in relation to the Newry, Mourne and Down district.

3.39 Professor Benoit argues that the discretion given to the Commissioner to recommend up to plus or minus 5 wards to a district is designed to make representation across unequally represented districts more equal. Margaret Hoben argued a somewhat similar point. However, comparison of electorates as between districts for the purpose of the exercise of this discretion is not included in the Rules. The number of wards is to be determined by reference to Rule 17.

3.40 The Down, Newry and Mourne branch of the SDLP requested that the recommendation of the Assistant Commissioner that this district should comprise 43 wards should be accepted.

3.41 The DUP opposed the creation of an additional ward in this district on the basis that the problem highlighted of areas on the periphery of towns being in rural wards is not unique.

3.42 Councillor Michael Carr submitted that my Revised Recommendation for 41 wards in the Newry, Mourne and Down local government district did not give sufficient weight to Rule 17(b) which required that in determining the number of wards within a district, regard shall be had to the desirability that there should be a proper representation of the rural and urban electorate within the district. He argued that the distribution of electorate in the urban area of Warrenpoint was such as to justify 42 wards for the district, and in particular that Warrenpoint should have 2 wards.

3.43 The case for an additional ward in Warrenpoint has merit. However, in my delineation of wards throughout Northern Ireland I have adhered to the principle that the deviation from the electoral average in any district should be no more than 10% - in accordance with Rule 19 which states that the number of electors in wards within a district should be “substantially the same”. I have tested the potential for 2 wards in Warrenpoint on the basis of both a 41 ward district and a 42 ward district, and I have concluded that it is not possible to delineate 2 wards in Warrenpoint without breaching my judgement as to what comprises “substantially the same”. A two ward Warrenpoint could only be achieved by incorporating rural parts of an adjacent ward and a consequential “ripple effect” involving a significant number of other wards. I confirm, therefore, my Provisional Recommendation as to the number of wards in the Warrenpoint area.

3.44 Having considered the further representations regarding the proposed number of wards in this district, I consider that there is not sufficient evidence in accordance with the Rules to justify further additional wards and I confirm my Revised Recommendation that the district should comprise 41 wards..

3.45 I received 409 petition letters that the “Windsor Hill” ward in Newry should be named “St. Patrick’s” for historical reasons. On the other hand, Paul Hoben proposed that the “Abbey” ward should be renamed “St Patrick’s. The Abbey ward contains the Abbey Monastery and I therefore confirm the name as “Abbey”. I accept the submission that “Windsor Hill” should be named “St Patrick’s” and the change is reflected in my Final Recommendations.



3.46 Paul Hoben and Margaret Hoben proposed that the wards in Newry should be named to reflect deprivation indicators. However this is not a matter to which I can give consideration under the Rules.

REPRESENTATIONS WHICH DID NOT RELATE TO REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS

3.47 The representations which I was unable to take into account because they did not relate to the Revised Recommendations were, in summary, as follows.

Boundaries of Local Government Districts

Boundary of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon with Newry, Mourne and Down

3.48 The DUP proposed that Rathfriland should transfer to the Newry, Mourne and Down district. However, this representation did not relate to a Revised Recommendation and I confirm my Provisional Recommendation.

Boundary of Belfast district with Lisburn and Castlereagh district

3.49 The DUP submitted a representation that I should reconsider my Provisional Recommendation that Dunmurry be included in the Belfast local government district on the basis that the arguments of the Assistant Commissioner who held the Belfast hearing were flawed. In considering whether to revise the district boundary in the Dunmurry area, I took into account not only the report of the Assistant Commissioner who presided at the Belfast hearing but the report of the presiding Assistant Commissioner at the Lisburn/Castlereagh hearing. The latter concluded that the Provisional Recommendation for the district boundary at Dunmurry represented a readily identifiable boundary for the district and that my use of zoning indicated a reasoned and appropriate approach to the determination of the boundaries. Taking both reports, and my own assessment of the written and oral representations, I consider that the district boundary at Dunmurry should remain as in the Provisional Recommendations.

3.50 Lisburn City Council rejected the Revised Recommendations report particularly in regard to the recommended boundaries at Dunmurry, Milltown, Belvoir, Forestside and Galwally. The DUP also asked me to reconsider the boundary at Forestside. The recommended boundaries in question are as set out in the Provisional Recommendations and were not the subject of revision.

3.51 By way of a petition letter with 69 signatories, Dunmurry Village Representatives and a number of individuals objected to their area being included in the Belfast local government district on the basis of local ties. However, the district boundary in question is as set out in my Provisional Recommendations and has not been revised.

3.52 The UUP argued that the Dundonald/Ballybeen area should be part of the Belfast local government district on the basis of local ties. The boundary between the Belfast district and the Castlereagh/Lisburn district in the locality concerned is as set out in my Provisional Recommendations and has not been revised.

Boundary of Belfast district with Antrim and Newtownabbey district

3.53 The DUP urged me to reconsider the recommended boundary between these two districts. However, their submission did not relate to a Revised Recommendation and I confirm my Provisional Recommendation.

Boundary of Derry and Strabane district with Fermanagh and Omagh district

3.54 I received 19 petition letters from residents of the Castledearg area objecting to the inclusion of the wards of Glenderg, Castledearg, Newtownstewart and Finn in the proposed Derry and Strabane local government district and seeking their inclusion in the Fermanagh and Omagh local government district on grounds of local affiliation. I received similar representations in relation to my Provisional Recommendations and after consideration of them and the report of the Assistant Commissioner who presided at the public hearing, I did not propose any revision to the boundary between the Derry and Strabane district and the Fermanagh and Omagh district. Accordingly, my Provisional Recommendation regarding this local government district boundary is confirmed as my Final Recommendation.

Names of wards

Names in Irish or bilingually in English and Irish

3.55 I received 39 submissions requesting that some or all of the ward names in Belfast should be bilingual in Irish and English. I received one submission that all wards in Northern Ireland should be named bilingually. I received a number of petition letters from individuals, Belleek Community Regeneration Group and Camloch Rovers Football Club that the wards of Camlough (197 signatories), Crossmaglen (7 signatories), Forkhill (56 signatories) and Mullaghbane (273 signatories) should be named in Irish. However, these representations did not relate to Revised Recommendations and I confirm my Provisional Recommendations.



Causeway Coast and Glens

3.56 The DUP and Councillor Ian Stevenson objected to the name “Lurigethan” as a ward name preferring “Cushendall”. As this representation did not relate to a revision, I confirm my Provisional Recommendation.

Ward boundaries

Belfast district

3.57 The DUP made proposals for a reconfiguration of a number of wards in North Belfast, including Woodvale, Shankill, Waterworks, Duncairn, New Lodge, Chichester Park, Fortwilliam, Innisfayle, Cavehill and Bellevue. This representation does not relate to Revised Recommendations and I confirm the relevant ward boundaries as indicated in my Provisional Recommendations.

3.58 I received some 40 representations to reconfigure a significant number of ward boundaries in West Belfast. Many of these were a repeat of representations made at an earlier stage in relation to my Provisional Recommendations which were considered by the Assistant Commissioner who presided at the Belfast hearing on 20th and 21st November 2008. As the result of her recommendations and my own consideration of those earlier representations, I revised some of the West Belfast boundaries in my Revised Recommendations Report. However, not all of the ward boundary changes proposed in those representations were revised and where this is the case, I confirm my Provisional Recommendation for the boundaries concerned.

3.59 Gerry Kelly MLA and Carál ni Chuilin MLA proposed that the Mountainview Estate should be moved from the Forth River ward to the Ardoyne ward on the basis of local ties. However, this representation does not relate to my Revised Recommendations and I confirm my Provisional Recommendation.

Antrim and Newtownabbey district

3.60 Both the DUP and the UUP were critical of the shape and boundaries of the Carnmoney Hill ward. I acknowledge the unsatisfactory nature of the configuration of this ward, but there are significant difficulties in delineating ward boundaries which achieve electoral equality in an urban area which includes a large, central open space feature. In the event, the boundary of this ward was not revised and I confirm my Provisional Recommendation.

Causeway Coast and Glens district

3.61 The UUP expressed their disappointment that the boundaries of wards in the Portstewart and Portrush area had not been revised as suggested in their proposals in response to my Provisional Recommendations. I set out my reasons for making no revision in my Revised Report and I confirm my Provisional Recommendations for ward boundaries in this locality.

North Down and Ards district

3.62 North Down Borough Council and Dr. Stephen Farry MLA of the Alliance Party proposed a number of minor amendments to ward boundaries in the North Down and Ards district. These did not relate to my Revised Recommendations, and I confirm my Provisional Recommendations in relation to the ward boundaries concerned.

3.63 My attention was drawn to some recent changes in the Balmoral Square area of Bangor and the fact that an adjustment of the ward boundary between the Bloomfield and Ballygrainey wards along Willowbrook Road would be more readily identifiable. I had in fact already noted this and my Final Recommendations reflect this change.

Newry, Mourne and Down district

3.64 Councillor Frank Feely drew my attention to a number of ward matters where he considered there to be anomalies. I have checked these and am satisfied that they are not anomalies.

Mid and East Antrim district

3.65 Larne Borough Council proposed changes to the boundaries of the Glynn and Kilwaughter wards. However, these boundaries were not revised and I confirm my Provisional Recommendations.



4 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 In bringing forward my Final Recommendations, I have had regard to the written and oral representations submitted in relation to my Provisional Recommendations; to the recommendations and conclusions of the Assistant Commissioners who presided over the public hearings; and to the further representations submitted in relation to my Revised Recommendations.

DISTRICT NAMES AND BOUNDARIES

4.2 My attention has been drawn to the fact that the remit of a Local Government Boundaries Commissioner does not extend to making recommendations regarding the names or status (e.g. city or borough) of councils. As the law stands, section 1(2) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 provides for the naming of councils and section 2 of that Act enables a council to apply for borough status. The remit of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner is to recommend names for local government districts. Accordingly, I recommend that the names of the proposed 11 local government districts should be as follows:-

1. "Belfast" incorporating the current local government district of Belfast and parts of the current districts of Castlereagh, Lisburn City and North Down;
2. "Antrim and Newtownabbey" incorporating the current local government districts of Antrim, Newtownabbey and a part of the current district of Carrickfergus;
3. "Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon" incorporating the current local government districts of Armagh City and District, Craigavon, the major part of the current district of Banbridge and a part of the current district of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough;
4. "Causeway Coast and Glens" incorporating the current local government districts of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady, and Moyle;
5. "Derry and Strabane" incorporating the current local government districts of Derry and Strabane;
6. "Fermanagh and Omagh" incorporating the current local government districts of Fermanagh and Omagh;
7. "Lisburn and Castlereagh" incorporating the major parts of the current local government districts of Lisburn City and Castlereagh;
8. "Mid and East Antrim" incorporating the current local government districts of Ballymena, Larne and the major part of the current district of Carrickfergus;

9. "Mid Ulster" incorporating the current local government districts of Cookstown, Magherafelt and the major part of the current district of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough;
10. "Newry, Mourne and Down" incorporating the current local government districts of Newry and Mourne, Down and a part of the current district of Banbridge;
11. "North Down and Ards" incorporating the current local government district of Ards and the major part of the district of North Down.

4.3 My Final Recommendations for the boundaries of each of the proposed new local government districts are set out on the attached map of Northern Ireland and are replicated in the relevant district Sections of the Report which follow.

NUMBER, BOUNDARIES AND NAMES OF WARDS

4.4 Within the Belfast district, I recommend that there should be 60 wards.

4.5 Within the districts of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, and Newry, Mourne and Down, I recommend that there should be 41 wards.

4.6 As regards the other eight districts, I recommend that they should comprise 40 wards.

4.7 My Final Recommendations for the number, boundaries and names of the wards are set out in the relevant district sections of this Report, together with associated maps.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES COMMISSIONER FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Local Government District Boundaries for Northern Ireland

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Due to constraints of scale some ward names are not shown.
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— LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICT
— WARD





Office of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner

-  BELFAST DISTRICT
-  DERRY AND STRABANE DISTRICT
-  ARMAGH, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON DISTRICT
-  LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH DISTRICT
-  NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT
-  ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY DISTRICT
-  NORTH DOWN AND ARDS DISTRICT
-  CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS DISTRICT
-  FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT
-  MID AND EAST ANTRIM DISTRICT
-  MID ULSTER DISTRICT

