

Report of the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee

16 February 2017

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Executive Summary

The Drogheda Boundary Committee was established by Mr Alan Kelly, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, under section 28 of the Local Government Act on 19 June 2015. The Committee was reconstituted on the 20 October 2015, and its substantial work commenced after that date. It was tasked with carrying out a review of the boundary between County Louth and County Meath, make recommendations with respect to the Borough District of Drogheda that it considers to be necessary in the interests of effective and convenient local government and prepare a report with recommendations to the Minister. The terms of reference identified several matters to be considered in formulating the recommendations. This report is the culmination of the efforts of the Committee to fulfil its brief.

The Committee engaged in an extensive consultation process as part of its work. It engaged with both local authorities on a number of occasions. 409 unique submissions were received and analysed following a call for input from the public and interested parties. Substantive submissions were received from several bodies and, in particular, from both local authorities. A number of meetings took place with some national stakeholders whose future activities could be affected by the outcome of the process. The Committee also examined good practice internationally and drew on the expertise of its own members and on the knowledge and experience of the Institute of Public Administration, which also provided professional support. Administrative support was provided by Louth County Council staff, who, along with Meath County Council staff, also participated in a Liaison and Support Group. A customised website was established to assist the process.

Having considered all the issues in the context of the terms of reference, the Committee recommends that no change to the existing boundary should take place. It recommends that a new programme of structured cooperation be immediately initiated by both local authorities to develop an innovative governance system for Drogheda. This should build on existing good cooperation between the authorities and focus on the development of an agreed vision for the area, a joint Local Area Plan for Drogheda, a joint retail strategy, the possible expansion of shared services, the development of a Service Delivery Plan with specific provision made for housing estates bisected by the county boundary, the further development of the identity of Drogheda and other matters.

In making these recommendations the Committee acknowledges the advantages that would result from a boundary change. It also acknowledges the previous cooperation between the two local authorities on a significant number of issues and the positive approach by elected members and staff to the future development of the Drogheda.

The Committee further recommends that if substantial progress is not made on the issues mentioned above, within defined time frames, the Minister should reconsider all options, including extending the boundary at a future date. The details of such an extension should be finalised at that stage following consideration of progress made by the individual local authorities in advancing the above recommendations.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Establishment and Membership of the Committee

Mr. Alan Kelly, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, appointed a statutory committee on the 19 of June 2015 to review the administrative boundary between County Louth and County Meath; one of four such reviews.¹

Under Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1991, the Committee was asked to:

- a) carry out a review of the boundary between County Louth and County Meath;
- b) make such recommendations with respect to that boundary, and any consequential recommendations with respect to the area of the Borough District of Drogheda, that it considers to be necessary in the interests of effective and convenient local government; and
- c) prepare and furnish to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, a report in writing of that review and its recommendations.

The Committee is independent in the performance of its functions, and the Terms of Reference clearly set out the basis upon which the Committee's recommendations were to be drawn and the scope of the Report that follows. The full Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out in Appendix 1.

The Committee was chaired by Mr. Jack Keyes. The original other members were Mr. Joe Allen and Mr. Ciaran Lynch. In September 2015, for reasons unrelated to the work of the Committee, Mr. Allen and Mr. Lynch withdrew, and the Committee's work was suspended pending the appointment of replacements. Mr. Donal Enright and Mr. Ger Sheeran were appointed in October 2015 and the work of the Committee recommenced. The same membership formed the Athlone Boundary Committee. Reviews of Waterford city and Carlow town boundaries are being conducted by a separate Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. David O'Connor.

1.2 The Work of the Committee

The Committee progressed its work through a number of methods.

1.2.1 Meetings of the Committee

During the course of its work the Committee in its current formation met formally on 24 occasions, including joint meetings with the Carlow/Waterford Committee and meetings attended by the liaison and support group.

¹ Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government [press release on appointment of the Committee](#).

1.2.2 Liaison and Support Group

A Liaison and Support Group was established to facilitate effective co-ordination and communication between the Committee, both Councils and the Secretariat. The members of this group, in addition to the Committee, were Des Foley (Meath County Council), Frank Pentony (Louth County Council), Barry Eaton (Louth County Council/Secretariat) and Angelo McNeive (Institute of Public Administration).

1.2.3 Secretariat

Louth County Council was requested by the Department to perform a secretariat function on behalf of the Committee. The secretariat role would involve servicing of meetings, e.g. minutes, preparation of documentation, etc., and carrying out any ad hoc research as necessary at the request of the Committees.

With the kind assistance of Fingal County Council, an online document management system (Alfresco) was implemented for the respective Boundary Review Committees/Liaison and Support Groups. Given the volume of documentation received and generated for each review, this greatly facilitated the administration and work of the Committees.

1.2.4 Joint Committee Meetings

As noted in section 1.1 above, a separate Committee—with a separate membership and chaired by Mr. David O'Connor—was appointed to review local authority boundaries in Waterford and Carlow. There has been a high level of co-operation between the Boundary Review Committees. They met jointly on 7 occasions for the purpose of establishing a substantially common framework approach to the reviews, to share learning across all reviews and to conduct joint consultations with a number of national stakeholder organisations.

1.2.5 Evaluation Framework

The respective Boundary Committees jointly developed an Evaluation Framework, based on their Terms of Reference, to ensure a level of consistency and efficiency across all four reviews. The Framework addressed the requirements of the Committees with regard to: necessary contextual and background information, a detailed evidence base from the respective local authorities to inform the Committees' deliberations, and a method for conducting public consultations.

A substantial volume of background documentation was provided by both local authorities in hardcopy and/or soft copy. The Committee acknowledges both Councils' support in providing the Committee members with this important information.

Both local authorities supplied background information and data as requested by the Committee in support of their evaluation framework and the criteria that the Committee was asked to have regard to under its Terms of Reference (see section 5.1 and Appendix 1). An outline of the detailed information and data that constituted this evaluation framework is provided in Appendix 3. This was provided as an input to the consultation process with the Councils and for their consideration in preparing their submissions to the Committee.

The Boundary Committees agreed to use a standard approach to the public consultation process across the four reviews.

1.2.6 Extensions of Timeframe

The timeframe for conduct of the review has extended significantly. Initially, an extension was required in order to re-constitute the Committee membership. Subsequently, following the period for public submissions, it became clear that the volume of submissions received in respect of the two reviews being conducted by the Committee would place a significant administrative burden on the Secretariat and IT resources in the first instance. It was also evident that review and consideration of submissions by the Committee, in addition to the other consultation activities described in Chapter 2 below, would be a substantial block of work. As a result, the Committee requested the Minister for a further extension to ensure appropriate consideration of all the submissions received. The Committee acknowledges that it took longer than anticipated to complete their report. The Committee wish to acknowledge the support of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (formerly the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government), Meath and Louth County Councils, public and stakeholders in this regard.

1.3 Acknowledgements

The Boundary Committee would like to thank the elected members, the chief executives, management teams and staff of both local authorities for their assistance with the Committee's work. In particular, the Committee wish to acknowledge the extensive administrative and technical support provided by Des Foley, Frank Pentony, Barry Eaton and their colleagues.

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the professionalism and commitment of management and staff in dealing with the volume of submissions received and otherwise supporting its work.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance received from officials of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. It would also like to thank the members of the public, organisations and public representatives who made submissions to the Committee. The Committee also acknowledges the significant work put into submissions received from both Councils and the respective local representatives. The contributions to the consultation process from national stakeholder organisations are also appreciated.

The Committee would also like to thank the Institute of Public Administration for their support and, in particular, Angelo McNeive, Mark Callanan, Richard Boyle and David O'Mahony, who provided research support for the Committee. Lastly, the Committee is grateful to Fingal County Council. Its Head of IT, Dominic Byrne, and his team greatly facilitated the respective work of all four Boundary Committees by providing an online repository and ongoing support. The Committee also thanks Waterford City and County Council, who prepared the website template.

Chapter 2 Consultation Process

2.1 Overview of Consultations Undertaken by the Committee

The Committee has consulted extensively in order to develop a comprehensive view of existing local government arrangements and the appropriateness or otherwise of any change. In conducting the consultation process, the Committee sought the views of the general public, elected members and executives of the respective local authorities, and relevant public bodies.

The review process generated a significant level of public interest. This was reflected in the volume of submissions received, in particular from individual members of the public. The approach taken to wider public consultation is dealt with separately in Chapter 3 below – the remainder of this chapter deals with the Committee's consultations with the local authorities concerned and national public bodies.

With the assistance of the Liaison and Support Group, the Committee conducted two site visits across the whole urban area, prior to and following the change of Committee membership. This afforded the Committee the opportunity to orientate themselves, with the assistance of Council staff from key functions in both authorities. As a result, the Committee was well placed to define its Area of Interest and develop its understanding of key issues and opportunities in the area.

2.2 Consultation with the Local Authorities

Two separate meetings were held with respective delegations of elected members from Meath County Council and Louth County Council. The first of these meetings with both Councils, in December 2015, prior to the closure of the public consultation process, enabled the Committee to develop an overview of the important issues arising in and for each county from the perspective of the elected members. The second of these meetings, in February 2016, afforded the elected members the opportunity to offer a considered response to the submissions received by the Committee and to further elaborate their views. The Committee found these meetings particularly helpful in clarifying a range of issues raised and appreciated the constructive engagement of members in the process.

The Committee also met with a number of staff from both local authorities, and with the Chief Executives, on two occasions. Based on their review of the background documentation and submissions received, the Committee engaged with both authorities to clarify a variety of issues and seek further information/analysis. The information received has been valuable to the Committee's deliberations.

2.3 Consultation with Relevant Public Bodies

The Joint Committees met Transport Infrastructure Ireland, IDA, the Regional Assemblies, Irish Water, and the Planning Division of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. These meetings assisted the Committees by providing a national, strategic perspective on a number of the issues emerging from the other consultations.

The detailed consultation process engaged in has helped the Committee identify the objectives and challenges that its recommendations address.

Chapter 3 Outcome of Consultations

3.1 Submissions Process

3.1.1 Area of Interest

In order to facilitate data gathering for the evaluation framework, undertake analysis, conduct the public consultation process and assess alternatives, it was essential to set some indicative limits to the area under consideration along the existing boundary. Therefore, the Committee identified an 'Area of Interest,' presented in Figure 1 below.² The Area of Interest (AOI) did not represent a proposal for a new boundary, and it was open to the Committee to include some of the Area of Interest, all of the Area of Interest, or more than the Area of Interest in the event of a recommendation to extend the boundary.

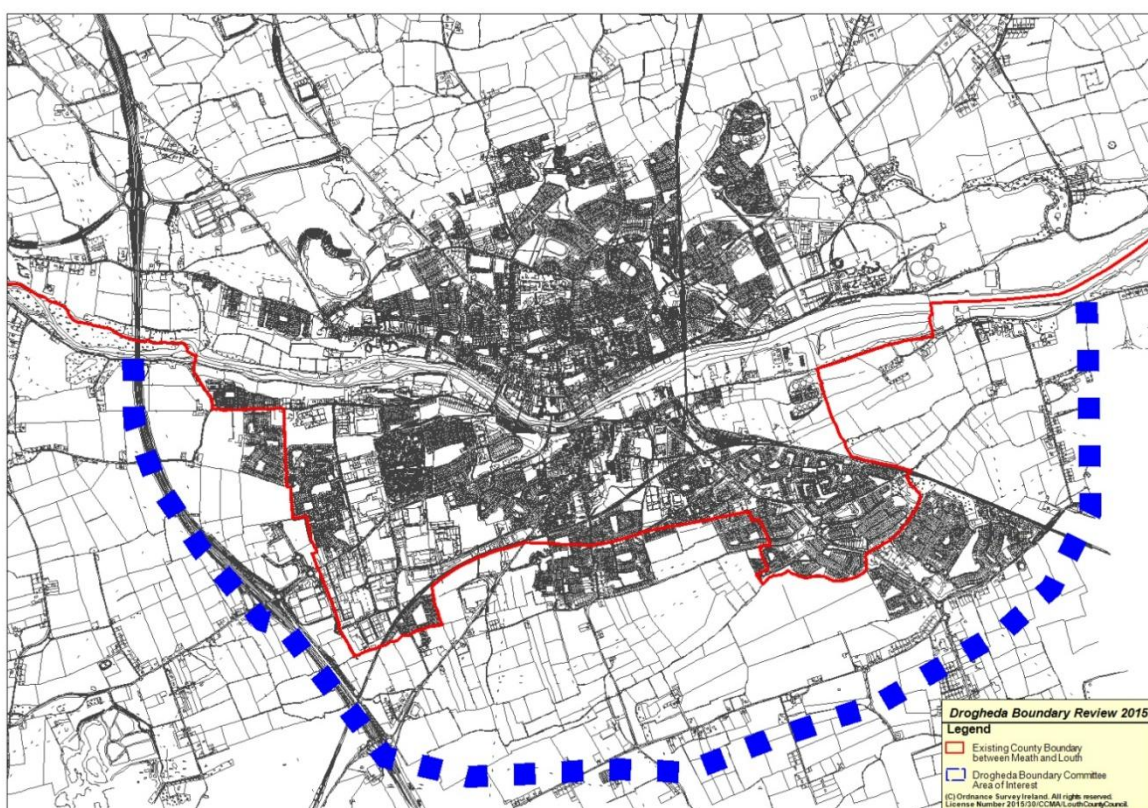


Figure 1: Drogheda Boundary Review Area of Interest

3.1.2 Boundary Review Website

For each boundary review, a stand-alone website was developed and hosted by the Council providing secretariat support. The Committee wish to thank Waterford City and County Council and the IT Section of Louth County Council for their assistance in this regard. The

² A larger version of this map is at <http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/Documents/BoundaryReview.pdf>

website³ provided important background information, including a statement from the Chairman, the Terms of Reference, biographies of the Committee members, press releases and a map of the Area of Interest. It also gave guidance on making a submission by way of a standard set of questions across all 4 reviews derived from the Terms of Reference and offered the option to make submissions electronically if individuals and organisations so wished.

3.1.3 Notifications

As required by section 33(4) of the Local Government Act 1991, a formal Public Notice inviting submissions was published on 25 November 2015 in the local press and online. The period for receipt of submissions closed on 22 January 2016.

3.2 Overview of Public Submissions

3.2.1 Numbers and Format

A total of 426 submissions were recorded by the deadline of 22 January 2016, some of which were duplicated electronically and in hard copy. A total of 409 unique submissions were received. Late submissions have not been included.

Submissions were received from a cross-section of the community, including the general public, residents' associations, sporting and community groups, political representatives and political parties, public bodies, businesses and the business community.

Of the 409 submissions received, the majority were against any change to the boundary (73%). Just under a quarter (23%) were in favour of change. Some research from the United States suggests that opponents of a boundary change are more likely to become involved in the consultative process surrounding that change than supporters⁴.

3.2.2 Processing and Data Protection

Every submission was individually registered. Each submission was associated with an individual name, but the address associated with an individual was withheld from publication in each case in compliance with Data Protection legislation. However, all information, including names and associated addresses submitted, was available to the Boundary Review Committee. Both Meath County Council and Louth County Council made submissions, as requested by the Committee.⁵

³ <http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/Default.html>

⁴ Feiock, R.C. and J.B. Carr 'Incentives, Entrepreneurs, and Boundary Change: A Collective Action Framework', *Urban Affairs Review*, 36(3), 2001, pp. 382-405.

⁵ The Louth County Council and Meath County Council submissions are available at <http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/currentsubmissions.html> as submissions W1110 and W1109 respectively.

All submissions received, along with the name of the individual or organisation, are publicly available on the Drogheda Boundary Review website, which will continue to act as a public repository and record.

The Committee has considered all of the submissions received in its deliberations. Particular attention was given by the Committee to the substantial submissions from the two local authorities, both in their own right and in their encapsulation of many of the issues raised in the other submissions.

3.3 Summary of Main Issues Raised in Public Submissions

The following summarises the public submissions and the main points made in favour or against boundary change. The submissions in full can be viewed at <http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/currentsubmissions.html>.

The arguments both for and against a change of boundary focused on a number of broad issues, including the administration of local government, identity considerations, financial implications, economic and wider development issues as well as the nature of the boundary itself. 88% of the submissions were received from the general public, and the remaining categories of submissions were from business, residents' associations, sporting and community groups, as well as from political representatives and political parties.

The remainder of section 3.3 summarises the primary issues raised by those opposed to, those in favour of and those who suggested alternatives to a boundary change

3.3.1 Issues Raised by Those Opposed to Boundary Change

The intent and process of the review and the potentially damaging precedent that these reviews could visit upon local authorities, locally and nationally, were raised as concerns. There was some negative commentary on the nature and extent of the terms of reference and on the timing of the review, which could not take into account the 2016 Census data that could yield the most up-to-date information on demographics and population. There was a suggestion that the current process is not democratic and that any decision should be made by referendum.

The financial loss to Meath County Council and the failure to adequately recognise the very significant investment by the County in the AOI was a serious concern. Estimates of the annual income loss to the Council in terms of levies, rates and local property tax from any change were provided and these losses, it was suggested, would pose a serious risk to the capacity for sustainable investment across the county. Given the significant investment in East Meath and the AOI to improve services and to yield longer term benefits for the betterment of the whole of County Meath, significant compensation would be required if any change were to occur.

With regard to current local government arrangements and the efficacy of existing arrangements, issues raised in the submissions included: the recent reform of local

government and a dedicated municipal district in the area; the economic strategy initiated by Meath which has benefitted the AOI; a thriving local community with employment growth, strong educational achievement and high skills when compared to other parts of Drogheda; effective planning and management of development in the area.

It was suggested that the current arrangements work well for residents. If residents are well served by both Louth and Meath County Councils, why risk divisiveness at this stage? There was also commentary on the extent of successful collaboration in areas such as water, emergency services and tourism, notably the Boyne Valley Drive. Within public administration more generally, it was asserted that there is a strong and proud tradition of working together, and that this is further supported by the fact that both counties are now in the one region – the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly.

There was also commentary on the relative quality, effectiveness and value for money between the two authorities which could disadvantage the AOI in the event of a boundary change, but some submissions argued that any differences would be negligible. Others suggested that both parts of Drogheda are well served and the boundary is not a barrier to accessing services.

3.3.2 Issues Raised by Respondents in Favour of Boundary Change

Not surprisingly, some of the same thematic issues arose in the submissions in favour of the boundary change, including service delivery, current arrangements, identity and social cohesion.

Among the potential benefits from a change, as expressed in the submissions, would be formal recognition of the 'de facto' position that the AOI is already part of the local Drogheda economic and social community (e.g. for Tidy Towns). It was argued, further, that an alteration would increase the possibility of developing local employment and allow time for social integration. One submission suggested that residents don't recognise or obey artificial political boundaries, while another asserted that all those within the hinterland of Drogheda are citizens of the town in every respect, except for local government administration.

In terms of service delivery, a consistent assertion was that services are mostly delivered by Louth County Council and that, as a result, it would be more efficient for Louth County Council to take responsibility for all local services. The availability of services in the immediate vicinity for the public and business was also seen as positive, enabling the anomalies that have arisen with different local administration structures in place to be addressed.

Many submissions highlighted the economic development and FDI opportunities of extending the BMW region to include the Area of Interest, thereby accessing higher grant supports.⁶ While collaboration on tourism has been a feature of inter-authority

⁶ The Committee notes that counties Meath and Louth are now within the one region – the Eastern and Midlands Region.

engagement, it was suggested that creating a greater critical mass in terms of area and population would benefit promotion and enhance attractiveness.

Concerns were expressed as to policy coherence and policy formulation in a situation where the existing boundary does not support future planning and strategy across a range of public services in the area. The situation in relation to the Action Plan for Jobs, the retail strategy, healthcare and policing issues were provided as evidence of this. The lack of coherent planning and consequential development anomalies north and south of the town were highlighted as resulting from the current boundary arrangement. It was contended that one single authority would have responsibility for resolving these planning and development anomalies.

The extent to which the boundary extension would allow for greater and more engaged political representation in relation to the key decisions affecting people in the AOI was also highlighted. It was argued that change would provide people in the estates on the south side of the town with rights and input into decisions which affect them. The fact that the AOI communities are conflicted was also referred to, i.e. politically aligned with Meath but look to Drogheda and Louth for almost all their goods and services and their leisure and other needs.

In terms of impact on sporting bodies, those in favour pointed to the Northern Ireland example, where county loyalties prevail in spite of local councils straddling several counties.

It was suggested that the proposed alteration will mean that a single unified economic vision can be forged allowing for the balanced development on both sides of the river while preserving the primacy of the town centre for town centre functions.

3.3.3 Issues Raised by Respondents as Alternatives to Boundary Change

Several submissions suggested a middle ground to a boundary change. The alternatives revolved around enhanced co-operation, more structured dialogue and consultation and the greater use of the regional assembly to address regional issues. The adequacy of the relatively new political representation on the municipal district was highlighted. There was also a view that current economic and FDI attractiveness is well served at present.

3.4 Summary of Council Submissions

Both Meath and Louth County Councils provided substantial submissions setting out their views. The following is a brief summary of the arguments made. It is not intended to be an exhaustive repetition of the full submissions, which are available on the boundary review website. The Committee has given serious consideration to the perspectives offered by both Councils and acknowledges the considerable effort put into their preparation.

3.4.1 Louth County Council Submission

The Council's submission asserted that, for reasons related to emergent development patterns and planning policy for the area, an enlargement of the municipal district of Drogheda would be an appropriate, natural and credible extension of a growth town.

The submission argued that a change would be in the interests of proper planning and the sustainable development of both County Louth and County Meath. As part of the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly area, Louth could support the uplift of the eastern seaboard economic corridor. The submission also asserted, consistent with the goal of increasing capacity for promotion of economic and social development, that this would be best done by services already established close to the area.

The Council suggested that developments in the AOI have been driven by a general commuter population increase in towns on the M1, including Drogheda, which was the largest recorded Census town in 2011. The CSO, in the census, recognised that "built up areas have extended beyond the legally defined town boundary". The Census population for Drogheda, at 38,578, includes parts of County Meath as part of the Drogheda environs. The submission asserted that Louth County Council currently provides services commensurate with Drogheda's growing status and reputation as the largest town.

Recent (independent) electoral reviews as part of local elections extended several urban areas, including Drogheda, in recognition of the changes in population. This evidences a recognition of a shift from rural to suburban, from County Meath to Drogheda.

Louth County Council recognised and acknowledged the extent of formal cooperation between itself and adjacent local authorities, including County Meath, and the reciprocal arrangements that have been put in place in the interests of efficient and effective service delivery. In the context of the AOI, the Council's Marsh Road treatment plant meets the needs of the town and adjacent parts of Meath, including the AOI. Similarly, the Irish Water treatment plant, managed by the Council, supplies drinking water to the town and East Meath, including the AOI. Similar agreements between Louth and Meath operate in relation to the Fire Service, where the AOI is served by the Fire Station in Drogheda. It is contended that these and other services are best delivered by a provider established and operating close to the population of the AOI.

In terms of Social and Economic Infrastructure, Drogheda was seen as an *"important strategic urban settlement in the Region and within the Eastern Economic Corridor in support of the Dundalk Gateway"*⁷. In the context of maximising the benefit, marketing the town and increasing the attractiveness of Drogheda as part of the Corridor, the IDA Business and Technology Park is outside the county boundary. There was a real risk, the submission argued, that the synergies and economic opportunities which exist may not be exploited. Similarly, the retail strategy and retail priorities for the county are undermined, it was suggested, by the Donore Retail Park and the Southgate Shopping Centre within the AOI.

⁷ Border Region Planning Guidelines.

In the context of the IDA strategy for foreign direct investment and the regional priorities and targets, the hinterland of Drogheda is effectively divided in two and therefore less attractive. Indeed, the division may, it was suggested, make Drogheda ineligible for some grant supports that would be available.

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) recognised Drogheda as a Primary Development Centre that has much potential for development. In the context of encouraging a compact urban form for Drogheda and best sustainable land development practice, the submission contended that the Local Area Plan for South Drogheda, which departed from the agreed joint strategy by zoning greater levels of development in the south of the town, created an imbalance in the envisaged parallel north and south expansion of the Town.

The expansion in population was occurring outside the Louth boundary. The Council, while supporting national, regional and policy direction within the 2015 Louth Development Plan, asserted that their ability to deliver on these strategic goals would be undermined. If Drogheda is to take a position of greater regional and national strategic importance, as is envisaged, it would be best administered by one authority.

The division of the Port, north and south, has led to a differential rate of development between the Louth and Meath sides of the River. This, it was contended, has resulted in the full value of the Port as a whole not being realised. There are great opportunities for the Port. Of relevance here is the fact that Louth County Council is to become the major shareholder in the Port.

That some housing estates and streets are serviced by Meath County Council and some by Louth County Council has, it was argued, resulted in a lack of dedicated political representation in relation to matters impinging on residents' lives and some adverse impacts on access to services. In part recognition of these facts, both authorities have entered agreements for provision of services, including fire services. The boundary has also implications for the effectiveness of policing services and the role of the Louth Joint Policing Committee. For example, depending on the location of public order issues, disputes or incidents proximate to the boundary, a call to the police may involve responses from Ashbourne, Navan and/or Drogheda Garda Stations.

The Council contended that the successful operation of any organisation or entity requires a single, clear and easily communicated vision. This does not exist for Drogheda and, in spite of attempts for both local authorities to collaborate and plan for mutual benefit⁸, "this has not worked in Louth's favour."⁹ In terms of the design and development of the built environment and infrastructure and the consequent presentation and perception of the town, having two separate and non-coordinated approaches is damaging and confusing and not favourable to the town.

⁸ The Greater Drogheda Planning Strategy (2007).

⁹ Louth County Council submission page 15.

In the medium term, the AOI and the north Drogheda environs are best placed to be the primary growth nexus for the town. An extension of the boundary would be appropriate, natural and credible.

3.4.2 Meath County Council Submission

The Council's submission set out its case that the current arrangements are working effectively and that the status quo should remain in place. It argued that the onus is on proponents of the extension of the boundary to show that it would deliver *substantial* improvements; there is no evidence that this would be the case.

The submission argued that current arrangements are generally working effectively. Results of a survey, specifically commissioned by the Council for the boundary review, indicated a high level of satisfaction amongst residents and businesses both in Drogheda and the AOI with the quality of their lives and with services received from their local authority. This survey was carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes over the Christmas and early New Year period 2015-16. Residents in the Meath part of the AOI were surveyed and, separately, a survey was carried out of businesses in this area. An on-street survey in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda was also carried out.

The Council has committed heavily to supporting community and economic development in the AOI, which is situated in an area of considerable importance to the economic development and sustainable growth of County Meath. The area has experienced rapid growth in population and employment. This commitment is reflected in the priority given to the Meath environs of Drogheda in the current Meath County Development Plan, ranked equally with Navan.

The Area of Interest is home to approximately 6,000 residents, comprising almost 2,000 residential units. Several factors create the potential for the AOI and the wider East Meath area to be a highly attractive and competitive location within the greater Dublin area. These include the educational attainment and skills profile of the residents, the area's favourable location and strong transport infrastructure. The economic development strategy for County Meath 2014 to 2022 aims to support the development of sustainable communities by facilitating employment closer to home. This includes the AOI, which is characterised by higher rates of outbound commuting.

The Council noted that employment increased in the AOI during the recent exceedingly challenging economic time, supported by a strong pro-business approach of the Council; while there is scope to realise further economic development, the AOI is functioning effectively economically. This is evidenced by the presence of significant employers within the AOI, amounting to approximately 40% of all foreign direct investment employment in the county as whole. Future economic development is also supported by the availability on 120 ha of employment-zoned lands within the AOI. The objective of achieving sustainable mixed use development in the area will also be facilitated by the 1,132 residential units that have been granted planning permission by Meath County Council.

The northern environs of Drogheda contain significant zoned land and development potential. Meath County Council was of the view that this presented the opportunity for

Louth County Council to progress its sustainable growth, while Meath leads in the sustainable growth of the southern environs of the town. There is an opportunity, working together, to create a *real regional economic power*.

The case for a boundary change must, in an impartial and evidence-based manner, demonstrate that such a change would result in a significant enhancement of quality-of-life for local residents, an improved economic environment and more effective and efficient council operations. Meath County Council was of the view that this case cannot be established. It argued that there is no evidence of any administrative or governance failure, no failure of service delivery and that service delivery is to standard. Nor is there any evidence, it maintained, that the current arrangement has an adverse effects on peoples' lives. Developments on the Meath side such as Southgate shopping centre and Drogheda Retail Park are viewed favourably by residents and have improved the economic environment for the town.

The submission highlighted a concern that any change to the existing boundary would create perverse incentives for other local authorities with similar boundary scenarios (a large town straddling a county boundary) and instanced 14 such towns and cities. Councils would be likely to take a more cautious approach to planning and development along any similar boundaries and potentially prioritise development away from their boundary, to the detriment of proper planning and sustainable development.

The long history and tradition of collaboration that exists between Meath County Council and all neighbouring Councils was highlighted. A number of examples of cooperation with Louth County Council with regard to planning and development, transportation, water services and tourism were outlined. Other examples in the areas of fire and emergency services, community development, environmental and cultural services were also provided. The submission also outlined possible future initiatives to grow collaborative activity on a service-by-service basis, focusing on areas where collaboration would have most beneficial outcomes. The submission noted how such initiatives might be developed, including the use of contracts, service level agreements and the establishment of forums for knowledge sharing. It drew attention to a Welsh Local Government Association briefing note, *A Collaborative Toolkit*, which identifies six main categories of collaboration.

With regard to efficiency, Meath County Council maintained that it is one of the most productive local authorities in the country. Its staff-to-population ratio is the lowest in the country at 3.3 per 1,000 population compared to 5.17 for Louth and to the national average of 5.8. This has been supported by a move to a function-based rather than a location-based service delivery model for the needs of the county. Despite a reduction of 20% in staff numbers, the Council believed that it has delivered a range of efficiencies and continues to deliver effective services to the community.

With regard to political representation, the Council held that a change in the boundary resulting in the loss of approximately 6,000 residents may have a knock-on effect on the composition of Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District, resulting in a decrease in the number of Council seats.

Meath County Council believed that proponents of the Drogheda City Status Campaign have taken the boundary review as an opportunity to promote their campaign. The Council was of the view that city status is separate from the question of the boundary review, but argued nonetheless that the creation of an additional city in the country is not justified. Any such city would lack the scale to compete internationally with other cities and is not supported by the Minister.

The Council presented analysis that could identify no financial savings flowing from a change in the boundary. The Council argued that the higher levels of Exchequer supports for Louth County Council would require net additional funding from this source under the current funding model.

The Council's strongly held view was that cooperation between local authorities is the most appropriate and proportionate way of addressing the needs of areas straddling county boundaries. No compensation arrangements would be sufficient given the future economic commercial potential of the area to Meath County Council. However, it has a clear roadmap for the future of the AOI.

3.4.3 Meetings with Councillors

The Committee met separately with the elected members of both local authorities on two occasions, at which meetings the councillors developed the arguments made in their written submissions with further information to support the perspectives of their county on the issue. The additional material presented at the meetings has been considered as part of our deliberations.

The Committee noted the positive nature of the meetings and was impressed by the commitment of the elected members to their counties. Very useful suggestions were made as to how the future development of the area could be advanced. Both sets of elected members were positively disposed towards cooperation and joint working.

Chapter 4 Setting the Context

4.1 Relevant contextual issues arising from the Historical Development of Drogheda

Drogheda was founded by the Normans soon after their arrival in Ireland, with the first charter for the town dating from 1194. The original settlement, on the south side of the River Boyne, was the defensive Millmount Fort, built at the lowest bridging point on the Boyne to facilitate crossing the river and a harbour for trade.

The development of the town progressed on both sides of the river, and the first defences which enclosed the settlements date to the 1190s. The eventual area within the walls was nearly 46 ha, with over 13 ha on the south side and over 32 ha on the north, making Drogheda one of the largest walled towns in medieval Ireland, comparable in size to Dublin, Kilkenny, Bristol and Oxford. The defences were strong enough to repulse an attack in 1315-16 by Edward the Bruce's Scottish army and in 1641-42 to resist three attempts by Sir Phelim O'Neill to take the town until relief forces from Dublin arrived. The last attack to occur on the town was in 1649, when Cromwell successfully breached the walls and massacred the garrison and Catholic clergy.

Drogheda was a major medieval port with trading links to other parts of Ireland, Britain, the Baltic and along the Atlantic seaboard of Europe. This peaked at the end of the 18th century, when Drogheda became the fourth largest town in Ireland after Dublin, Cork and Waterford. The town began to significantly outgrow the walled area at this time, but reminders of the medieval past are evident in the street layout (where not affected by the inner relief road) and preserved buildings and monuments.

Early economic activity, with strong links to the port, included soaperies, salt works, tanning, corn and flour milling, brewing and distilling, and footwear manufacture. In particular, the linen industry flourished up to the Act of Union in 1800, and textile manufacture continued into the early 20th century. Nevertheless, economic activity declined during the 1800s, with a drop in population of up to 40% during the century. The continued decline in traditional industries into the 1970s and 1980s left a legacy of brownfield sites in the urban area.

The economic regeneration of the town since that time has seen the development of traditional sectors: the port throughput is about 4% of the total national tonnage, focused mainly on break bulk e.g. construction related materials¹⁰ and port-related manufacturing (edible oils, magnesia products) and there are a number of significant food and drink processing enterprises. There has also been some expansion based on FDI, but more limited than other parts of the country. Drogheda and the Boyne Valley are also important tourism destinations, and Drogheda is strongly linked to the wider Boyne Valley within Ireland's Ancient East offering. Drogheda is also regionally important for services, such as Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, the largest employer in the town.

¹⁰ [Irish Maritime Transport Economist 2014, Volume 12](#), published by the Irish Maritime Development Office.

The rail line to Dublin opened in 1844 and to Belfast in 1852, with the Boyne Viaduct completed in 1855. The M1 motorway bridge over the Boyne and the motorway standard connection to Dublin Airport and Dublin were completed in 2003. A significant proportion of the population commute to work outside the town and environs, living in the more affordable housing in Drogheda and relying on the transport links to access employment.

Drogheda and Dundalk are the two towns with the largest population in the State and contribute significantly in making County Louth one of the most urbanised counties in the country. In 2011, the population of Dundalk was larger than the population of Drogheda in County Louth, but including the population of the environs of Drogheda in County Meath, the overall population of Drogheda (38,578) marginally exceeded that of Dundalk and its environs (37,816).

Much of the dynamism in Drogheda's growth has occurred in the **southern environs and the AOI**, linked in part to the convenience of this area for commuters. Local employment has risen in this part of the town, based on FDI (2 major employers), food and drink processing (2 major employers) and retail (Southgate Shopping Centre and Drogheda Retail Park). In contrast, plans for the development of the northern environs, including a new access road to the Port, which would have assisted towards a more balanced development of the town, became a casualty of the financial crisis of the last decade. Opportunities for further development exist both to the north and south of the town.

The 2 legally separate settlements on the north and south sides of the Boyne were united by a single constitution and formed into a single local authority in 1415. It remained a separate local authority until the Local Government Act 1898, when the town, including an area south of the Boyne, became part of County Louth with the status of a Borough Corporation. The area of the Borough Corporation was more than doubled in 1977 to meet development needs, primarily through the inclusion of parts of County Louth in the Borough Corporation area. This extension also included about 290 ha transferred from County Meath, primarily already developed land, including an overspill of 200 local authority houses built by Drogheda in County Meath.¹¹ In 1994 the boundary was further extended into County Meath, for local election purposes only, by the inclusion of part of the St Mary's electoral division in Meath in County Louth and Drogheda Borough. This meant that the local government electors in the extended area voted in local elections for Louth County Council and Drogheda Borough Corporation, and did not vote in the elections for Meath County Council, but Meath County Council remained the local authority for the extended area. This arrangement did not apply to the local elections in 2014.

4.2 Brief description of the Area of Interest (see map at Figure 1)

When requesting submissions on its terms of reference, the Committee considered it necessary to provide a map of an indicative Area of Interest to assist interested persons engage with the Committee. It was made clear, however, that the Committee would not be restricted to considering only this area; it would consider a smaller or larger area as

¹¹ Reference: [Dáil](#) and [Seanad](#) debates in December 1976.

appropriate. In short, the Committee has examined the Area of Interest in the context of Drogheda and its environs as a whole.

The Area of Interest was centred on the zoned lands in the Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009. The population of this area was 5,983 in 2011, living mainly in a number of relatively new housing estates, such as Parklands, Highlands, Colpe, Millmount Abbey, The Cairns, The Hazels, Árd Rí and some others. These are wholly in County Meath. However, some housing estates (Five Oaks Village, Blackbush Ave, Bryanstown Village, Rosevale, Martello Village (The Court) and Longwood) are split between Counties Louth and Meath, with some 148 houses in these estates on the Meath side of the boundary; these housing estates are mostly extensions of estates with larger numbers of houses in County Louth.

All developed and zoned lands in proximity to the border between Louth and Meath are thus included in the Area of Interest. In order to ensure the Committee would have submissions in relation to possible additional areas to be considered, within its terms of reference, the indicative Area of Interest was extended to the west along the line of the M1 motorway from the Boyne and then to the south and east of the zoned lands from junction 8 on the M1 to the Boyne downstream of the Port. The additional land, outside the zoned lands, included in the Area of Interest is largely rural in character, with some ribbon development.

4.3 Status of Drogheda as a Primary Development Centre

4.3.1 The National Spatial Strategy 2002

The National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (NSS) 2002 - 2020 is a 20-year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions.

The NSS identified 9 Gateways where public and private investment would be prioritised. Other urban centres linked to these Gateways are defined as Hubs. Further down the hierarchy are Primary Development Centres, and Drogheda is included in this category in the NSS.

The NSS envisages that Primary Development Centres need to aim at a population level that supports self-sustaining growth, but which does not undermine the promotion of critical mass in other regions. This suggests an ultimate population horizon of up to 40,000 people for the primary development centres. In addition, Drogheda's close functional and physical links with the GDA highlights a need to consider its role in the spatial development of the GDA when reviewing the Strategy.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is currently in preparation by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and will replace the NSS. A 20-year plan that will guide the preparation of the future Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

and County/City Development Plans, it is due to be in place by the first quarter of 2017¹². Since January 2015 the former 8 Regional Authorities have been replaced by 3 Regional Assemblies. Louth and Meath are now in the same Regional Assembly, the Eastern and Midlands Assembly. In addition, there are sub divisions within the Regional Assemblies called Strategic Planning Areas and Meath and Louth are in the same SPA along with Wicklow and Kildare. Uniquely among counties, Louth is also linked with another assembly – the Northern and Western Assembly. This recognises Louth as a border county.

4.3.2 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Area 2010- 2022

These Regional Planning Guidelines are based on policy SG.2:

“To ensure the development of the Gateways, Hubs, Drogheda and Carrick-on-Shannon as the strategic drivers of growth for the Region and to facilitate integrated sustainable development between urban and rural areas;”

The established eastern corridor extends from Dublin to Belfast. In the Border Region, the corridor is anchored on Drogheda and Dundalk, with Newry having an increasingly influential role through the Newry/Dundalk Twin City Strategy. In 2011, these three settlements had a combined population of 106,340 persons. The challenge for this corridor is to exploit the potential of Newry/Dundalk, coupled with the growth of Drogheda, which is driven by the latter’s proximity to the Greater Dublin Area. The eastern corridor benefits from an ever-improving inter-urban motorway and good cross border rail services. Future growth within the Eastern Corridor must be directed towards existing settlements as defined in the core settlement strategy and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region have a target population of 38,956 by 2022 for Drogheda, including the Northern Environs.

4.3.3 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) state that outside of the Gateway core area, the Primary Economic Growth Towns of Navan, Naas, Bray, Wicklow, Drogheda and Maynooth/Leixlip should be promoted as anchors for regional enterprise.

They also point out that Drogheda, one of the largest towns in Ireland, is a designated primary growth centre within national and regional spatial policy. Locational advantages include multi-regional location, proximity to coast and ports and position along the M1 Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor. Though primarily located within the Border Region, the settlement extends into parts of Meath and has a notable economic sphere of influence within the GDA in terms of service provisions and attracting labour supply from areas such as Meath, Louth and Northern Ireland.

¹² Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Towards a National Planning Framework: A Roadmap for the delivery of the National Planning Framework 2016* (2015).

IDA-supported businesses in a number of business parks located on the edge of the Drogheda are key elements. Continued growth and employment opportunities for the town and its environs, availing of its multi-modal transport connections, as befitting its primary economic growth centre status, is desirable to strengthen the opportunities and benefits to the GDA of the E1 International economic corridor from Drogheda, through Meath, Fingal and to Dublin City and Wicklow.

4.3.4 Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, 2012

Putting People First is a milestone document published by the then Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. Its objectives were given legal status through the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

In regard to towns and Municipal Districts, paragraph 6.4.2(c) states:

“However, in all cases the district should incorporate the relevant hinterland of each town, subject to the constraints imposed by county boundaries close to towns e.g. New Ross located adjacent to the Kilkenny/Wexford boundary, Carrick-on-Suir adjacent to the boundary between Tipperary and Waterford, or Athlone on the Roscommon/Westmeath border. In cases such as these, suitable agency arrangements or service level agreements should be implemented to ensure that one authority has responsibility for all functions (including development plans) and services throughout the entire area of the town, notwithstanding county boundaries.”

4.4 Strategic Planning Policies

4.4.1 Louth County Development Plan 2015 - 2021

While acknowledging Drogheda’s role as a commuter town, the Council is keen to support the policies and objectives of the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017, particularly having regard to the objective of developing the town as a self-sustaining Primary Development Centre that will energise development within its own catchment.

The Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 states that it will be an overarching Development Plan for the entire county, including Dundalk and Drogheda. Whilst Development Plans are currently in place for both Dundalk and Drogheda, the existing respective development plans for the urban areas of Dundalk & Drogheda will be reviewed and ultimately replaced by Local Area Plans. The local area plans for Dundalk and Drogheda will be sub-sets of and will be consistent with the provisions of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021.

Policies in the Louth Development Plan that relate to Drogheda include:

“SS 2 To facilitate the development of Dundalk and Drogheda and to maintain their positions at the top of the settlement hierarchy.

SS 4 To review the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 and to prepare a Local Area Plan for Drogheda and Environs which will be consistent with the provisions of the County Plan.

SS 5 To ensure that the expansion of Drogheda to include the Northern Environs, takes place in an orderly and sustainable fashion that will support the growth of Drogheda and not detract from the vitality and viability of its town centre.”

4.4.2 Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017

The Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 sets out a spatial strategy to direct future growth within the Drogheda Borough Council area. It also establishes a framework for development within the wider Greater Drogheda urban area by setting the Borough Plan within the context of related spatial plans for the larger urban area, including the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area, 2007, the North Drogheda Environs Local Area Plan 2004 and the associated North Drogheda Environs Master Plan, 2006. It also takes cognisance of Meath County Council’s Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009.

The Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan states that future Framework Plans will take cognisance of developments, either existing or proposed, in the neighbouring jurisdictions of both Counties Louth and Meath. Within these two jurisdictions, detailed Local Area Plans have been prepared for extensive areas both north and south of the Borough in the adjacent areas of Counties Louth and Meath.

The Drogheda Borough Council Plan also states that a further Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda was completed in 2009 by Meath County Council. This Plan operates under the auspices of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 and provides the local-level planning policy context for the southern environs of Drogheda located in County Meath. The provisions of these Plans are incorporated as guidelines into the overall development strategy for the plan area. If any conflict arises between the provisions of any of the existing plans outlined below, the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 will at all times take precedence.

4.4.3 Local Area Plan for the North Drogheda Environs, 2004

In 2004, Louth County Council prepared a Local Area Plan (LAP) for the Northern Environs of Drogheda that provided for the phased development of three new neighbourhoods, each capable of accommodating an additional population of 20,000 inhabitants. A further objective was to make provision for industries, business parks, information technology and logistics land uses to provide employment opportunities for the existing and future population of the town. An early draft of the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area provided guidance in the preparation of the North Drogheda Environs Masterplan,

2006. This Masterplan, in turn, was adopted by the Council as a variation of the Drogheda Local Area Plan, 2004.

By 2013, planning permission has been granted for a total of 5,051 new dwellings within the Northern Environs Area, but very few have been built. It was envisaged that a single Local Area Plan will be prepared for Drogheda and the Northern Environs Area.

4.4.4 Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

Navan and Drogheda Environs in Meath, identified as Large Growth Towns I, represent key destinations in the Greater Dublin Area. The policy of the Development Plan is to promote them as economically active towns supporting the surrounding area and maximising their location on multi modal corridors. Consistent with this approach, and in line with the policy of the RPGs, Meath County Council identifies the Large Growth Towns I of Navan and the Drogheda Environs as the primary growth centres in County Meath. The functions of these towns include acting as regional economic drivers in the GDA whilst also supporting and servicing a wider local economy. They will accommodate significant new investment in transport, in economic and commercial activity, and in housing. Planning for Navan and Drogheda Environs should take cognisance of accommodating an ultimate population of 50,000 persons in those towns.

Navan and Drogheda environs have also been assigned significant economic status in the economic strategy of the Development Plan, befitting their identification in the Regional Planning Guidelines as primary economic growth towns. The towns are to be the main centres of economic activity in Meath and should embody the dynamism of the GDA economy.

“The development of the economic role assigned to these towns is considered crucial as the basis for their future growth should not be as dormitory towns for the Metropolitan Area of the GDA.

Large Growth Towns I will become, in the longer term, self-sustaining and must grow in a manner which supports this goal without threatening the role of other settlements and regions. In particular, development should allow for the integration of land use and transport and the holistic and balanced expansion of the towns.” Ref p61

4.4.5 Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009-2013

The Southern Environs Plan made by Meath County Council states that the overall development context for Drogheda is substantial given the anticipated population expansion to approximately 65,000 persons by 2024, as set out in the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area, 2007. The Plan notes that the main areas of development expansion are outside the former Borough District of Drogheda, located to the north in the administrative area of Louth County Council and to the south in the Meath County Council administrative area. In this context, the Plan states it is important that all future expansion of the town is integrated with the existing built-up area. It states that it is therefore an

imperative objective of the Plan that all new housing development and residential extension areas form an integral part of the built-up area of Drogheda. These areas should be integrated with the town by providing clear and legible linkages, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, and by ensuring that new built-up areas integrate with the existing and established built fabric of the town.

The Plan states that the overall development principles for the Local Area Plan lands should strictly adhere to the objectives and policies set out in the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area.

A number of key objectives apply in terms of the overall development framework of future development in the Plan area:

“DF1 All new development should be set in/ be mindful of the context of the existing built up area of Drogheda town and needs to demonstrate how it integrates with the town proper, both in terms of linkages and integration with the existing built form.

DF2 The sequential approach shall apply to all new residential development in that those areas closest to the existing built up area should be developed first.”

4.4.6 Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area, 2007

The future role and function of Drogheda was defined by the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area 2007. This strategy, which has a time frame of 20 years, was jointly commissioned by Louth and Meath County Councils and Drogheda Borough Council to plan for the cohesive and integrated development of the town going forward.

The estimates contained in the Strategy indicate that the existing zoned land bank in the town and environs in counties Louth and Meath could accommodate an additional 60,000 persons, thereby potentially almost trebling the population of Drogheda to 90,000 persons. Set against this backdrop, the strategy sets out population targets for the town over four growth periods with an ultimate population horizon of 65,000 people for Drogheda and environs by 2024.

The Committee is of the view that this population target was overly ambitious given that the population of Drogheda and its northern and southern environs grew by 7,500 over the 10 year period to 2011, when the population had reached 38,578, and given the preliminary 2016 Census results, which indicate that Drogheda’s population has increased by just 3.1% since 2011.

4.5 Other Local Government Policy Issues

4.5.1 Housing

Drogheda, along with Dundalk, is placed at the highest level (Large Growth Town 1) of the Settlement Hierarchy in the Louth County Development Plan 2015 – 2021. Drogheda is

described as a key destination, economically active, supporting surrounding areas, and located on a multi-modal corridor. The Development Plan projects a population of 37,944 for Drogheda, including its Northern Environs, by 2021. It also projects that 952 additional dwelling units will be required for the increased population, and that 76.3 hectares of additional zoned residential land is needed to accommodate these dwellings. However, there are 355 hectares of undeveloped residentially zoned land within Drogheda and the Northern Environs, and this is more than adequate to meet the housing need.

The Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 states that planning for Navan and Drogheda Environs should take cognisance of accommodating an ultimate population for each of 50,000. This is seen as critical as it will contribute to achieving critical mass in these centres. The core strategy of the Development Plan envisages that 857 additional dwellings will be required for the Drogheda Southern Environs by 2019 and this will translate into a need for 19.9 hectares of additional zoned land. However, there is already 159.1 hectares of land zoned for residential use. The County Development Plan identified 1,653 housing units granted planning but not built (reduced to 1,132 in the Southern Environs of Drogheda LAP (as varied March 2015), as some planning permissions had lapsed).

To deal with this over supply of residential zoned land, the Southern Environs of Drogheda LAP based the order of priority of release of zoned residential land to 2019 on a number of criteria which included, inter alia;

proximity to the town centre, availability of public transport, consistency with sequential approach to urban expansion and contribution to a compact urban form.

4.5.2 Economic Development

A study entitled Louth County Economic Development Strategy (2009 - 2015), commissioned by the Louth Local Authorities from Indecon International Economic Consultants, provided a blueprint for the Louth Economic Forum, a collaboration of the State Development Agencies and the business community in County Louth established to drive the implementation of comprehensive economic development strategies for the county. The Louth Economic Forum has devised an overall 10-point plan identifying specific areas to be addressed within its work programme. The purpose of the action plans is to outline Louth's joined up approach to fostering existing business and grow new enterprise in County Louth. The 10 specific areas are:

Foreign Direct Investment; Sustainable Energy; Indigenous Industry; Tourism and Heritage; Education and Training; Age Friendly Business; Agriculture, Food and Fisheries; Making Louth the Best County to do Business; Broadband; and the Drogheda, Dundalk, Newry Economic Corridor.

The Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 accepts that the majority of economic growth will be focused on the two principle urban areas of Dundalk and Drogheda. It stated

“Policy CS 4 To support the development of identified growth centres of Dundalk and Drogheda, as focal points for regional critical massing and employment growth.”

The Meath County Development Plan 2013 -2019 designates Drogheda Environs along with Navan at the top of the core settlement strategy hierarchy as Large Growth Towns 1. The Development Plan states that the Primary Economic Growth Towns (and this includes Drogheda) will be promoted as anchors of regional enterprise. These growth towns are located on multi-modal growth corridors which provide locational advantages in terms of access to strategic rail and road networks and to gateways, such as ports and airports:

“These centres shall be prioritised for economic development and investment to redress the imbalance of residential development and jobs and the emergence of dormitory areas.” Ref page 26.

Drogheda is also given a special designation: *“Drogheda Core Economic Area (encompassing M1 Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor as it passes through it)”* Ref page 27.

There is a total of 124.88 hectares of zoned land available for employment use in Drogheda Southern Environs.

In regard to tourism, the Boyne Valley has been designated by Fáilte Ireland as a world class destination. The Louth Meath Tourism Development Study 2010 recommended sharing or resources between the local authorities including a Boyne Valley Tourism Officer. The Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012-2014 and the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 were produced by the Meath and Louth local authorities in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland. Their aim was to provide direction for tourism in the Boyne Valley Destination.

4.6 Comparative Analysis

The Committee investigated international experiences with boundary changes and inter-local authority working.

While it is of course instructive to look at international examples for ideas that could potentially be replicated in Ireland, it is also necessary to acknowledge the different range of powers, responsibilities and roles assigned to local authorities across different countries, and sometimes even within countries. Local authorities vary in their range of functions, their population size, their decision-making structures, their revenue raising powers, and so on. Every local government system is different to some extent, shaped by national and local circumstances. Comparative analysis must take into consideration the unique historical and cultural factors in diverse areas that lead to distinctive political and administrative traditions. Different features of local government systems in different jurisdictions must be considered when drawing on international examples of boundary change. Amongst these can be included:

- Differences in functional responsibilities and the suite of services provided by local government – arrangements in other jurisdictions may relate to the choice of service delivery models that may be relevant to the provision of services provided by local government in that country. Depending on the country in question, this can include public services that are not delivered by local authorities in Ireland, including

primary and secondary education, childcare, public transport, primary healthcare, social services, or (in the case of North America) policing.

- Differences in the size of local government units – arrangements in other jurisdictions may relate to the size of local government units in that country (typically measured in terms of population size). For example, local authorities (often referred to as municipalities) in continental Europe and North America on average are considerably smaller than the 31 county and city councils in Ireland, and some decisions around service delivery models may relate to the relatively smaller size of local government units.
- Differences in local government financing – local government systems vary in terms of the extent to which local authorities have financial discretion in raising revenue and the extent of central government controls over local government expenditure. The result is differences in the balance between local sources of revenue and central funding, in the balance between central discretionary grants and central specific grants, and in the buoyancy of local sources of revenue.

In addition to these fundamental differences between systems of local government, there are also differences between jurisdictions in the nature of boundary change. In the United States, for example, the most common form of boundary change comes from instances where a municipality expands its territory through taking responsibility for an area that is not serviced by another municipality (a so-called ‘unincorporated area’)¹³. This is a process that is not directly comparable to the current proposal concerning Drogheda, namely the proposed change to the boundary of one local authority to include an Area of Interest currently serviced by another local authority.

These differences in scale, service responsibility and financial resources are significant in influencing the criteria used in considering proposals for boundary changes. Different forms of revenue streams for local authorities produce different potential financial implications arising from boundary change. The nature of distinctive service responsibilities has to be considered in assessing proposals for boundary change. The process for undertaking boundary reviews varies from country to country (and sometimes between different regions/states within the same country). All of this means that identifying directly comparable ‘like-for-like’ cases as a means of assessing the Drogheda situation is highly unlikely.

The Committee therefore concluded that the Drogheda case must be considered on its own merits, and that an approach based on searching for a direct ‘like-for-like’ comparator with Drogheda would lack validity. Nevertheless, the Committee was conscious of drawing on international experience in terms of the criteria and methodologies that can be used to evaluate proposed boundary change in different jurisdictions, even if these would have to be adapted to suit the particular characteristics of the Irish local government system (this is further reflected on in section 5.1). The Committee also drew on the growing international trend of inter-local authority working between neighbouring local authorities in identifying options (see also section 5.1).

¹³ Feiock, R.C. and J.B. Carr ‘Incentives, Entrepreneurs, and Boundary Change: A Collective Action Framework’, *Urban Affairs Review*, 36(3), 2001, pp. 382-405.

Chapter 5 – Issues Arising

5.1 Introduction

The terms of reference for the Committee required it to carry out a review of the County Boundary between County Louth and County Meath, make recommendations in respect of this boundary, and address any consequential changes to the area of the Borough District of Drogheda “that it considers necessary in the interests of effective and convenient local government”. As a result, the Committee has focused in particular on the boundary at Drogheda and on the option of extending the boundary of Louth into Meath. This option would provide for a single local authority to be responsible for all local authority services for Drogheda, including the area which may be defined by this committee.

The Committee considered that 3 scenarios should be examined across a standard set of criteria to assist in analysing the issues relevant to its terms of reference. These scenarios are:

- **No Change:** to leave the boundary between the two counties exactly as it is and make no further recommendations.
- **No Change with greater use of agreements under Section 85 or 86 of the Local Government Act 2001, or other form of structured cooperation between the local authorities:** Section 85 is a commonly used mechanism that allows one local authority, by agreement, to perform specified functions of the other local authority for the area of the local authority as a whole, or for part of the area¹⁴. Section 86 is less commonly used, and provides that local authorities may perform agreed functions jointly¹⁵. There are also a broad range of cooperative mechanisms used by adjoining local authorities to suit specific requirements, and these mechanisms can be either short-term to address specific circumstances or long-term standing arrangements. As noted later in section 5.3, section 9 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the possibility of a single development plan between adjoining local authorities. Joint planning, shared services, and inter-local authority agreements between neighbouring local authorities are also increasingly common features of local government service provision both nationally and internationally¹⁶. In some instances, inter-local agreements are pursued as an alternative to boundary change¹⁷.

¹⁴ Agreement that another local authority shall perform certain functions under section 85 for a local authority is reserved to the elected members of that authority.

¹⁵ A decision to use Section 86 is not a reserved function.

¹⁶ See for example: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (2012, pp. 111-112); Hulst, R., A. van Montfort, A. Haveri, J. Airaksinen and J. Kelly, 'Institutional Shifts In Inter-Municipal Service Delivery: An analysis of developments in eight Western European countries', *Public Organization Review*, 9(3), 2009, pp. 263-285; Andrew, S.A. 'Recent Developments in the Study of Interjurisdictional Agreements: An Overview and Assessment', *State and Local*

- **Redraw to Boundary:** To extend the Louth boundary into the Area of Interest previously defined by the Committee. For the purposes of this scenario, the Committee is conscious that the Area of Interest is just that and no more, and that any change in the boundary may or may not be the same as the indicative Area of Interest provided to assist in the public consultation process. While the Area of Interest extended a short distance south and east beyond the development envelope zoned in Meath County Council's Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda 2009-2015, in practice the examination of this scenario focused on the development envelope in the context of Drogheda as a whole.

No other significant scenario emerged from the public consultation process.

The criteria against which each of these scenarios were examined are summarised as follows:

- **Cost and Efficiency Savings:** the focus is on the financial and other implications, including the costs and savings to one or other local authority, and overall benefits and costs or savings. To the extent possible, these costs and savings have been quantified and efficiencies and value for money have been identified.
- **Economic and social development and regional voice:** this focuses on the developmental responsibilities of local authorities in the spatial and socio-economic spheres and includes the contribution local authorities make to settlement and employment patterns and to the economic and social development of their wider region.
- **Community identity and cohesion:** particularly how different scenarios might impact on the identity and cohesion of local communities.
- **Service delivery across the full range of services for which local authorities are responsible:** these are the wide range of services of direct benefit to citizens and local communities, which the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government*,

Government Review, 41(2), 2009, pp. 133-142; Baldersheim, H. and L.E. Rose (eds) *Territorial Choice: The Politics of Boundaries and Borders*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

¹⁷ Some examples exist abroad of further attempts to legislate for other compromise solutions between local authorities as an alternative to boundary change. For example, the US state of Michigan allows local authorities to enter into negotiated agreements on service provision and the transfer of local government jurisdiction for a specific area for a set contract period. The agreements also include arrangements to share revenue accruing from the area between the two local authorities, including from future development. The contract period tends to be long-term (most are negotiated for periods of between 45 and 50 years), and should specify what happens to the area at the end of the agreement – in roughly half of the agreements negotiated at the end of the contract period the land permanently transfers, in roughly a third of cases the land reverts to the original local authority jurisdiction, and in the remainder a renegotiation or split in jurisdiction is envisaged. See: Bassett, E.M. "This Land Is *Our Land?*" An Analysis of Land-Use Planning and Cooperation under Michigan's Conditional Land Transfer Act', *State and Local Government Review*, 38(1), 2006, pp. 23-33; Zeemering, E.S. 'Negotiation and Noncooperation: Debating Michigan's Conditional Land Transfer Agreement, *State and Local Government Review*, 40(1), 2008, pp. 1-11.

Putting People First and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 envisage being performed by local authorities.

- **Governance and Accountability:** examines the impacts of the scenarios on local government structures for both local authorities and the Area of Interest under these headings.

These criteria are based on the considerations the Committee was required to have regard to as part of its terms of reference. In addition, they have been informed by the criteria typically used to evaluate proposed boundary changes in other jurisdictions: financial implications (changes in expenditure demands, implications from changes to the tax base for revenues from local taxes and intergovernmental grant allocations); spatial planning issues (providing a more coherent or integrated development framework for the wider area, the physical and natural features of the area subject to proposed boundary change, the population of the proposed area, the mix of residential, commercial and agricultural land-use in the area and new development potential); and issues around local identity and the predisposition of citizens in the area concerned towards boundary change¹⁸.

It is recognised that for the last 4 criteria identified, quantification and monetisation of the benefits and costs would be more difficult than for the first criterion, and these criteria have been dealt with qualitatively.

5.2 Cost and Efficiency Savings

To establish what efficiencies, if any, could be achieved as a result of a boundary change it is necessary to look at contextual developments in local government in recent years. These comprise:

- Structural reforms, including the abolition of 80 town councils and the mergers of Waterford City and County Councils, North and South Tipperary County Councils and Limerick City and County Councils.
- New funding and governance arrangements, including the introduction of a local property tax to fund local services, and performance monitoring with the establishment of the National Oversight and Audit Commission.
- The general public service moratorium on recruitment and promotion and incentivised early retirement and career break schemes, resulting in an overall staffing reduction of close to 30% in the local government sector. Both the Croke

¹⁸ See for example: Coe, C.K. 'Costs and Benefits of Municipal Annexation', *State and Local Government Review*, 15(1), 1983, pp. 44-47; Breen, E., F.J. Costa and W.S. Hendon 'Annexation: An Economic Analysis', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 45(2), 1986, pp. 159-171; Knapp, G. and S. Juelich 'The Fiscal Impacts of Detachment: Is It Better to Give Than to Receive?', *State and Local Government Review*, 24(1), 1992, pp. 28-35; Edwards, M. 'Annexation: A "Winner-Take-All" Process?', *State and Local Government Review*, 31(3), 1999, pp. 221-231; Edwards, M.M. 'Understanding the Complexities of Annexation', *Journal of Planning Literature*, 23(2), 2008, pp. 119-135. While there is significant variety in the specific methods and techniques used to identify implications of these factors arising from proposed boundary change, nevertheless financial implications, spatial planning considerations, and citizen preferences are the factors most commonly cited as key considerations in debates over boundary change.

Park and Haddington Road Agreements also introduced pay reductions and additional working hours.

- The establishment of Irish Water, which removed a key service that had been provided by local authorities and re-assigned staff, for at least the period of the Service Level Agreement.
- The increased prominence of shared services within local government in areas such as payroll and superannuation, procurement, waste collection permitting and the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme.

Proposals for boundary change often have financial implications. It is suggested that changes can result in reduced costs or increased efficiencies for one or more of those local authorities affected. Boundary changes, when implemented, are said to have scale effects on local authorities, either adding or detracting from both the population base and the geographical area of the local authorities concerned.

However, the question of costs and efficiencies within local government, and their relationship with scale, is a complex and disputed one. Much of the international and domestic research suggests in fact a limited relationship between scale and costs and efficiencies. Tests to establish a statistical relationship between the size of local government units and costs or performance standards suggest in many cases that there is no relationship between the two. Where such a relationship might exist, this is likely to relate to the specific nature of different services provided. Some research suggests that any scale effects on efficiency are most likely to be positive in cases of more capital-intensive local government services, specialised services, and certain 'back office' corporate functions. However, any scale effects are more likely to be potentially negative for more labour-intensive local government services. This suggests that increasing or reducing the size of individual local authorities is unlikely to have intrinsic efficiency value in itself¹⁹.

The Committee concludes that the net costs of a boundary change to the local government system as a whole are likely to be neutral, in the sense that increasing or reducing the size of the two local authorities concerned is unlikely in itself to have inherent efficiency effects. Based on the submissions from both authorities and evidence assembled, it is the view of the Committee that a boundary alteration will not realise any further efficiency. Both authorities currently fulfil their respective roles in the Area of Interest in an efficient manner. That said, there would of course be financial implications arising from a boundary change for the specific local authorities concerned.

On the revenue side, financial implications arise primarily in the context of changes to the tax base that might arise from a boundary change (impacting on commercial rates and LPT revenue), and possible effects of adjustments to central government general grant allocations to both local authorities. On the expenditure side, additional costs could arise to Louth resulting from the servicing of additional land, alongside reduced costs arising for Meath resulting from the servicing of less land.

¹⁹ Callanan, M., R. Murphy and A. Quinlivan 'The Risks of Intuition: Size, Costs and Economies of Scale in Local Government', *Economic and Social Review*, 45(3), 2014, pp. 371-403.

In its submission, Louth County Council pointed to its significant investment in infrastructure in the town and to the health, rail and other facilities based in or managed from the town that people in both counties avail of, including library, fire and waste water. It noted that housing, operations, library, fire, motor taxation and finance functions had been retained in Drogheda following the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act in 2014, with a dedicated Director of Services taking responsibility for the Drogheda Municipal District. It drew attention to specific housing estates that straddle the boundary and pointed out that Garda and emergency services were divided and served by separate headquarters. It stated that the elimination of duplication of services would generate efficiencies. Meath County Council pointed to its successful provision of a wide range of services in the Area of Interest and to its superior performance in many areas as measured in the National Oversight and Audit Commission reports. It also pointed to its low staff numbers per head of population as an indicator of current efficient delivery.

At the request of the Committee, the local authorities undertook a joint analysis of potential financial losses/gains arising from an adjustment of the boundary.

- Because Louth County Council has varied the rate of local property tax (LPT) by a reduction of 1.5%, and no such reduction has been applied by Meath County Council, the overall loss in LPT collected across the two counties would be approximately €9,000 per annum.
- There would be a loss of approximately €624,000 to Meath County Council and a gain of €615,000 to Louth County Council.
- It was also noted that Meath County Council is a net contributor to the Equalisation Fund and there is no mechanism in the LPT allocation to local authorities to make up the shortfall to the county.
- Assuming a full build-out of extant planning permissions and the development of all residentially-zoned land, the LPT transfer from Meath County Council would increase to approximately €3.1m per annum and the net loss of LPT nationally would be €46,000.
- The net loss in commercial rates across the two authorities was estimated at approximately €154,000 per annum due to the differences in the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) between the 2 local authorities; it would be expected the ratepayers in the Area of Interest transferring to Louth, which has the lower ARV, would see a reduction in their commercial rates bill. The loss to Meath County Council would be €1.1m, and the gain to Louth County Council would be €0.96m.
- The loss in LPT and rates was seen as having a significant county-wide impact on finances in Meath, as there is no significant cost currently in servicing the Area of Interest (most infrastructure is modern and in place).

5.3 Economic and Social Development and Regional Voice

No Change Scenario

The Drogheda Southern Environs is designated in the Meath County Development Plan, along with Navan, as the focus of economic development and the two primary growth centres in the county. In a no change scenario, this would continue. In addition, the Regional

Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area refer to this area and state that, though primarily located within the Border Region, Drogheda extends into parts of Meath and has a notable sphere of influence within the GDA.

There is also concern expressed in the submissions against an extension of Louth into the Meath part of Drogheda (409 unique submissions were received, with 73% against an extension) that the facilitation of good development in this area by Meath County Council may not be replicated by Louth County Council. The surveys conducted by Meath County Council to assist preparing their response to the review indicated that 85% of the businesses in the Area of Interest were “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with being located in County Meath.

On the other hand, maintaining the current situation without the additional population of 6,000 in the Southern Environs included in the local authority for the town would weaken Drogheda’s regional voice and could militate against Drogheda achieving a higher status in the upcoming National Planning Framework or in the future Eastern and Midlands Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy.

Extending the boundary

Extending the boundary would increase the critical mass of the town and allow for a more strategic and integrated policy for Drogheda as a whole in regard to housing, industry, retail, recreation, community facilities and infrastructure and, accordingly, assist in overcoming negative effects on investors’ perceptions. It would give Drogheda more weight nationally and allow for a unified approach to attracting significant employers, including Foreign Direct Investment, and assist the IDA’s focus on creating jobs outside the Greater Dublin area.

However, under the new regional arrangements both parts of Drogheda, unlike previously, are now within the one regional authority - the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly. The future Eastern and Midlands Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy will set out high-level policies, such as residential, economic and retail for all settlements within the region, and section 27(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, now requires all Development Plans to be **consistent** with these Regional Strategies.

In addition, the extension of Drogheda to remove it from County Meath, which had focused a significant amount of resources into developing this area, may create bad feeling between the two local authorities at political and executive level and may diminish, for some time at least, the current level of good cooperation.

Greater Use of Agreements

Greater use of agreements, such as under section 85 or section 86 of the Local Government Act 2001, between Louth and Meath would allow for the provision of shared services for Drogheda so these services could be provided in an integrated manner. These service level agreements, which are referred to in the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First*, could both minimise the potential for duplication in the facilitation of economic and social development and benefit customers in accessing nearly all local authority services locally.

On the other hand, such arrangements have their own challenges, particularly in the case of Development Plans and Local Area Plans adopted by the elected members. Members may have difficulties adopting policies that may be to the overall benefit of the plan area but at some perceived potential opportunity cost elsewhere in their county.

However, the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, now includes the facility to make a single Development Plan for the specific circumstances that exist with Drogheda and the Southern Environs (section 9(3)(a)). Alternatively, the two local authorities may be required by the Minister to co-ordinate the Development Plans (section 9(7)(a)). In relation to Local Area Plans, the two local authorities may cooperate in the preparation of an LAP for an area which lies within their combined functional area (Section 18(2)). In addition, even in the case where separate Development Plans or Local Area Plans are made for the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda, the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, requires that these plans are consistent with the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy. This will be further reinforced by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 that, when enacted, will create the Office of the Planning Regulator, whose main function will be to evaluate and to assess local area plans, development plans and regional plans to ensure that they are consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned.

As part of its work, the Committee sought the views of some national organisations involved in infrastructural and economic development. Local infrastructural development is largely controlled by national organisations and government departments, with local government often playing an implementation role. Most such organisations have a national remit that transcends county/city boundaries. While almost all expressed a view that it was preferable to deal with the minimum number of organisations, the existence of boundaries was not presented as a major challenge. Current cooperation between the local authorities and infrastructural providers was acknowledged, as was the occasional competition between counties for investment. In one case, an example was given of peak-hour congestion arising from rapid development. However, there was no suggestion that this was a result of an inappropriate boundary.

5.4 Community Identity and Cohesion

Most citizens have an instinctive understanding of their own sense of identity and belonging. In the Irish context, the county clearly remains a strong source of local identity and affiliation. Successive reports on local government reform have emphasised the county structure (alongside cities) as the primary unit of local government in Ireland. The 2008 Green Paper on Local Government reform suggested that “the county basis of local government in Ireland remains sacrosanct”²⁰. In relation to boundary changes, it noted the “particular emotional affinity to county boundaries” and that “proposals to alter county administrative boundaries [are] politically divisive, highly emotive, and difficult to resolve

²⁰ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, *Green Paper on Local Government: Stronger Local Democracy – Options for Change*, Dublin: Stationery Office (2008, p. 30).

[and] lead to significant public resistance”²¹. Aside from formal local government structures, an increasing number of sporting, political, social and representational groups were organised on a county basis from the late 19th and into the early 20th century²². Proposed changes to Dáil constituencies which do not respect county boundaries also tend to spark public resistance. The attachment to the county structure has been reflected in some of the submissions received by the Committee.

Defining and clarifying community identity and cohesion is problematic. Some research²³ suggests that local identity is not a mutually exclusive issue, and that several different levels of geographic community identity can exist in an area; at neighbourhood level, village/townland level, town level, district level, county level, and provincial/regional level. Each of these geographic areas might relate to different areas of service provision, from childcare at a highly localised level to transport planning at a metropolitan level. In addition to several potential ‘geographical’ communities, community identity can also relate to historical or social traditions or distinctiveness (such as a shared heritage), physical communities based around the coherence and interdependency between town and hinterland, functional communities (whereby people are drawn together through common or shared activities, such as shopping, sporting and leisure activities, and education and schools), and perceptual communities (how the local community identify themselves). All of this results in community identity typically being a flexible and dynamic reality. Given the complex and evolving nature of community identity, one conclusion drawn has been that “an all-embracing notion of community identity is virtually impossible to delineate in terms of fixed boundaries around definite geographical areas, [so] the questions of approximations and constructions comes more sharply into play”²⁴. This appears to be the case in the greater Drogheda area, where the county boundary does not seem to be the overriding determinant of community (41% of those living in the AOI surveyed by Behaviour and Attitudes for Meath County Council’s survey said the definition of the Council area in which they lived was “very important”, while 40% said the Council area was “not particularly important” or “not important at all”). The same survey showed that residents in the Area of Interest who are members of clubs, etc., are split roughly equally between membership of clubs in Meath and clubs in Drogheda.

Social capital derives from networks and relationships based on trust, shared norms and values. Shared norms and values arise, *inter alia*, from individuals sharing a common bond based on a sense of shared community and a sense of belonging. Social capital is recognised as a contributor to sustainable development, and its importance to economic development can be significant. There would appear to be merit in the further development of social

²¹ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, *Green Paper on Local Government: Stronger Local Democracy – Options for Change*, Dublin: Stationery Office (2008, p. 109 and 111).

²² Daly, M.E. ‘The County in Irish History’, pp. 1-11 in M.E. Daly (ed.) *County & Town: One Hundred Years of Local Government in Ireland*, RTÉ Thomas Davis Lecture Series, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

²³ Ball, R. and J. Stobart ‘Community Identity and the Local Government Review’, *Local Government Studies*, 22(1), 1996, pp. 113-126.

²⁴ Ball, R. and J. Stobart ‘Community Identity and the Local Government Review’, *Local Government Studies*, 22(1), 1996, p. 115.

capital in the area, including strengthening the identification of the population with the town of Drogheda.

In terms of the scenarios considered by the Committee, a decision to leave the boundary as it is and employ greater use of section 85 and 86 agreements or other forms of structured cooperation would see existing county identities maintained. This issue of identity has been stated to be important in some of the submissions. On the other hand, were the boundary to be extended there would not appear to be a strong fear by many that their identity would be seriously damaged. In the Area of Interest, it seems a significant section of the population has not developed a strong identity with Meath or Louth.

Greater use of sections 85 or 86 agreements or other forms of structured cooperation would have a marginal impact on community identity and cohesion. There is scope for integration across the two Councils in their engagement with local communities. Joint working through the PPNs in both counties could be a feature of such integration, where relevant. The integrated approach may have some practical benefits in terms of local government functional responsibilities and service delivery, especially in the case of housing estates split by the county boundary, where the difference in service delivery on the ground (e.g. footpaths, public lighting, ongoing maintenance) is a source of some irritation. However, significant impacts, positive or negative, do not arise in relation to community identity and cohesion.

The option of extending the boundary could allow for a new sense of community identity, focused on Drogheda, to be fostered and would be supportive of the integrated and sustainable development of the town as a whole. The use of cooperative mechanisms could also be the springboard for the further development of an identity with Drogheda but would need focused actions to achieve this result.

Changing the boundary would potentially impact on many community groups in their interaction with their local authority, and Meath County Council is seen as being proactive and supportive in its engagement with local communities. However, for organic, bottom-up organisations, embedded in local communities, the change would not have any significant impact, as the nature and needs of the communities they serve would not change due to the change in the local authority boundaries.

5.5 Service Delivery (across the full range of local authority functions envisaged in the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First* and the Local Government Reform Act 2014)

Meath County Council has focused significant investment in the Area of Interest, with €20.665m invested in the period 2001 to 2015²⁵. Given the growth potential with 124.88 hectares of employment-zoned land,²⁶ it can be anticipated that the area will remain a focus for the Council, with ongoing investment in services into the future.

²⁵ Table 8.1, pg 171 Meath submission.

²⁶ Table 4.1 Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

A range of services and community facilities has been provided in the Area of Interest by Meath County Council and other State agencies. Nevertheless, there is significant reliance on Drogheda as an urban centre and on Louth County Council for the provision of certain services (library, fire, water services and car registration). Most other services provided by a local authority for an area (roads infrastructure, public lighting, footpaths, cycleways, street cleaning, flood management planning, waste management, recycling) are in place in the Area of Interest. There are strong links to the town centre. The area could benefit from enhanced community and recreational facilities, as is the case for all of Drogheda, particularly in light of high deprivation indices in parts of the town. At the very least, greater cooperation in planning and operating such facilities could be expected to lead to improved outcomes.

Not changing the boundary (either with or without greater structured cooperation) would mean that the Area of Interest would continue to be a priority for Meath County Council. However, the current division of emergency and Garda services might continue unless agreement could be reached with the relevant bodies to deliver on a “whole of town and environs” basis.

Changing the boundary could mean that the services required in an urban area could more effectively be provided by a single authority with a responsibility for the area as a whole. An integrated approach would be taken to the provision of services for the area, without risk of duplication or inadvertent omission. This could also be achieved through agreed rationalisation of service delivery by both Councils and integrated provision where benefits could be gained.

Changing the boundary would have an effect on the operations of Meath County Council. However, such an effect, while not insignificant, would not materially undermine the Council’s viability and critical mass. It would also have an effect on the operations of Louth County Council. It would need to cater for the increased population and absorb the maintenance and ongoing development costs in its budget. Once again this does not appear to be an insurmountable barrier to an extension. The absorption of a relatively young and well educated population would be a benefit to the county as a whole, and amalgamating the Area of Interest with Drogheda may succeed in creating employment locally for the large cohort currently commuting to work.

There are options to expand on the use of section 85 and 86 agreements and other forms of structural cooperation for the provision of services (e.g. motor tax, library facilities) and the sharing of a range of community facilities where this does not already occur. While there are practical difficulties in implementing greater cooperation through shared services agreements around service delivery, a more integrated approach would overcome some of the limitations of the status quo and boundary change options observed above.

5.6 Governance and Accountability

Irish public policy as it pertains to local government has focused on enhancing governance structures and accountability. The *Better Local Government White Paper*²⁷ signalled a significant shift in how decisions were to be taken. It outlined the merits of participatory democracy and the need for it to coexist with representative democracy in a strengthened governance system. Structures to support community voice, known as community fora, were established.

The most recent major central government policy on local government, the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First*²⁸, signalled the continuation of the principle of open governance through the establishment of Public Participation Networks and the input of community voice at Local Community Development Committee and Strategic Policy Committee levels.

At international level in recent years the debate on the allocation of power between local government units has centred on the contrast between solutions involving formal hierarchical structures (a 'government' model) and those that link organisations horizontally through cooperation, eschewing government entities with jurisdiction over an entire metropolitan model (a 'governance' model). The concept of horizontally linked organisations implies that municipal boundaries matter little if local government units can cooperate to provide services and enhance local democracy. Research in the United States suggests that "more and more local governments are resorting to intergovernmental boundary agreements (IBAs) to redraw their jurisdictional borders"²⁹.

In considering the current assessment on a proposed boundary extension in Drogheda, the Committee sought to consider political, community and political voices through the following mechanisms:

- A call for submissions by individuals and groups, including both local authorities, by means of public advertisement and use of a framework to aid focus on the key issues in the brief;
- Face-to-face meetings with elected members from each county (2 meetings per county) and with officials.

There was no attempt by the Committee to otherwise measure public or political opinion, as it was the Committee's view that the above approach, which was used elsewhere, was adequate.³⁰ The results of the submissions were noteworthy for 2 reasons:

²⁷ Department of the Environment, *Better Local Government: A Programme for Change* (1996).

²⁸ Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (2012).

²⁹ Taylor, G.D. and E.M. Bassett, 'Exploring Boundaries in Governance: Intergovernmental Boundary Agreements', *State and Local Government Review*, 39(3), pp. 119-130, 2007, p. 119.

³⁰ The Committee noted the results of the surveys (residents in the Area of Interest; in-situ/on-street in Drogheda and the Area of Interest; and businesses in the Area of Interest) commissioned from Behaviour and Attitudes by Meath County Council.

- The quantum of responses (409 in total), which was greater than the number received in earlier calls in Ireland but also significantly less than the number received in recent calls in relation to Athlone and Waterford;
- The majority viewpoint was in favour of the status quo and against a boundary extension.

The issue was not deemed to be important to most people's lives. There was no significant dissatisfaction with the status quo, but there was an undercurrent of opinion suggesting change of some kind would be beneficial.

In considering the options identified by the Committee, it was clear that retaining the existing boundary (either with or without greater structured cooperation) would mean that the voice of a majority of the population who responded would be recognised. It would also give the recently instituted Municipal Districts time to develop their potential. Meath County Council currently has the maximum number (40) of elected member in a local authority (apart from Cork County Council and Dublin City Council) with a population ration of 4,603 per member (table 9.1 Meath submission). It would retain this number if the boundary was changed, but the boundaries of the Municipal districts would need to be reassessed with some change necessary. In relation to Louth, it is possible that a boundary change would result in an increase in the number of councillors by 2. This would pose challenges, as there are currently 10 members in the Drogheda electoral area, the maximum allowed. At a minimum, moving the boundary would necessitate a redefinition of the municipal district boundaries established to implement the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First*.

Greater use of section 85 or 86 agreements or other forms of structured cooperation could yield some additional benefits. They could provide an opportunity to develop innovative governance structures across county boundaries that link local authorities and other organisations horizontally. Given the broad preference to maintain the current boundary, a good governance model provides an effective means to address issues, even if there would be the likely need for local authorities to devote resources to the early implementation of cooperative agreements.

On the other hand, not changing the boundary would mean that there would be a continued absence of a forum where the unified voice of the people of Drogheda could be articulated. Issues relating to the area would continue to be aired in two council chambers. Extending the boundary would entail a more unified representational voice for the people of the greater Drogheda area, eliminate overlap of representation (e.g. one housing list for the whole area), and reduce confusion among a minority of citizens living close to the border, most evident in housing estates split by the boundary, as to who represents them.

The drawbacks of extending the boundary would include a loss of contact between citizens and existing elected members representing them, tensions between groups during the implementation process, and a challenging bedding-in period. The will of the majority of the people most directly affected who made submissions would be ignored. The Municipal Districts would also have to be redesigned and the number of councillors possibly increased.

Chapter 6 Options

a) No Boundary Extension

i) Maintain the Status Quo

It is evident from the preceding chapter that there are disadvantages in leaving matters as they are. Drogheda has suffered from the lack of a shared vision for the greater urban area, there is less than ideal integration of facilities and services, and occasional unhelpful competition between the areas that has the potential to damage the overall fabric of the urban area, particularly the town centre. The potential for the town is not being fully realised due to the lack of coherence in planning the integrated development of the town as a whole by Louth and Meath County Councils.

Maintenance of the existing boundary would, however, respect the wishes of the majority of the submissions received from people and organisations. That said, without improvements in the governance arrangements between the 2 Councils, the status quo would be preserved at the expense of the sustainable development of Drogheda as a whole.

Based on the above, and the considerations in earlier sections, the Committee does not favour this option.

ii) Greater Use of Shared Services

It is recognised that local authorities nationally are developing a suite of shared services, primarily for back-office functions such as payroll, procurement, treasury management, etc., as part of the delivery of greater efficiency in the local government service. Of themselves, these nationally or regionally shared services will not address the issues identified in relation to Drogheda. However, local authorities have now developed skills in devising and implementing such agreements.

There are a number of shared services and examples of structured cooperation currently delivered across the County boundary as outlined in Section 5.3. These provide benefit for the communities in both counties and have evolved due to the good working relationship that has existed between both counties. There is scope for the further development of shared services, including motor tax and libraries, using Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001.

The Louth County Council submission stated that “until recently the Motor Tax office in Fair Street collected tax for Louth and Meath.....a large proportion of people were coming in from Meath to use the services there” (page 24). It also gives examples of occasions when cooperation has been less than ideal. The National Oversight and Audit Commission report *Performance Indicators in Local Authorities 2014* recommended that “year-

on-year performance based on indicators, by reference to comparable authorities and against targets, be reviewed at least once annually by local authority management teams, elected members and Audit Committees” and that “comparable authorities analyse the cost indicators to identify the factors underlying significant variations in performance, ensure that value for money is being achieved and facilitate the sharing of approaches to efficiency measures.” This should include assessment of the extent and benefit of inter-authority cooperation and joint working where improvements in the services delivered are possible.

The history of collaboration with Louth County Council and with the former Drogheda Borough Council in terms of effective local government services delivery in South Drogheda and East Meath is emphasised and referenced on a number of occasions in the Meath submission, including in Section 7 (pages 153-169). It suggests that a systemic system of formal cooperation, knowledge sharing and contracting, building on previous practice, may be the ideal model for Drogheda. It instances development planning, roads projects and maintenance, water and waste-water provision, social housing, tourism, fire and emergency services, community development, environment, mobile library service and arts service as examples of previous collaborative efforts and/close liaison. It refers to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Louth County Council and Newry and Mourne District Council, which was commended by the Regional Policy Directorate (DG Regio) of the European Commission. Meath County Council proposes the development of a new model for future cooperation and collaboration and states that this is a worthwhile alternative to proceeding with a boundary extension.

The key shared service that would need to be delivered in a joint manner is the strategic planning function. This would require a joint Development Plan or Local Area Plan for the greater Drogheda area, built on an agreed and shared vision for the town. This could be done on the basis of existing planning legislation, with an integrated Development Plan or Local Area Plan developed jointly by both local authorities and the relevant part of the Plan adopted simultaneously by each local authority. Alternatively, it would be possible to use Section 86 of the Local Government Act 2001 to provide for the joint discharge of this function. It is noted that the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area 2007, agreed between both counties and Drogheda Borough Council, was built on a collaborative approach.

There exists in Drogheda a unique opportunity to create a new innovative model of cooperation. This could build on the relatively good history of cooperation and on the willingness of officials and elected representatives to develop a new model. There is scope to create a governance system that could include both local authorities, community representatives, and other relevant organisations, built upon the Local Community and Development Committee model. Support from central government in

creating coherence of delivery for the local citizen requires commitment of central government Departments to ensure all parties buy in to new arrangements, including in the law enforcement, ambulance service and other areas.

Based on the above, and the considerations in earlier sections, the Committee favours this option.

b) Adjustment to the Boundary

i) Move the Boundary to the centre of the Boyne

Drogheda since its foundation has developed on both sides of the river, and the idea of using the river as the county boundary has not been pursued. The transfer of the area south of the River to Meath would reverse the boundary extensions in 1997 and 1994 and would not address the key requirement for an integrated planning framework for the town as a whole. It also has the potential to exacerbate the problems caused by the lack of the necessary integrated approach.

Based on the above, and the considerations in earlier sections, the Committee does not favour this option.

ii) Provide for a Boundary Extension

As explained at section 3.1.1, the Area of Interest was defined to assist in the public understanding of the scope of work of the Committee and was not intended to be the only option for a new boundary to be assessed.

The Area of Interest includes both the development envelope to 2019 and an adjoining rural area

Given the requirement for a shared vision and Development Plan for Drogheda, any extension of the boundary of County Louth into County Meath should be centred on the proposed and envisaged development envelope and could include an appropriate additional rural area to provide future-proofing for ongoing development requirements beyond 2019.

The whole Laytown-Bettystown ED was not included in the Area of Interest (see section 4.2), and the Committee has identified no reason why this area should be included in County Louth, should the boundary be extended. Any extension into the adjoining rural area should ensure that any south-eastern expansion of Drogheda does not encroach on Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington and the distinct character of these settlements is retained.

This option has merit. Based on the considerations in earlier sections, however, and subject to demonstrable cooperation in accordance with the recommendations in the following Chapter, the Committee does not favour this option.

Chapter 7 Recommendations and Implementation

In finalising its recommendations, the Committee has undertaken a comprehensive consultation with relevant parties and the public, analysed the issues raised, reviewed the documentation provided, considered international best practice and attended to government policy at national, regional and local levels. The volume of submissions necessitated an arduous but fruitful process to distil the many perspectives advanced by the citizenry. The views of the elected members were elicited both by way of formal submissions and by dialogue through 4 separate meetings. All of the above were considered in the context of the terms of reference provided by the Minister. The Committee also availed of the individual skills and experience of its members, which were augmented by the support provided by the Institute of Public Administration. The Committee's recommendations are as follows.

The Committee recommends that no change be made to the existing boundary. In doing so, it acknowledges the many strong arguments in favour of a boundary extension.

As a part of the “no boundary change” recommendation, the Committee, drawing on its experience of good governance in local government and on the in-depth knowledge of the key stakeholders, adds the following crucial proviso: that the process of planned and structured cooperation between the two local authorities for the future planning and delivery of services in the greater Drogheda area be immediately accelerated to deliver sustainable development for Drogheda. The Committee has been impressed by the quality and approach of elected members and officials from both authorities, including a willingness to engage in a positive manner to address the weaknesses that currently exist and so help the town of Drogheda to reach its potential as an entity.

Specifically, the Committee recommends that the 2 authorities, working together, will produce:

- A unified vision for Drogheda;
- A Joint Local Area Plan for the Greater Drogheda Area incorporating this vision in a comprehensive strategy for the sustainable development of Drogheda, including social, cultural, environmental and economic development. This may necessitate variations to the existing County Development Plans as a Local Area Plan may not contravene its parent Development Plan;
- A joint retail strategy for the town for Drogheda;
- A joint initiative to improve community cohesion and further develop an identity of belonging to Drogheda for all citizens while retaining current county allegiances as part of the above process;
- A report detailing the results of a comprehensive review of service delivery of all local authority services and functions analysed as a totality (as per the recommendation of paragraph 6.4.2(c) of the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First*) and as individual services with a view to

creating efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of delivery to the communities and citizens of Drogheda who ultimately should be able to access almost all services locally. Specific provision is to be made in respect of the housing estates split between the two local authorities to ensure a unity of service at local level. This will lead to the preparation of a Service Delivery Plan;

- An analysis of services delivered by other bodies, e.g. IDA, Enterprise Ireland, HSE, including recommendations to Government for delivery on a whole of town basis where deemed appropriate.

In making the above recommendations to the Minister, the Committee is reluctant to suggest binding time scales for their implementation. It recognises that unforeseen circumstances may delay such processes. However, given the urgency of the need for a coherent approach to the future sustainable development of Drogheda, it suggests the following as being reasonable:

1. Joint Retail Strategy –18 months from publication of this report;
2. Joint Local Area Plan – 24 months from publication of this report;
3. Service delivery analyses and Plan– 9 months from publication of this report;
4. Implementation of Service Delivery Changes – progressively from completion of this Service Delivery Plan and completion within 3 years from date of the Plan.

Meath and Louth County Councils should provide to the Minister a Joint Implementation Plan within 6 months of the publication of this report to indicate their proposals and timelines for completion of these tasks, and thereafter provide joint annual reports to him or her on progress in their implementation. In the event of substantial non-completion of the above four tasks within a four-year period, it is the view of this Committee that the Minister should consider the necessary steps, including revisiting the option of extending the boundary, in order to achieve coherent sustainable development for Drogheda.

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference

Drogheda Boundary Committee

Terms of Reference

1. The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government hereby establishes the Drogheda Boundary Committee under section 28 of the Local Government Act 1991, hereinafter referred to as "the Committee".
2. The following persons are hereby appointed as members of the Committee: -
 - Jack Keyes (Chair);
 - Donal Enright and
 - Ger Sheeran.³¹
3. The Committee shall be independent in the performance of its functions and shall stand dissolved on submission of its final report to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.
4. In accordance with sections 32 and 33 of the Local Government Act 1991, the Committee is hereby required to-
 - carry out a review of the boundary between County Louth and County Meath;
 - make such recommendations with respect to that boundary, and any consequential recommendations with respect to the area of the Borough District of Drogheda, that it considers to be necessary in the interests of effective and convenient local government; and
 - prepare and furnish to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, a report in writing of that review and its recommendations.
5. In the event of a recommendation that the boundary between County Louth and County Meath and the area of the Borough District of Drogheda should be altered, the report shall contain relevant supporting information, analysis and rationale relating to or arising from such recommendation, including the following matters: -
 - (a) The financial and other relevant implications, including the potential outcomes to be achieved, and likely benefits and costs.
 - (b) Any significant issues that are considered likely to arise in the implementation of revised arrangements and how these should be addressed.

³¹ The original membership included Joe Allen and Ciaran Lynch prior to the appointment of Donal Enright and Ger Sheeran.

- (c) Measures that should be taken consequential to or in the context of the recommended arrangements, including any measures in relation to financial arrangements.
 - (d) Any matters in relation to which provision should be made in a primary order or a supplementary order (providing for matters arising from, in consequence of, or related to, the boundary extension) within the meaning of section 34 of the Local Government Act 1991, including any financial adjustments required.
 - (e) Any interim measures which should be taken, if necessary, in advance of, or in preparation for, the full implementation of the recommendations.
 - (f) The appropriate timescale for implementation of recommendations, including any interim measures.
6. In carrying out its review and formulating its recommendations, the Committee shall address the following matters in particular, insofar as relevant to the requirements of articles (4) and (5): -
- (g) The need to take full account of: -
 - (h) current demographic and relevant spatial and socio-economic factors, including settlement and employment patterns;
 - (i) detailed information to be provided by the relevant local authorities in relation to their structure, services, finances and operations or other matters relevant to the Committee's functions;
 - (j) Government policy in relation to local government as set out in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, and in relation to the public service and the public finances.
 - (k) The need to maximise efficiency and value for money in local government.
 - (l) The need to ensure that the arrangements recommended are financially sustainable and will not result in an ongoing additional cost to central Government through increased subvention.
 - (m) Staffing, organisational, representational, financial, service delivery and other relevant implications or requirements.
 - (n) The need to ensure effective local government for Drogheda and its hinterland, with particular regard to the need to maximise the economic performance and potential of the area; to facilitate the delivery of efficient and good value local authority services; and to ensure effective and accountable democratic representation.
 - (o) The need to have regard to the identity and cohesion of local communities.
 - (p) Any weaknesses in current local authority arrangements or operations that need to be addressed.
 - (q) Any additional matters that the Minister may specify.
7. The Committee shall make such recommendations with respect to the requirements at (4) and (5) and (6) as it considers necessary in the interests of effective and efficient local government. It shall prepare and furnish to the Minister, **no later than 31st March 2016**, a report, in writing, of its review and recommendations, which the Minister shall publish.

Appendix 2

Public Notice³²

Public Notice

BOUNDARY COMMITTEE PUBLIC NOTICE AND INVITATION OF SUBMISSIONS

Review of the administrative boundary in Drogheda between County Louth and County Meath

Part V of the Local Government Act 1991

Notice is hereby given that Mr Alan Kelly TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has established a Boundary Committee to carry out a review of the local government boundary in Drogheda between County Louth and County Meath and to prepare a report under Part V of the Local Government Act 1991.

The terms of reference, details of members of the Committee, guidance on the making of submissions, maps and other information are available on www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie

The Boundary Committee is independent in the performance of its functions. The task of the Committee is to identify the most appropriate administrative boundary between the two Counties concerned which would be required in the interests of effective and convenient Local Government. The application of any changes to the administrative boundaries by sporting or other cultural bodies would be a matter for the bodies themselves.

Submissions, in writing, are invited in relation to the boundary review. Submissions should be provided via the Review website at www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie using the template provided. Alternatively, or in addition, submissions in writing can be made to the undersigned. Submissions should be received not later than 5pm on Friday 22nd January 2016 and will be published on or after this date on the Review website.

Following consideration of submissions relevant to the terms of reference, and of the outcomes of such consultation as may be carried out by the Committee, the Committee will make such recommendations with respect to the administrative boundary of County Louth/County Meath and any consequent recommendations that they consider to be

³² See link to the Public Notice at www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie

necessary in the interests of effective and convenient local government in due course. The Committee will prepare and furnish to the Minister a report in writing of that review and its recommendations.

The Terms of Reference, for the Boundary Committee and maps, showing the existing boundary and the Committee's area of interest are on display for public inspection at the offices of Louth County Council and Meath County Council.

The address for written submissions is:

Drogheda Boundary Review Secretariat,
Louth County Council,
Civic Offices,
Fair Street,
Drogheda, County Louth.
A92 P440

Appendix 3

Standard Framework for Evaluation

Standard Framework for Evaluation

for

Local Authority Boundary Reviews

for

Athlone, Carlow, Drogheda and Waterford

As developed and adopted by the Boundary Review Committees

13th November 2015

Overview

The following is a summary of the information to be assembled as an evaluation framework to be used for the purposes of meeting the requirements of the Terms of Reference.

The framework will comprise three sections:-

Background Documentation, Detailed Evidence Base and material derived from the **Public Consultation** process.

Each of these is described as follows:

1. Background Documentation:

This is general contextual and background information in documentary form compiled to provide the Committee with sufficient reference sources to undertake its work.

2. Detailed Evidence Base: This component must provide the Committee with the necessary quantum of data to enable an assessment of the extent to which any revision of the statutory boundary between authorities will change the means whereby services are provided for the people in the areas so revised, including the practical impact of such revisions on the economic development and community cohesion of the areas, as well as on the operation of both authorities.

3. Public Consultation: The process of public consultation will inform the work of the Committees of the range of opinions of people's perception of the impact of any revisions to the administrative boundary between the respective Local Authorities.

Public submissions will be particularly important in this regard as well as the views of those in elected office as representatives of the people in the area under consideration. A website is in place for the convenience of making on-line submissions.

The Committee especially requests that people respond to the questions assembled by the Committee for ease of assimilation of views under particular headings. People are by no means to be confined to making responses under those headings alone but may submit any opinion or material they wish that is relevant to the remit of the Committee within its Terms of Reference as set out by the Minister.

There will be some overlap between material requested in Background Documentation and Detailed Evidence Base sections. The local authorities may cross-reference where such information is provided under one or other heading where this happens so as to avoid having to insert, or read, the same information in two places.

1. Background Documentation

The respective local authorities are asked to provide the following documentation, although they are not limited to same. These will be provided in electronic formats in the first instance. All documentation, in hard-copy format, must be assembled by each authority and held in a “data room” so that it can be made available on request for the Committee.

Each Local Authority is to submit the following information - insofar as it applies to the identified Area of Interest outlined by the Committee - a Summary Document that comprises analysis of organisation-wide Policies, Plans, Strategies, Budgets, Workforce and general Resource Deployment,. This includes such matters as

- 1.1** The Council Corporate Plan, Workforce Plans, Municipal District Budgets and associated Implementation Plans, Services provided through relevant Municipal District, Schedule of Municipal District Works for Town in respect of Parks and Open Spaces, housing maintenance, road maintenance, street sweeping and litter management.
In addition, the Committee requests transactional analysis for relevant MD (incl. housing rental income, motor tax, payments, library visits, sports centre visits, parking fines, litter fines).
- 1.2** Available plans, proposals etc of State agencies having a bearing on the Area of Interest in terms of economic and/or community development (e.g. EI, IDA Ireland, HSE, Regional Authority/Authorities, LEADER)
- 1.3** County / City Development Plans, Local Areas Plans or any statutory Land-use or Transportation Plans that may be relevant – including draft or lapsed documents (the committee requests copies of the documents in draft or if they are lapsed and will give appropriate consideration these, given the status of each, as may be relevant).
- 1.4** Democratic representation - Local Representatives by electoral area.
- 1.5** Population Profile and Census Statistics: Data is available on statistics for the overall context assembled by the CSO – termed “Area Profiles”. Links to this database output should be assembled and, insofar as it is practically possible to do so, a comparative analysis of this data and that for the Area of Interest should be compiled. The headings used by the CSO in their “Area Profiles” should be used for this purpose. Small Area statistical data, in addition, will be particularly useful information for the Committee in this regard.
- 1.6** Mapping and Statistics:
Both Local Authorities are requested to cooperate to assemble a Land-use Zoning Map for the Area of Interest that uses the Land-use categorisation developed for MyPlan so as to have common zoning references available for both authority areas.

The authorities are requested to provide an analysis of the sequential development of the contiguous urban areas, in both their areas, by decade, over the past 70 years in particular, to aid the Committee's understanding of the sequential development of the general area.

Separate mapping of land in public ownership should be provided to include local authority lands, lands in ownership of the state and its agencies e.g. the CIE group (Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann), IDA, Development Agencies etc..

Maps should be provided to identify CSO and DED Boundaries, referenced so as to be associated with population distribution, offices, facilities and depots under the control of the local authorities. These maps should also identify the functional areas in use by state agencies serving the population e.g. Garda Síochána districts, HSE districts and areas, public transport routes and termini.

In addition the Councils are requested to provide the latest aerial photography available for the Area of Interest.

2. Detailed Evidence Base

The following table provides indicative data by which each of the Terms of Reference requirements may be evaluated. It is not intended to be exhaustive and the consultation process may propose other data, hence the process will be iterative until a final evidence base is available. In preparing the following, the Committee has taken into consideration the relevant recommendations of the Report of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group (2010).

Terms of Reference Requirement:

a) Current demographic and relevant spatial and socio-economic factors, including settlement and employment patterns

Indicative Data:

- Relative levels of deprivation (Pobal)
- Levels of unemployment relative to the average in both Local Authorities
- Evidence of joint development planning
- Current and target population in overall settlement (LAs)
 - Availability of land to accommodate such a population
 - Service and enterprise land needed for such a population
 - Availability of such land and current zoning

b) Structure, services, finances and operation of the relevant local authorities

(This information overlaps with some of the Background Documentation outlined above)

- Staff assigned to the area in question/per head of population relative to the average in each Local Authority (LAs)
- Evidence of collaboration between the two local authorities in the following areas:

Development Plans (Joint/Collaborative Plans and Actions for the purpose of coordination such as joint Retail Strategies, Transport Strategies, Infrastructure Strategies and the like)

- Road Maintenance and Road Safety Programme arrangement,
- Water infrastructure (supply and waste) provision;
- Housing: Social housing collaboration for the purposes of addressing housing need (joint or separate housing lists, the efficient use of housing stock, alignment of housing policies to address housing demand and homeless services), joint housing and associated community facility projects,
- Commercial Rates – comparative analysis of Commercial Rates between local authority areas and the extent of the Commercial Rate Base within each existing local authority area – including the income derived therefrom. base of the area of interest
- Emergency Services arrangements including the how the arrangements around Major Emergency Planning are jointly coordinated.
- The extent of existing or proposed shared service arrangements in general that may not be covered under any of the headings outlined here.

c) Government Policy in relation to Local Government, the public service and the public finances

Details are requested as to how overall policy in the following areas is coordinated and/or impacts on the Area of Interest in particular under the headings:

- Action Programme for Effective Local Government
- Action Plan for Jobs
- Regional Planning requirements

d) Need to maximize efficiency and value for money in local government

Responses under this heading will have been addressed under other headings as requested above. The local authorities are asked that, through the other indicators and through submissions they address what they regards as opportunities to achieve specific savings.

- Both local authorities are invited to provide an initial outline of the impact of any change in boundary on the practical administration of their area as a consequence of either the gaining of additional contiguous area or the loss of such an area. These analyses should extend to the impact on their services that may be delivered from a base or bases outside the Area of Interest and also to how they see that services outside that area might need to be reconfigured as a consequence of loss or gain.
- Are there savings or costs that would be envisaged over and above those arising from existing collaboration?
- Are there financial performance indicators e.g. relative level of and/or collection rates/arrears of LPT that are relevant in this regard?
- Any plans/projects of either local authority, within the Area of Interest, that are being hampered by the current arrangements or for which the existing boundary arrangements have no relevance?

- LA view of managing or providing services in an area not under its control if such exist (e.g. housing, water, waste-water). This issue could be one for either authority. (LAs)

e) Need to ensure arrangements recommended are financially sustainable and will not result in ongoing additional cost to central Government

Both local authorities must set out the extent to which the following may arise as a result of any changes boundary configurations:

- Outstanding debts and rates, development levies and property.
- Commercial Rates differential and compensation between Councils that may be implied as a result of changes – to varying degrees of extent as may be postulated in such submissions.
- Are there implications, in the opinion of any party, for impact on central government funding as it is specifically required that any change involves no additional ongoing costs to central government?
- Relative levels of expenditure / income per head in area under review relative to average in both authorities.

f) Staffing, organizational, representational, financial, service delivery and other relevant implications or requirements

Estimated potential financial costs/savings resulting from recommendations is to be assembled as a summary by each local authority.

Each local authority should submit its opinion on the implications of any change for local representation.

Each local authority should submit its case on how service delivery will be affected in the Area of Interest and in any area contiguous to that location, to include change requirement associated with offices, depots and council facilities as relevant in the opinion of the authority.

Finally an overall assessment of the implications for staff resourcing for each local authority that will affect continuing service delivery to the community in area where change may arise.

g) Need to ensure effective local government for the 'Town' (or city as may be the case) and its hinterland with particular regard to need to maximize the economic performance and potential of the area; to facilitate the delivery of efficient and good value local authority services; and to ensure effective and accountable democratic representation

Each local authority should outline its view of the implications for:

- enterprise development including FDI of having an existing area extended under the remit of the neighbouring local authority;

- wider economic development, both in terms of the development of the city/town itself and the impact on the economic development of the wider hinterland served by the city/town, and where relevant, in a regional context;
- political governance and the functioning of local democracy. This includes issues such as local political oversight and accountability, and the role and arrangement of municipal district, to include current political representation of the areas under review and the implications of any changes for this representation;
- the extent to which the population may perceive alienation or to be otherwise marginalised in a new context and how the electorate will perceive an affect on the most effective and efficient delivery of local authority services in their area;
- access to LA services and a need to travel for such services and whether there is or will continue to be a local area service office provided, including if there are implications for population adjacent to new boundary of the withdrawal of such a service office.

h) The need to have regard to the identity and cohesion of local communities

Each authority is requested to outline levels of civil society activity/volunteering/local organisations (Census/Volunteer Centre). They may highlight the extent to which the activities of each is associated with existing local authority boundary configurations. This should include an account of how, in the opinion of each authority, any change on existing boundary arrangements may impact on any such identified group or activity, and where relevant, on wider social and community coherence and needs.

In support of arguments in any direction (for or against change) some demonstration of how local authorities are enabled to leverage community actions and/or local innovation to improve local areas or otherwise should be submitted. Any such case cited should robustly show this may have real or marginal relevance in the context the most effective and efficient delivery of local authority services to the residents and business interests.

i) Are there any weaknesses in current local authority arrangements or operations that need to be addressed?

Are there, or have there been any difficulties in collaboration between local authorities experienced by either authority in the past?

Are there plans/projects of either local authority which are not possible to be fully implemented to the extent that might otherwise be the case or is either local authority being specifically constrained or hampered by the current arrangements?

Public Consultation Submissions Template

The following provides a template (and related guidance) for inclusion on the respective boundary review websites which are in addition to the public notice text (see code provided by Waterford City and County Council).

Make a Submission

*To make a submission **please complete the form below** as it helps to guide you through the main points that the Review Committee has to consider in making its recommendation to the Minister.*

You may any other points you wish in addition and you may add references to reports or evidence you believe to be relevant to the consideration of the Boundary Review.

Please Note:

The submission deadline is xx xx 2015. The maximum file size you may upload with this form is 8Mb.

You should know that all submissions made will be publicly available on this website at the end of the public consultation period. Your contact details are required to ensure transparency regarding the consultation process and to allow us to contact you should there be a need for clarification regarding the content of your submission.

The addresses, email addresses and phone numbers of private individuals will not

be published on the website, and subject to the requirements of the Freedom of

Information Act, will not be released otherwise.

Name:

Address:

Email Address:

Daytime Contact
phone number:

Area in which you
reside (for
publication
instead of
specific address).

To aid our work the Review Committee would be grateful to receive your answers to any or all of the following questions:

Question 1 How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder the retention or creation of employment and the general economic performance of the area?

Text Box to be inserted to receive answers to each question.

Question 2 How might the alteration of the boundary help or hinder the identity or cohesion of local communities in the area?

Question 3 How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder delivery of services by local government to ensure that the needs of the local community are met now and in the future?

Question 4 How might alteration of the administrative boundary help or hinder the need to maximise efficiency and value for money in local government?

Question 5 How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder the Planning and Development needs, as administered by the local authority, of the community?

Question 6 How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder the delivery of effective and accountable democratic representation?

Question 7 What strengths or weaknesses do you see in current local authority administrative boundary arrangements in the area?

You may Upload a file here, if you wish to provide supporting documentation for points made in response to these questions or in relation to any matter you believe to be relevant to the task assigned to the Boundary Review Committee.

Box to be inserted to receive submissions