

Your ref:

Our ref:



Mr John Kelpie
Chief Executive
Derry & Strabane Council
98 Strand Road
DERRY
BT48 7NN

13 November 2017

Dear Mr Kelpie

CLOSURE OF OMAGH ELECTORAL OFFICE

I am writing to bring to your attention the likely closure of Omagh Electoral Office and plans to move staff and services to Derry/Londonderry.

NIPSA is the trade union that represents staff employed by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland and we have been involved in a long running campaign to protect electoral services across Northern Ireland. Last year, Minister Kris Hopkins MP released a public consultation on the future delivery of electoral services but no decisions have been published from this consultation despite it closing some 9 months ago. We also understand that a decision on this public consultation may be pending but any implementation, especially if elections are passed to councils, would take at least 12 months to implement.

At a recent meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer, she stated that EONI have as yet been unable to agree an extension to the current lease for the building on Kelvin Avenue, Omagh with the current agreement due to end at the end of December. Given this, it was likely that the office would close with all staff and services moving to Derry/Londonderry. With the absence of online services and an assembly election in the near future a possibility, this would leave your constituents at a significant disadvantage and may seriously impact on any election result.

I would therefore ask that you contact the Chief Electoral Officer, the Northern Ireland Office and the recently appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Lord Duncan, to have the necessary funds provided to obtain new premises in Omagh for electoral services. NIPSA understands that the main prohibiting factor to obtaining new premises in Omagh is the cost of funding new secure IT and building security but this would likely be in the region of £12-15k and we consider this would be a small cost to retain electoral services for such a large geographical area and to ensure your constituents are treated equally.

NIPSA are happy to meet with you on this matter and I would ask you to contact Elizabeth Buchanan at NIPSA Headquarters on 02890 661831 to organise a time and date. However given the timeframes, there is an urgent need to register concerns on these plans and I would ask that you correspond immediately seeking a

Alison Millar General Secretary

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Contact

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postponement of any decision and demand that electoral services are retained in Omagh.

I look forward to your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dooley Harte', written in a cursive style.

DOOLEY HARTE
Higher Executive Officer

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