

What is a Representation Review?

It's where Council identifies communities of interest and works out how best to provide fair and effective representation for those communities of interest.

What is a Community of Interest?

Where there is an identifiable geographic area that has a sense of community identity and belonging, which can be reinforced by:

- Distinctive physical and topographical features (e.g. mountains, hills, rivers)
- Similarities in economic or social activities carried out in the area
- Distinct local history of the area
- Dependence on shared facilities and services in an area, eg schools, recreation and cultural facilities, retail outlets, transport and communication links

Identifying communities of interest is important to ensure any Ward boundaries appropriately group communities of interest together.

Can some members be elected from Wards, and some from across the district as a whole?

Yes, that is an option that Council can consider.

Can Council have a Māori Ward that covers the whole district, and a General Ward that also covers the whole district?

Yes, that an option that Council can consider.

How does Council ensure its representation arrangements are “fair and effective”?

First the Council considers options for providing effective representation for any identified communities of interest.

Once it has identified options that would provide for effective representation, the Council must check those options to ensure the fairness of those options. This means ensuring each member's votes are of the same approximate equal value (within a threshold of plus or minus ten percent) unless there are good reasons to depart from this requirement.

What does “Effective” representation mean?

This means providing the most effective representation for identified communities of interest. Some examples are:

- considering elected members' ability to effectively represent the views of their electoral area;
- considering the accessibility, size and configuration of an area and the population's reasonable access to its elected members and vice versa;
- avoiding arrangements that may create barriers to participation, e.g. not recognising residents' familiarity and identity with an area during elections;
- avoiding grouping together communities of interest that have few common interests, or splitting recognised communities of interest between electoral subdivisions;
- considering how many Councillors are needed to effectively represent identified communities of interest.

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What does “Fair” representation mean?

This means ensuring each Councillor represents a similar proportion of the population.

How many Councillors is the “right” number of Councillors?

The minimum number allowed is 5, and the maximum number is 29. A smaller elected body can be seen to enable more efficient decision making, while on the other hand a larger elected body can be seen to provide better diversity of representation. There are currently 10 Councillors plus the Mayor.

Will changing the number of Councillors change the amount of rate funding needed to pay their salaries?

No – the level of total funding decided by the Remuneration Authority does not go up or down in relation to the number of Councillors there are.

What is a Community Board?

A Community Board is an elected body, that works at a “grass-roots” level in the specific geographic area it represents.

What does a Community Board do?

Usually a Community Board advises the Council of local concerns, overviews any works and services in its area, makes submissions in terms of local needs and priorities for the Council’s Long Term Plan, and establishes contacts with local organisations and groups. A Community Board can work as Council’s communications link with the local community, for example by providing a public forum opportunity at Community Board meetings where members of the community can come to speak about any issues.

A Community Board is not an autonomous body. Its functions, duties and powers are delegated to it by the Council. A Community Board operates within governing legislation (eg Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and Local Government Act 2002).

Does it cost to have a Community Board?

Yes, there are costs associated with having a Community Board that would need to be provided for through rates. These include salaries of the Chairperson and members (in addition to amount provided for Mayor and Councillors), provision of administrative support services, meeting venue costs.

How does Council currently connect to its communities of interest?

The Council currently connects to its communities through the Community Committees, and the partnership established through the Community Planning Programme.

In its day to day operations the Council uses a wider view of the definition of community interest than the Local Electoral Act’s geographical one. Some examples of communities with which the Council engages are mana whenua, business, older persons, sports, health, environmental interests, arts, and younger persons.