

Westland District Council

Representation Review 2024

Introduction

Council must, in accordance with section 19H of the Local Electoral Act 2001 (the Act) determine by resolution:

- 1)** Whether the members of Council are proposed to be elected;
 - By the electors of the District as a whole; or
 - By the electors of 2 or more Wards; or
 - In some cases by the electors of the District as a whole and in the other cases by the electors of each Ward of the District; and
 - The proposed number of members to be elected by electors of the district as a whole; and
 - The proposed number of members to be elected by the wards of the district.
- 2)** The proposed number of members to be elected; and
- 3)** The proposed name and the proposed boundaries of each Ward and the number of members for each Ward.
- 4)** Whether there should be community boards in the district and, if so;
 - The number of boards, names and boundaries
 - The number of members of each board including appointed members
 - Whether the board area should be subdivided for electoral purposes
- 5)** A decision on Māori Wards has already been made.

A public notice of the initial resolution must be made within 14 days of making the resolution.

Background

Westland District has traditionally elected its members using the ward system.

In determining the existing ward boundaries and representation, Council took into account the traditional communities of interest, the population, the geographic area, and the rateable values of each ward. No community boards have ever existed in Westland.

Current Representation arrangements

Currently the District comprises of 3 Wards.

Northern Ward	All that part of Westland District north of the Mikonui River but excluding Hokitika Ward.
Hokitika Ward	All that part of Westland including the town of Hokitika, the area north to Three Mile and including the areas to the east known as Blue Spur and Brickfield as far as Pine Tree Road.
Southern Ward	All that area of Westland south of the Mikonui River.

Ward names, members, population, and ratio of Councillors to population and variation from the District ratio as follows:

Ward	Population	Members	Cr/Population	Variation
Northern Ward	3210	3	1070	97%
Hokitika Ward	3500	3	1167	106%
Southern Ward	2080	2	1040	95%
Total	8790	8	1099	100%

Table 1: Existing Representation Arrangements used for 2019 Election.

Matters to be considered by Council in undertaking the review.

1) *Communities of Interest*

Westland District is a long narrow District with a large and diverse area. The population is not evenly dispersed along the length of the District, with a significant concentration in the main District township (Hokitika), and a larger rural population in the north of the District including Kaniere and Blue Spur.

The existing Ward boundaries recognise the urban nature of Hokitika (Hokitika Ward), the rural principally dairy farming and small support townships of the north (Northern ward), and the geographic isolation and tourism dominated nature of the south (Southern Ward).

2) *Effective Representation for identified Communities of Interest*

Because of the size and diversity of the District, it is considered that effective representation of communities of interest can only be achieved by Councillors being elected on a ward basis. An “at large” system of election is not considered to be in the best interests of the geographically distinctive communities of interest in Westland.

3) *Consideration of whether there should be Community Boards*

Westland District currently does not have any community boards. The District is well served by a network of existing local community organisations, which are recognised by Council, and consulted with on local issues.

Historically, because of the low population of Westland District, the ward basis of elections and the accessibility of and to Councillors, it is considered that Community Boards are not warranted.

The Council need to consider that this approach is still relevant.

Council should consider;

- Do all communities enjoy fair and effective representation?
- Could improved, fair and effective representation be achieved through community boards?

Should Council resolve to establish community boards, then each board must;

- Membership to be not less than four nor more than 12 members; and
- Consist of no fewer than 4 elected members; and
- May include appointed members who must be members of, and appointed by, the territorial authority for the district in respect of which the community is based; and
- The number of appointed members is to be less than half the total number of members.
- The appointed members must represent a ward in which the community is situated.

Should council consider establishing community boards, the wards and membership would be required to change.

Board members would be funded by a targeted rate.

4) *Fairness of Representation*

The current situation using the estimated current population figures as at 30 June 2019 is demonstrated by the following table:

Ward	Population	Members	Cr/Population	Variation
Northern Ward	3210	3	1070	97%
Hokitika Ward	3500	3	1167	106%
Southern Ward	2080	2	1040	95%
Total	8790	8	1099	100%

Table 2. Existing Representation Arrangements with estimated current population figures at 30 June 2019.

Under s 19B of the Act, there should be no less than 6 councillors and no more than 30 including the Mayor.

The existing wards have provided fair representation, with a spread of members along the length of the District. The Council may therefore opt for the retention of the existing Wards.

Using Stats NZ representation tables, all wards comply with s 19V of the Act, where the variation to the population as a whole is within the +/- 10% rule.

Ward	Population	Members	Cr/Population	Variation
Northern Ward	3340	3	1113	101%
Hokitika Ward	3300	3	1100	99%
Southern Ward	2170	2	1085	98%
Total	8810	8	1101	100%

Table 3. Updated population figures under current arrangements.

Therefore, it is not necessary to review these wards.

If elected members do require a review, this would either be in the nature of a change to representation or by a change to Ward boundaries or a combination of both.

Council may not want to change the number of elected members as there would be financial implications on individual member salaries.

It is necessary to consider the effect of any changes on communities of interest.

5) Māori Wards

Under the Local Electoral Amendment Act 2002, a local authority may resolve to establish Māori Wards or Māori Constituencies (Regional Councils).

The decision, if made after a triennial election but no later than two years before the next triennial election, takes effect for the next triennial election and the next.

Using Stats NZ MEP and GEN statistics – 2022 estimates the population of Westland District would allow for one representative.

Council resolved on 26 October 2023 to not establish Māori wards and to continue with the Manatu Whakaaetanga (partnership agreement).

6) *Electoral system*

The review does not include review of the electoral system. Council resolved on 24 August 2023 to retain the First Past the Post electoral system for the 2025 and 2028 election.

Recommendation:

- 1 That this report be received.**
- 2 That Council note that the current representation arrangements do comply with section 19V of the Local Electoral Act 2001.**
- 3 That Council consider the option of the creation of one or more Community Boards.**
- 4 That council considers as to whether further consultation on the representation arrangements needs to be carried out prior to the commencement of the statutory procedures.**