

The Future of Wairarapa Local Government

Public Meetings

4 June – Martinborough

9 June – Greytown

11 June – Featherston

Mayor, Fran Wilde



**SOUTH WAIRARAPA
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Kia Reretahi Tātau

Why council reform is happening now

Government LG reform programme:

- Water (Wairarapa/Tararua = Waitī Waters)
- Planning & environment
- Housing & infrastructure
- Rates capping
- Emergency management
- Local government structure

Current Structure of Local Govt

MODEL ONE

- **Territorial Authority**
(City or District Councils)

Delivers local services (e.g. parks, libraries, pools), community facilities (e.g. halls, toilets), local roads, building consents etc.

SWDC, Carterton DC, Masterton DC, WCC, Hutt CC, UHCC, Porirua CC, KCDC

Plus

- **Regional Council**

Delivers land/air/water services (e.g. river control, environmental planning/regulation, pest control), spatial planning, transport (public transport, regional highway priorities) maritime regulation etc.

Greater Wellington Regional Council

MODEL TWO

- **Unitary Authority**
Delivers everything!

Examples:

Auckland Council

Gisborne, Nelson, Tasman, Marlborough Councils

Local Govt changes

- Regional Councillors finish at 2028 election
- Headstart programme: TAs can apply to form unitary councils
- Unable to have combined TA – minimum for us is a Wairarapa Unitary
- Status quo is not an option
- Councils that do nothing move into Backstop – Govt will decide for them after 2028 election

Headstart: 5 tests for Govt to assess proposals

- **Deliverability**

Realistic and able to be implemented by or shortly after 2028 local elections

- **Supports the new planning system**

Helps deliver new planning rules; avoids disrupting spatial planning, environmental work or infrastructure

- **Simpler local governance**

Reduces duplication and complexity; improves how decisions are made across region or sub-region

- **Economies of scale**

More efficient services; better infrastructure planning and investment; effective delivery of key functions

- **Strong local voice**

Communities fairly represented; local decision-making preserved; urban and rural interests balanced

Eligibility – who can apply?

- Focus on unitary structures
- Two or more TAs
- Must have majority of councils/populations in affected areas
- Sub-regional groupings allowed
- Where councils do nothing, Government will implement standardised approach with transitional governance arrangements (Backstop) post-2028 election

Timeframe

- Initial proposals due **9 August**
- Cabinet will decide which ones to accept, announced **September**
- Proposals worked on by councils/communities/DIA officials to flesh out details
- Legislation drafted **2027**
- Final mergers prior to **2028** local election

Option 1:

One Wairarapa unitary council

- One council replacing three current TAs
- One elected mayor/council
- Integration of all current TA and GWRC Wairarapa delivery

Benefits of this Model

- One voice for Wairarapa with central govt and others
- Scale - simplified planning/infrastructure delivery
- Operational efficiency gains
- One-off cost savings (e.g. three into one)
- Main benefit **not** cost savings but enhanced strategy/delivery.

Concerns with this model

- Cost to local ratepayers for current GW services
- Delivery of regional functions – e.g. rail/maritime
- Potential Government veto – too small
- Basic question: What would we lose by being separate?

Option 2: Part of Wellington region unitary council

- One elected regional Mayor
- One back office
- Single CEO/staffing
- One rates collection
- Local boards/councils

Benefits of this model

- Strong regional voice with Govt and others
- Significant operational efficiency gains - back office
- Harmonisation will provide Wairarapa continued financial support for land/water delivery
- Eliminates need for special regional arrangements - public transport, maritime, spatial planning, emergency management.

Concerns with this model

- Loss of local voice/accountability
- Representation numbers
- Service delivery responsibility – local v. regional
- Rural interests under-represented
- Local funding and rates harmonisation v. differentials
- NB Not about community identity

Our bottom lines

- Protect local voice...decision-making as close to community as possible
- Rural recognition
- Retain Wairarapa plans – e.g. Combined District Plan, Wairarapa Spatial Plan
- Local service centres
- Relationships with mana whenua

Issues to note

Government will accept “bespoke” models and legislate them

For example:

- representation (rural weighting)?
- local delivery?
- Wairarapa “deal/s”?

Process

- Currently Wairarapa Councils in two parallel processes - ours and wider Wellington
- Option 2 is an alternative if the Wairarapa Unitary won't work
- No decisions yet on either, including any details of models

Currently looking at principles, protections and opportunities

Questions:

- What problems can Wairarapa solve alone and which ones increasingly require regional scale?
- What is the most important issue for you in future council arrangements?

Thank you for attending tonight
You can help by talking to others
SWDC will seek feedback in a few
weeks' time



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