

# South Wairarapa District Council DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

## Draft Proposal on Wairarapa District Council by Local Government Commission

South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC) has discussed the 'Draft Proposal for Wairarapa District Council'

SWDC has prepared this discussion document to highlight various aspects of the Draft Proposal. In this way, it is hoped you will have more points to consider when making your decision, and if and when there is a poll (which SWDC encourages), will be able to make a more informed decision.

It is up to each individual in the Wairarapa to make a decision on the Draft Proposal by the Local Government Commission. Your vote counts and contrary to some opinion in the region, the Draft Proposal for amalgamation into the Wairarapa District Council is not a 'done deal'. You have the right and opportunity to have your say as to whether this happens or not.

SWDC have not drawn a consensus on a preferred option, as the views of Councillors were many and varied.

Instead we have broken this document down into the various sections as they are represented in the Draft Proposal document with our views and concerns.

The majority of the SWDC retains the strong view that, if there is to be an amalgamation a Unitary Authority is the best future governance option for the Wairarapa. This view is held on the basis that decisions need to be made by the Wairarapa, for the Wairarapa.

A unitary authority is a local authority that has a single tier and is responsible for all local government functions within its area.

A concern the SWDC has with the proposed Wairarapa District Council is with the current relationship with the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), for example the consenting and other decisions made by the GWRC, are holding the Wairarapa back, both in terms of the costs associated with consents and the time their processes take.

It is our view that a Wairarapa Unitary would ensure more balance is established in these processes, truly reflective of the needs of the district and environment.








# South Wairarapa District Council

## What would Wairarapa District Council look like?

### Wairarapa District Council composition

Mayor **1**  Ward councillors **12**  Community board members **21** 

#### Featherston Ward

Ward councillors

**1** 

Community board members

**4** 

#### Greytown Ward

Ward councillors

**1** 

Community board members

**4** 

#### Martinborough Ward

Ward councillors

**1** 

Community board members

**4** 

#### Carterton Ward

Ward councillors

**2** 

Community board members

**4** 

#### Masterton Ward

Ward councillors

**5** 

Community board members

**5** 

#### Maungaraki Ward

Ward councillors

**1** 

Community board members

**N/A\***

#### Te Kauru Ward

Ward councillors

**1** 

Community board members

**N/A\***

In the proposed Wairarapa District Council the South Wairarapa would have three councillors elected from the wards of Featherston, Greytown and Martinborough and three Community Boards.

This means the South Wairarapa would have fewer Councillors representing our district which could mean less

representation of South Wairarapa issues.

While wards are set based on population, some wards are very big geographically and there needs to be a mechanism to ensure geographical based issues are not lost over population based issues.

It should be noted that wards are used for voting purposes only, once elected;

Councillors are responsible for District wide decisions, not lobbying for one specific ward. Councillors will of course take issues from the areas they are more familiar with to the Council table, however when it comes to voting they need to take a district wide view.

## Community Boards

Community Boards are the key to this proposal being effective from a governance and representation perspective. The current legislation states the role of community boards is to lobby and represent their communities to the local authority.

Community boards will need to embrace this legislative mandate to ensure all areas of the district are heard.

Likewise, the proposed Wairarapa District Council need to embrace the role of community boards in their governance philosophy.

The South Wairarapa already has three Community Boards and they are instrumental in developing their town's growth and lobbying Council on key issues. Masterton and Carterton currently do not have Community Boards and it may take some time for these to get up

to speed on their very important role and responsibilities. The SWDC would commit to assisting Masterton and Carterton in establishing and guiding these boards if needed.

We agree with the composition of the community boards as set out in the Draft Proposal, but they must be well resourced and supported in order to be successful.

## Working with Māori

The options discussed were for an Advisory Committee, or a Standing Committee.

We proposed and support the standing committee approach as this gives more formality to this important aspect of a

district council operations.

We highlight that decisions are more often made at the Hapu/ Marae level, and we do not see an appropriate mechanism in the draft proposal to accommodate this. Thought needs to be given in any final

proposal to ensure this aspect is covered.

The existing Māori Standing Committee will be making their own submission to the Local Government Commission.

# Discussion Document



## Working with Rural/Provincial Community

Wairarapa economy is by and large rurally based and we feel it is important the rural voice is strongly represented.

The draft proposal includes a standing committee and we support this approach.

In the draft proposal there are two distinct rural wards (Maungaraki and Te Kauru),

Featherston, Greytown and in particular Martinborough, have a mix of both urban and rural. The SWDC has concerns that urban representatives may not have a good understanding of rural issues and it could take time for this to develop. This could be a disadvantage for rural people in these wards.

The majority of the budget is land transport (roads), and it is important this is spent in the appropriate ways and places.

It is our view that there will be adequate, but not necessarily strong, representation from the rural sector.

## Area Offices

We support the retention of area offices as discussed in the draft proposal.

It is our view that the current offices are an important aspect of our communities' economy and identity. It is important to note the volume of building consent and resource consent work undertaken in South Wairarapa.

To ensure there is no economic barrier to the efficient processing of this work, a strong service centre in South Wairarapa needs to be retained for the long term.

It is our view that the proposed Wairarapa District Council's 'Head Office' should be in Carterton, as this is more to the centre of the District, both economically

and geographically and also closer to the centre in population terms.

SWDC has received concerns that Masterton interests will tend to dominate a Wairarapa District Council.

## Rates, Debt

SWDC debt now stands at \$17M.

In the Draft Proposal there are two options with debt, one is ring fencing, and the other is status quo (ring fencing means that targeted rates will be 'on hold' until June 2024, there will be no change to targeted rates until this time).

The majority of SWDC supports the status quo option on the basis that over time, there are swings and roundabouts in regards to debt and infrastructural asset condition and replacement. Also a Wairarapa District Council will be in a position to make decisions on how costs

should be apportioned.

Currently we happen to be in a cycle where Masterton District Council (MDC) has high debt (backed off against infrastructural assets by and large) and the other two councils have lower debt. Over time as the other councils replace their infrastructure, their debt will rise, and MDC's debt will be paid off.

Another key point is that the SWDC and Carterton District Council (CDC) are incurring new debt to meet the new requirements for discharges to freshwater. We believe this debt would be better

managed on a district wide basis as efficiencies can be achieved.

The SWDC believes that should the proposed Wairarapa District Council be put in place, the new Council needs to adjust the rates across the whole of the Wairarapa from the start, removing the swings and roundabouts cycle so all rate payers know what the new rates will be from the start.

For this reason we do not support ring fencing.

## Relationship between the proposed Wairarapa District Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council

There would be a Wairarapa Committee within the Greater Wellington Regional Council. It is important that this Committee is heard and the decisions and

recommendations made to the GWRC are respected and not disregarded or delayed. If decisions and recommendations are regularly challenged by the GWRC

then there would be little benefit for the Wairarapa in having a Committee within the GWRC.





## Annex 1

- SWDC does not agree that the LGC should have the decision making ability to decide who will be placed on the Implementation Team from the affected authorities. This should be determined by the affected authorities, who work with and understand the skill set of existing staff members across all three existing Councils.
- More thought needs to be given to the transition period; on-going Council work cannot be held up or put on hold while this happens.
- Consideration needs to be given to how the Long Term Plans for the existing three Councils will merge into the proposed District Council plan. There will need to be joint agreement on the projects, levels of service and how these will be funded. This will entail an extensive amount of work and negotiation by the Transition Board, which will be a mix of one independent Chair appointed by the LGC, two members each from SWDC, CDC and MDC.
- Consideration needs to be given to Reserves. SWDC has good financial reserves and wants them left as status quo. These reserves have to be spent where they have been earned.
- The SWDC would like to see how the costs and savings of a proposed Wairarapa District Council were concluded to in more detail (the cost and savings were based on an LGC appointed independent consultant). How accurate are these and what is the impact on our ratepayers?

## Summary

The SWDC retains the view that, if there is an amalgamation, a unitary authority is the best future for our region.

Decisions affecting our region need to be made by Wairarapa people.

The proposed draft has a high level focus on the governance of the proposed Wairarapa District Council, but it is lacking in consistency and any real detail on how

this proposal would work at an operational level.

If the proposed Wairarapa District Council proceeds, the most tangible benefit that an amalgamation will bring is a bigger council organisation.

There are benefits to having more staff e.g. more specialised roles, cover for staff on leave or sick etc.

A larger staff would allow for more specialist roles and the ability to have consistency in service provision.

There is also a chance to learn best and different practices from each existing council.

A new council can choose and implement the best model, system or practice.

**The SWDC strongly encourages everyone to put in a submission on the draft proposal for a Wairarapa District Council. Submission forms can be picked up from all Wairarapa libraries, on Council websites and at [lgc.govt.nz](https://lgc.govt.nz)**