

# 2023-24 REPRESENTATION REVIEW

## Overview of local democracy arrangements

### Glossary of key terms:

Local authorities – councils.

Elected members – people who are voted by the community onto their local authority.

Wards – various areas within a local authority's territory. Each ward is represented by a certain number of councillors, according to its size. In Napier there are four wards – Ahuriri, Nelson Park, Onekawa-Tamatea and Taradale. Not all councils have wards.

Councillors at large – councillors who don't represent a ward. Instead, they represent the entire city or district. In Napier, there are currently no 'at large' councillors.

Representation arrangements – how a local authority's residents are represented. This includes how many wards (including Māori wards) if any, the number of elected members for each ward, the boundaries and names of any wards, and the total number of elected members in the local authority.

### Overview

Elections for local authorities (councils) are held every three years. This is when residents vote for mayors and councillors, and in some parts of New Zealand, for community board members and local board members.

Local authorities are required by the Local Electoral Act 2001 to take a fresh look at their representation arrangements at least once every six years. This is to ensure a local authority is structured to best serve the interests and needs of its community.

For Napier, this means we need to consider:

- How many elected members should be on council?
- We currently have wards - should we keep them? If so, how many should our city have, what should their boundaries be, and what should they be named?
- Should we do away with wards and have at large councillors only?
- Should we have a mix of both ward councillors and at large councillors?

### Māori wards

In 2021, Napier City Council consulted with the community on whether to introduce Māori wards to Napier. Following this consultation, Council made the decision to introduce Māori wards at the 2025 local authority elections. This means we also need to confirm how many Māori wards and councillors for these wards Napier should have, so we're ready for the next local authority election.

### Māori roll vs the general roll

If a voter chooses to enrol on the Māori roll for Napier's next local elections, then they can only vote for someone standing for the Māori ward(s). Voters on the general roll can only vote for people standing in the general ward(s). If Napier moved to an 'at large' system (either fully or partially), then all voters could vote for at large candidates AND their ward candidate(s) (either Māori ward or general, depending on whether they are on the Māori roll or general roll.)

Some local authorities have community boards. Community boards carry out functions and have powers delegated to them by their councils. Their role includes representing and acting in the interests of their community. They liaise with organisations and special interest groups in their community on council matters.

Currently Napier doesn't have any community boards. In this representation review, we need to consider whether introducing community boards would be appropriate for Napier. If so, how many boards should Napier have, how many representatives should they have, and for which communities?

### Communities of interest

To help us make informed decisions in the representation review, we need to understand Napier's 'communities of interest', which means how people see themselves as 'fitting in' to their district.

We had an external research agency to undertake a community survey to get a good understanding of this. The survey asked questions such as which suburb do you see yourself being a part of? Where do you shop – mainly in the city centre or a local suburb? Where do you work and how do you travel? Which schools do your children go to?

Understanding what makes up Napier's many communities will help us to decide on whether to keep wards, decide on their boundaries and names, or whether to not have wards at all.

### Ward councillors vs councillors at large vs mixed system

Many local authorities are made up of wards, with each ward represented by a certain number of councillors. Some local authorities have no wards, and councillors are elected 'at large', meaning they are elected by voters across the entire district. Some local authorities have a mixture of both ward councillors and councillors at large. It is up to each local authority to decide on this during a representation review.

#### *Wards*

Adopting a ward-based system for electing councillors:

- means representation is likely to be more evenly distributed geographically across the district, although candidates are not required to live in the ward in which they are standing.
- encourages residents to become better informed on candidates and their policies because there are fewer candidates, who may also be better known to locals.
- may improve accountability in that ward and ensure a closer link between Council and residents of particular parts of the district. This could contribute to the effective delivery of local services and facilities.
- may result in residents feeling more able to approach ward councillors directly.
- may enable more effective management of community/council consultation processes.

- could result in potential candidates finding it easier financially, and in terms of time, to campaign in a ward than under an at-large system.

### *At large*

The “at large” option can:

- be seen to give a wider choice of candidates for residents to vote for, rather than restricting them to voting only for candidates from one area of the local authority.
- be seen to remove any perceptions of parochialism from Council deliberations.
- make it easier for “at-large” councillors to take a district-wide perspective.
- may achieve more diverse representation. For example, ethnic minority groups and other interest groups spread across the city could have a greater chance of being elected in an at-large system.
- if residents are given the opportunity to choose from all candidates, may result in increased accountability.

### *A mixed system*

A mixed system, where some councillors are elected to represent wards and some are elected at large:

- can be seen to provide a balance between representation of district-wide interests and local concerns.
- means that residents can vote for more than just their ward councillor(s), as they can also vote for councillors being elected at-large.
- still provides specific ward (local) representation.

### *Important points about all options*

All elected members, regardless of the area they are elected to represent, make the same declaration to act in the best interests of the whole district. There is no difference in the decision-making role of elected members elected at large and members elected to a ward. Ward and at large members do, however, continue to represent the areas they are elected from at the council table.

A resident can ask any councillor for help and is not limited to their local ward councillors, if under a ward system.

### [How to be involved in this decision](#)

We undertook a survey on this matter in late 2023. Based on this, we will refine the options and ask the community what they think again in a survey in 2024. After that, Council will put forward a proposal in a formal community consultation in July 2024. You will have the chance to speak at a Council meeting about your views during this consultation if wanted.

The community will be notified of the final decision after that. At this time there will be the opportunity to lodge a formal objection if desired. The finalised representation arrangements for Napier will remain in place for the next five to six years.