

Carterton District Council Position Statement Local Government Commission Draft Proposal for Wairarapa District Council

The Carterton District Council has prepared this position statement in advance of its submission to the Local Government Commission's Draft Proposal to amalgamate the three Councils in Wairarapa.

The Council does not have a position about whether it supports or opposes the proposal. This position statement instead focusses on the proposed Wairarapa Council arrangements and identifies where the model can be improved and strengthened. In preparing this position statement the Council is also not assuming an amalgamation will happen. If the Commission releases a Final Proposal then the community will ultimately decide if amalgamation will happen, through a poll.

Principles for the design of the Wairarapa Council model

There is an opportunity for the Wairarapa to have in place a local government model that fits with the area's unique character. Although the model must comply within the provisions of the Local Government Act, the Council believes there is scope to significantly strengthen aspects of the Commission's draft model.

The Council considers the following principles should underpin any new local government arrangements in Wairarapa:

- Decisions about activities affecting local communities should be made locally, unless it is more efficient to carry out the activity on a district-wide basis, or where the benefits of integrating and aligning with other areas outweigh benefits of keeping decision-making local
- Emphasis must be placed on working with communities
- Consultation and communication between the council and the community boards needs to be positive, respectful and enduring
- District-wide strategies should be supported and implemented by local plans
- Place-making must stay local
- Resources need to be provided where responsibilities are delegated and allocated to local communities/community boards
- The relationship between the Council and the Regional Council needs to be respectful and enduring.

Representation

The Council believes the representation arrangements are appropriate, as proposed. We especially support the names of the rural wards. We note that the ward boundaries are based on a population formula and cannot be changed significantly.

Community Boards

For Carterton residents, amalgamating into a much bigger Council entity poses a high risk that Carterton issues will be overlooked when the Council is considering its budgets and activities. Therefore, the model needs to enable the Carterton community to be able to make decisions about our unique area.

The Council believes the community board arrangements are a vital part of the proposal. In line with the principles identified above, the success of the model will in part rest with the willingness of the Council to allocate resources and delegations to the community boards, and allow the boards to effectively carry out their roles as leaders of their local communities.

So, for the model to be successful the Community Boards must be supported by Council resources, including both budgets and staff. We believe the proposal will be strengthened if there is specific provision made for each community board to have sufficient staff resources and budget allocated to enable them to operate and make decisions effectively.

The Draft Terms of Reference included in the Draft Proposal set out a wide range of responsibilities for community boards. The Terms of Reference could be further strengthened by a statement about the purpose of the boards. This statement should make reference to the boards being, in their local areas:

- advocates for their communities;
- leaders in the development of plans and decision-making on the use and development of local amenities, facilities and services; and
- decision-makers on issues that are local to their areas, except where it is more efficient for that decision-making to be done on a district-wide basis, or where the benefits of integrating and aligning with other areas outweigh benefits of keeping decision-making local.

The Terms of Reference should also provide for the preparation, every three years, of a Local Area Plan that sets out the priorities and preferences of the communities in their area for local activities and levels of service over term of the Board. This will enable the board to set out clearly their community's expectations for activities and investments in their local area, for the Council to consider and provide for in its Long Term Plan.

An amended Terms of Reference is provided at page 5 of this position statement. It also identifies some other changes that would strengthen the Draft Proposal with respect to community boards.

Working with Maori

The proposed Maori Standing Committee is supported. We also support the Commission's decision to leave any other decisions and arrangements for the Council's relationship with Maori for the new Council to make. This committee needs to be well supported by Council resources.

Working with the rural community

We strongly support the establishment of a Rural Standing Committee. As with the Community Board discussion above, this committee needs to be well supported by Council officer resources and be delegated to make decisions relevant to the rural areas of Wairarapa. We believe there will need to be significant interaction between the Transition Body and the rural community as the Rural Standing Committee's terms of reference and delegations are prepared.

Area offices, principal public office, and service centres

We support the proposal to retain area offices in Carterton, Martinborough and Masterton. It is very important that residents do not lose their direct access to council services and advice.

We note that the Commission has not nominated a head office, but has instead identified Masterton as the location of the "principal public office". We also note that the draft proposal provides for the Transition Body to make decisions about the location of staff and functions.

We believe the new Council will need a central base which will be the location of the Mayor's office and Council Chambers. We also believe that location needs to be as accessible as possible. It is important that people across the Wairarapa District feel that they can access the Mayor and Council. With the geographical size of the proposed district, a central location will be important both practically and symbolically.

Serious consideration should be given to Carterton being the principal location of the Mayor's office and Council Chambers, because of its geographical central location.

In addition, and on a purely practical basis, there will be the need for the new teams within the Council to regularly come together, especially early on as the Council is established and systems and processes are integrated. With the service centres located in Masterton, Martinborough and Carterton a lot of work will be required to avoid the risk of the new organisation simply operating as they currently do as three separate units. This will miss the benefits of amalgamation.

It makes sense that Carterton is the principal place where meetings are held. The new Council will need to create meeting spaces to enable them to come together. We note that this would be the case where ever the main office is to be located. The Carterton Events Centre already has modern meeting facilities which could be utilized in part to meet the new Council's needs.

Both Masterton and Carterton have property that will potentially be surplus, depending on the decisions made about the location of a head office¹. The relative value of that property should be a consideration in the decisions made about a head office location, so that ratepayers get the best value from any sales and investment in new facilities.

Rates, debt and assets

We strongly support the Commission's approach to ring-fencing debt associated with wastewater

¹ We believe there are only two viable options for the location of a head office – Masterton (largest urban centre) or Carterton (geographically central). Property currently owned by South Wairarapa District Council is therefore not relevant to the consideration of surplus property.

treatment systems. We support the Commission locking-in the proposed provisions for as long as it is legally able. We note that upcoming debt-funded capex may also need to be ring-fenced in this way.

Process from here

Should an amalgamation be confirmed (and we will be actively supporting a petition to require a poll) we would like the new Council to be in place by October 2018. Our staff have been operating for a number of years now with the uncertainty of amalgamation and this has caused some stress. If an amalgamation is confirmed we would like the impacts on staff minimised by having as short a transition period as is possible. We strongly encourage the Commission to progress the proposal as quickly as it can.

Service delivery

While outside the scope of the Commission's powers to include in a reorganisation proposal, we would like to make a statement about service delivery. Carterton District Council currently delivers the majority of its services using in-house resources. While we contract out our road management, maintenance and capital works, and rubbish collection and disposal, we use our own staff to deliver all our other services. We believe this enables us to provide the best level of service to our communities.

Should the Wairarapa Council eventuate we will continue to advocate strongly for the adoption of this model². We ask that the Commission, through the transition period, ensures the current Councils do not enter into long term contracts that might preclude this option being adopted across the Wairarapa, and/or force a contract-based service delivery model on Carterton.

² Subject to Section 17 of the Local Government Act

Suggested Amended Draft Terms of Reference for Wairarapa community boards (suggested changes from the Draft Proposal shown in red)

Purpose of Community Boards

The purpose of the Wairarapa community boards is to enable democratic decision-making within their areas in partnership with the Council. This means providing a leadership role in empowering local communities to determine local issues associated with their areas. For the communities in their areas they are:

- advocates
- leaders in the development of plans and decision-making on the use and development of local amenities, facilities and services
- decision-makers on issues that are local to their areas, except where it is more efficient for that decision-making to be done on a district-wide basis, or where the benefits of integrating and aligning with other areas outweigh benefits of keeping decision-making local.

The Community Boards will have delegations and be resourced by the Council to effectively fulfil their role. This includes the appointment of a senior manager to be the "Area Manager" for the board areas. The Area Manager's role will be to lead the officer support of the Board, including administration, communications, reporting, planning, etc.

1. Annual Submission on Expenditure

- At the beginning of each Triennium, authority to prepare a Local Area Plan that sets out the priorities and preferences of the communities in their area for local activities and levels of service for the 3 next years. The Local Area Plans should provide for the implementation of districtwide plans and strategies where appropriate, as well as setting out activities that are unique to the area.
- Authority to prepare a board annual plan for submitting to the Wairarapa District Council (Council) for expenditure within the community, for consideration as part of the annual plan and Long Term Plan processes.

2. Community

- Authority to communicate with community organisations, local marae and special interest groups within the community (as per section 52 of the Local Government Act 2002).
- Authority to listen, articulate, advise, advocate and make recommendations to Council on any matter of interest or concern to the local community.
- Authority to work with Council and the community to establish a strategic plan.
- Authority to provide a local community perspective on the levels of service as detailed in the long term plan, and on local expenditure, rating impacts and priorities.
- Authority to receive information of Council's receipt of all non-notified resource consent applications.
- Authority to provide advice to the Council and its committees on any matter of interest or concern to the Community Board in relation to the sale of alcohol.

3. Community Grants

- Authority to allocate community-based grant funds as approved through the annual plan process or the long term plan process.
- Authority to consider, and either approve or reject applications by community groups to establish community gardens, in accordance with the licensing requirements under the Reserves Act 1977 and Council policy.

- c. Authority to allocate any bequests or similar consistent with the terms of the bequest by making resolution for Council ratification.

4. Parks and Reserves

- a. Authority to make recommendations to Council after reviewing existing or considering new draft Reserve Management Plans for local public parks and reserves within its area, within current Council policy or management plans and within the annual plan/long term plan budget.
- b. Authority to decide priorities for local public parks and reserves within its area and in accordance with the Reserve Management Plans.
- c. Authority to prepare development and implementation plans for local public parks and reserves within its area and in accordance with the Reserve Management Plans.

5. Rooding

- a. Authority to make recommendations relating to all traffic control and signage matters, in relation to existing local roads within the community board's area.
- b. Authority to make recommendations on changes to speed restrictions on local roads.
- c. Authority to make recommendations on the need to permanently diminish or stop roads. (i.e. permanently change the size of or permanently close a road)
- d. Authority to assist the Chief Executive (through the Community Board Chairperson) to consider and determine temporary road closure applications where there are objections to the proposed road closure.
- e. Authority to determine priorities for footpath maintenance and priority locations for new footpaths.

6. Naming Reserves, Structures and Commemorative Places

- a. Authority to receive requests from the community, or put forward names, regarding specific names of reserves, structures and commemorative places for input to the staff report.
- b. Authority to approve or reject officer recommendations in respect of such names.

7. Naming Roads

- a. Authority to make recommendations on the naming for public roads, private roads and rights of way.

8. Urban Reserves, Urban Amenities and Town Main Centres

- a. Authority to make recommendations on matters relating to urban reserves, urban amenities and town main streets that meet current Council policy or management plans and fall within the annual plan/long term plan budget.
- b. Authority to decide priorities for urban reserves, amenities and town main streets within its area and that meet current Council policy or management plans and fall within the annual plan/long term plan budget.
- c. Authority to prepare development and implementation plans for urban reserves, urban amenities and town main streets within its area and that meet current Council policy or management plans and fall within the annual plan/long term plan budget.
- d. Authority to prepare local area improvement plans.
- e. Authority to lead place making activities.

9. Submissions

- a. Authority to make submissions to Council on issues within its area.

10. Emergency Management

- a. Authority to support the development and promotion of individual and community planning for a civil defence emergency; **in partnership with the Council support response activities during an event**; and after an emergency event, support community-~~response~~ recovery efforts.

11. Training and Development

- a. Authority to set priorities for and expend annual funding allocated by Council for the purposes of training and development.