Vocal about Local Representation Review Pre-Engagement 2023 – Summary of feedback

To support workshop 17 April 2024

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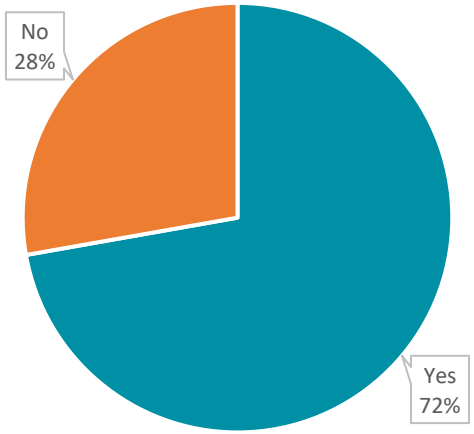
Summary of feedback received

Early engagement with the community on the representation arrangements took place from 21 November till 17 December 2023. There were 56 responses received in total. People could submit on any or all of the questions.

1. Number of councillors

Based on the question "Do you feel the community is well represented by the current number of councillors (i.e. 9 councillors)?"

	Number of people
Yes	39
No	15
Total	**54**



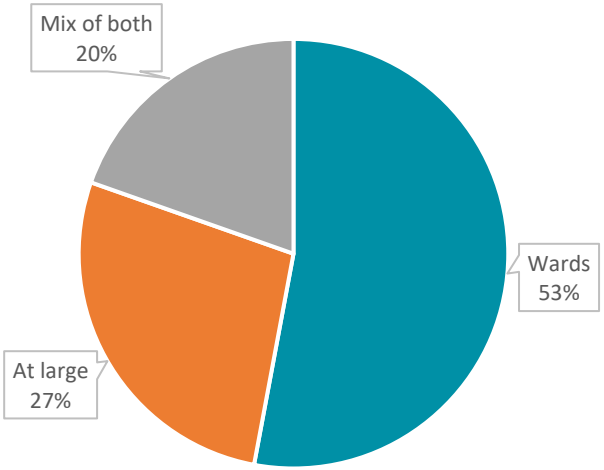
1.1 Comments on number of councillors

Comments
Support for CURRENT number of councillors / no preference
• Don't increase numbers of councillors.
• 9 councilors is probably sufficient but not when the majority have the same interest - farming
• The current number is sufficient
• In the present term there has been numerous times when there has been some councillors absent, and council has still functioned well.
• Increasing voter engagement and turnout should be a higher priority.
• I feel 9 is a great number if all know their roles. 12 is excessive and 6 would be not enough diversity :)
• It seems more co-operative decision making is happening now than when we had more (12) Council members
Support for a HIGHER number of councillors
• More councillors would bring other opinions and perspectives to the table.
• 9 people are not enough to represent our district and our wide ranging issues
• Potential for more diversity - 'improvement if the elected members around the council table were as diverse as our community is'.
• One councillor to 4000 residents is any amount. Too many, and individual views can be lost.
Support for a SMALLER number of councillors
• Smaller will encourage more effective conversations
• Over represented. In tough financial times like now, we have too many people doing a piss poor job and I'd rather see less people so less money on their wages being spent.
• Less councillors maybe better for cohesion
• Too many Councillors for the size of the District
• The number of councillors in the Ashburton Ward could be reduced, however we would not support this if it also meant reducing the number of Eastern and Western councillors.

2. System for electing councillors

Based on the question "What system of electing councillors do you prefer (e.g. wards, at large, mix of wards and at large)?"

	Number of people
Wards (our current system)	27
At large (district wide)	14
Mix of wards and at large	10
Total	**51**



2.1 Comments on how councillors should be elected

Comments
Support for wards
• We observe that there is a very strong lobbying group that is very involved in local body politics in this district, and because of that councillors being elected at large would likely mean councillors could be elected according to that lobbying group's concerns and preferences.
• The existing system whereby all councillors are elected based on ward is supported. This is appropriate for the Ashburton District where there are distinct and unique needs of both urban and rural residents, and different needs across the district's landscapes of the inland Foothills and the coastal areas. East and West wards should be cut in half with one councillor in each half.
• The area they represent, know their feelings etc.

Comments
• The ward system should ensure there is a spread of representative across the District. However with the way anyone can be nominated and not having to reside in the ward makes a mochery of the ward system.
• It's easier just having to read/watch about t consellors representing/wanting to represent your ward. If you had to learn about all of them People would be less disinterested
• Best practise for a fair hearing for each resident.
Support for at large
• This option I believe will provide more options for more people.
• Have more at large. Eg keep the Ward boundaries the same and have 1 east, 1 west and 2 ashburton. Remaining 6 at large. Could there be an extra Ward created with say 1 councillor that represents the small settlements (methven, rakaia, mayfield etc).
• This would allow for comments on other areas you may be interested in.
• Have at least one third of councillors elected from 'at large'.
Support for a mix of wards and at large
• I understand that for good reasons, such as service provision to households, council representation is primarily based on where one resides. It is frustrating though to apparently have no or little say in electing the representatives of the ward where I happen to work, shop, and engage in council facilities and services, and a variety of sport and recreation opportunities (Ashburton Ward), due to where I live (Eastern Ward). For that reason, I would like to see a mixture of at large representatives, and local representatives/input from Community Boards who can advise on local requirements.
• This would allow for comments on other areas you may be interested in.
• Perfect
• select by the Pacific Islanders their own voice rep
• could get people with a different set of skills on board

3. Māori representation

Based on the question "Do you have any thoughts on Māori representation in the district?"

46 responses received

3.1 Comments on Māori representation

Comments
In favour of Māori representation at Council
• Without an amendment to the Local Electoral Act, it is unlikely that the number of voters on the Māori Electoral Roll in Ashburton District will reach the threshold stipulated any time soon. HMCC would strongly recommend that ADC use every possible procedure to have Māori represented at a governance level – every working group or advisory board should have Māori representation around the table. We also believe that in this community ADC should be strongly partnering with both mana whenua as well as local Māori leadership, and that ADC should have a public strategy around such partnerships.
• Council needs to have at least one Māori representative
• Our Māori Community keeps growing and in my opinion, they should be represented in our Council. The bottom line is that the Council should be representative of the community they lead. More diversity in our councillors is always good, our town is changing and other points of view are always positive. This is if there is a suitable and capable candidate.
• I believe there should be Māori representation on ALL Community Boards
• Build a partnership/ maintain a partnership with the Hakatere Marae and also the mana Whenua Arowhenua.
• I am in favour of this
• An iwi partnership model
• We need more Māori representation Always was and will be Maori land.. Aknowledment should be given with due prosess regardless of how many people actually identify as Maori.
• WE SHOULD
• Should always have at least one maori person. I dont know whose up for election
• You should have a Māori ward despite not meeting the threashold. Anything less accomodating to the indigenous people of Aotearoa is racism. Do better.

Comments
NOT in favour of Māori representation at Council
• MCFF does not believe that specific Māori representation on the Council is required when considering the population composition of the district.
• I believe that residents of all cultures should have the opportunity to be heard and supported by our council, and we should ensure that there are no barriers to anyone eligible standing for election. This does not mean that all cultures will necessarily be present on our council, but regardless, if any issues arise that may impact residents of one culture and not others, they should then be specifically consulted.
• We don't need them. Everybody gets to vote. No need for race based policies
• They are not the people who live in the district, everyone's money in the district keeps the area going
• The Ashburton does not not have enough on the Maori roll to justify a Maori ward. The way ADC liaise with Arrowwhenua is a perfect way to include their point of view. I am totally opposed to having unelected representatives with voting rights on council.
• No preferential representation. Stand like all councillors, win or loose.
• Only if the number is proportionate to the number of Māori residents. Ethnicity should otherwise not favour Māori over white folk
• No. Everyone deserves to be represented.
• I do not like one ethnic group to be making decisions. Just because a person is born Maori doesn't give them any more wisdom or knowledge than anyone else. if Maori want to be listened to they should stand for council as everyone else does.
• Not necessary
• if they are not voted in by the majority of the rate payers in that district they are not a representative of the people. They are a there only for themselves.
• Yes! There should be no separate Maori representation! Nobody should be elected by race!
• No way should any group or section of society be favoured with representation, based on any other criteria other than equal and fair demographic election, through the ballot box.Granting representation to Maori purely based on ethnicity, is not only condescending but patronising. We must have faith in the demographic system, that it will provide for all citizens, equally.
• All people should have a voice to be heard not just one race. No Maori representation in the district
• no special right, Racist
• For all people that live in Ashburton not just one group
• We feel they should stand for a place on council the same as other candidates just like Archie Keeper did. It shows they are genuinely interested

Comments
• No we dont have other Nationalities
• no it is up to them please
• I do not agree with specific Māori representation - all councilor's should consider all ethnicit
• I believe that race should not have any bearing on representation in a democracy, including in local government.
• No need to pick councillors based on race.
• Not required
• Stand and get elected like everyone else, no preferential treatment for Maori or any other ethnic group
• If anyone of any colour or creed has what it takes to represent the community, then it should happen. Separatism in any form is just plain wrong!
• If Maori want to sit around the table stand for election. No seats given
• We don’t have the population at this stage to fairly represent this community
• How many native Maori are living permanently in the district? This number will determine if Maori representation is needed. I believe that there are more migrant communities in the district than native maoris.
General
• I believe this should be up to the iwi in the district to decide
• I’m unsure but interested to find out more.
• Maori advisors on relevant issues
• working relationships with tangata whenua representatives in a way that works best for them is far more respectful

4. Community boards

Based on the question "What are your thoughts on community boards in the district?"

42 responses received

4.1 Comments on community boards

Comments
In favour of community boards / supports current system

• The Board wishes to submit on the following points:
  ○ The board is happy with the number of elected members of the community (5) and doesn't believe that there needs to be any changes.
  ○ The board believes that the present system adequately represents the community interests and doesn't see the need for further unelected appointments.
  ○ The board supports the extended boundaries as attached. The area is becoming more and more populated and share the same interests and facilities as the present boundary. The enlarged area will give those residents greater representation to the Community Board and ultimately the council as many of the council services are already at their gate or are being used already.

• I would like to see further community boards or representatives in our district, advocating local issues, being heard by council
• Essential for Methven.
• if we moved to electing councillors at large, community boards would be good for Methven and Rakaia
• I think this is currently working.
• Given that community boards provide both a means of local engagement and an introduction to local government policy and procedures, HMCC is of the view that community boards should be established in more of our centres of population – Rakaia and Hinds specifically.
• No further community boards are required in our opinion.
• Makes sense to have one in Methven. It has a big enough population

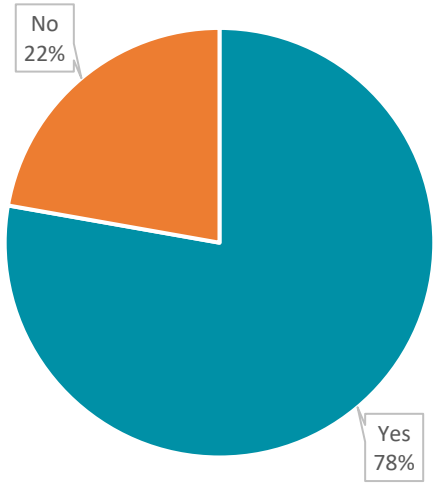
Comments
• We definitely need them as each area knows what their specific areas needs are and what is required whereas a councillor sitting in a nice comfy office with air conditioning and living within Ashburton town boundaries will not know what it's like each year when the Hinds river floods or Rakaia losing power often due to road accidents or weather or because the wind blew the wrong way.
• Stay as is.
• Fine • I live in the methven region and love that we have a board to focus on our area. If it went away I'd be worried and sad.
• Community boards are very important. No good having things decided for you by someone who does not know the lay of the land as they say.
• Great idea
• Just the one in Methven
• I think it is needed. it is an up an coming town
• Good to have that local voice otherwise can feel unseen and unheard
• Very good.
• They seem to work well..we support the current system
• Should stay the same
• Minimal boards
• Good idea.
• happy with them
• Methven is a vibrant community that deserves representation
• Create more community board for Rakaia and Mayfield area
NOT in favour of community boards
• Scrap them
• wards should cover this, another waste of money

Comments
• I wonder if they are necessary - considering we only have one in our region - what makes Methven different to other areas
• Not required an extra layer of governance cost & complication for a District of this size
• Don’t need it for such a small population
General
• Is it needed? Could we have a extra Ward that represents the smaller settlements around the district vs just a methven voice.
• It is a decision to be made by Methven as the only Community Board in the district. But they should be charged the full cost of the time and travel they receive by Council staff attending their meetings. Methven receives a lot more time by staff and opinions they express by a minority of the district.
• All members Must be elected.
• I would need to learn more about it. I don’t know enough to give an opinion sorry.
• I don't understand them
• Don’t know
• Not sure about this. What about those that live in the east of Ashburton
• I don't know.
• Reduce the number on the board. Rates should be struck on the same basis as the rest of the district.
• shall be chosen from us all in the areas
• No comment, as have no experience with Community Boards.
• Wouldn't be needed if local councilors for the area made themselves available to all community members and drove hard for their towns

5. Number of councillors per ward

Based on the question "Do you support the number of councillors representing each ward?"

	Number of people
Yes	35
No	10
Total	**45**



5.1 Comments on number of councillors per ward

Comments
Support for current system
• Stay as is.
• It is part of the electoral act that each ward should have a equal number of voters in each ward. With some minor adjustments a spread of 5 urban and 4 rural work out correctly.
Support for more councillors per ward
• HMCC advocate for the number of councilors to be increased from 9 to 12. The number of councillors must adhere to the +/-10% rule. The Ashburton Ward currently has one councillor to 4,240 population, whereas the Eastern Ward has one councillor to 3,830 population, and Western Ward one councillor to 3,930

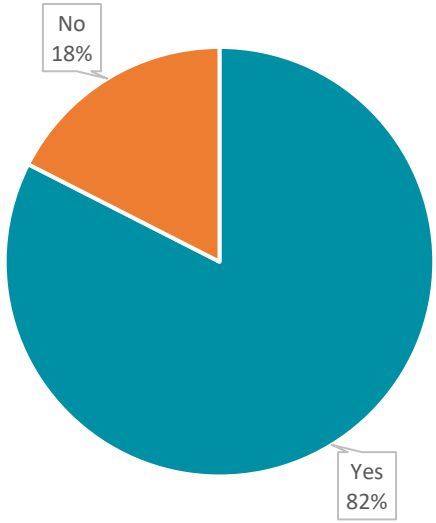
Comments
population. This ratio between the Ashburton Ward and the Eastern Ward barely meets the +/-10% rule, and new ward boundaries would likely need to be amended given current populations.
• It appears to work well. We do think the boundaries should be regularity reviewed
• no need for any more.
Support for less councillors per ward
• MCFF supports the arrangement of two councillors each for the Western and Eastern Wards. However, a reduction in the number of councillors in the Ashburton Ward is preferred although we note this would be unlikely based on the requirements in the Local Electoral Act 2001. - When considering the number of councillors required, the Council must remember 'rural' councillors have to cover such a large geographic spread compared to their urban counterparts. Therefore there is justification to reduce the number of urban representatives but the rural representation must be maintained.
• Needs to be less
• Need less councillors of better quality.
• should be less
• I think there could be less councillors
General
• MCFF preferred arrangements - First preference - maintain status quo - Second preference - mixed system – 2 councillors for Western, 2 councillors for Eastern, 2 councillors for Ashburton Ward and 3 councillors elected at large.
• They should drop and have more at large
• wards should be scrapped
• I don't really know much about this but there's always things to improve and learn.
• Electoral boundaries move w population changes, we are used to this.
• Other experienced experts to be included for the areas needs
• Unless there is a change in the population of a ward.

Comments
• Don't know.
• I understand population growth and changes to zoning however each tradtional ward needs to have a voice.
• with the growth, particularly in Methven it is important to routinely review and be confident that representation is appropriate and fair
• I would like to run as one of the councillors in the future if I may be selected or get elected.. I love to show my passion for this city
• I prefer skills and motivation over where someone lives

6. Ward boundaries

Based on the question "Do you support the current ward boundaries?"

	Number of people
Yes	33
No	7
Total	**40**



6.1 Comments on ward boundaries

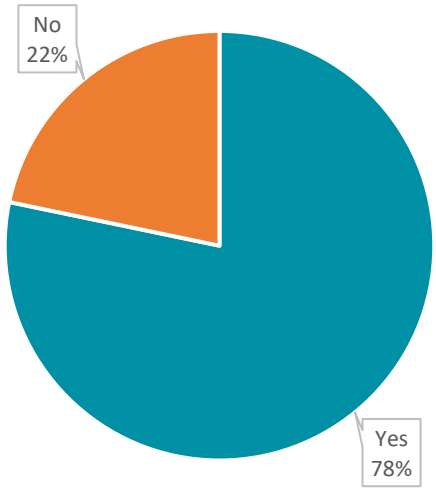
Comments
Support for current ward boundaries
• works now
• Yes as long as they still represent the areas of residential and industrial growth in Ashburton.
• Makes it fair
• MCFF supports the current ward boundaries as they maintain rural representation
Support for alternative boundaries

Comments
• In addition to any changes that should be made to ensure the +/-10% rule is met, new sub-divisions around the periphery of Ashburton are likely to require ward boundaries being changed. These are clearly urban ward properties and should receive a level of service other urban-dwellers enjoy, street refuse collection, for example, and pay rates commensurate with that level of service.
• With a perhaps one thought, to have one rural ward could be an option. However before the district had a Eastern and Western rural wards, Methven with a larger population dominated in a ward including all south of the Ashburton river, and it was difficult for Mayfield Hinds Lowcliffe Carew to have any representation.
• But changes in population of wards needs to be taken into account and boundaries adjusted if necessary.
General
• As per previous answer.
• Don’t know
• I don’t know
• Not known
• I don't know.
• not really
• Rural wardrobe require equal representation as they pay high rates but receive minimum services

7. Ward names

Based on the question "Do you support the current ward names (Ashburton, Eastern and Western Ward?"

	Number of people
Yes	36
No	10
Total	**46**



7.1 Comments on ward names

Comments
Support for current ward names
• MCFF supports the current ward names as they are an accurate representation of the communities of interest
• Definately, citizens of this district understand what is meant by the present names. No to Maori names, there was enough confusion over Government Departments having Maori names not understood by the majority in our district. With the present Government making English as the first title to be used when both English and Maori are used, we would be only causing unnessary complication to change from what we have now.
• Makes it easy
• Why change?

Comments
• why waste money to change, them spend that on fixing roads
• yeah.. i think but not really
• why not
Support for alternative names
• HMCC accept that these names are readily understandable by many, but note that they lack much in the way of place recognition. Adopting names from the indigenous Māori population might give a more local flavor to ward names, in the same way that the official name gifted to the new library and civic centre does. Why not have a Whakatere ward, an Ōpuke ward and a Hekeao/Rakaia ward?
• Not really. Maybe Te Reo names could be used.
• They should specify the areas within the ward eg Methven
General
• As previously stated each individual community needs to be represented, Rakaia,Methven, Stavely,Mayfield,Hinds, long beach, Chertsey, and Dorie.
• Boundaries need to be well advertised
• Don't know.

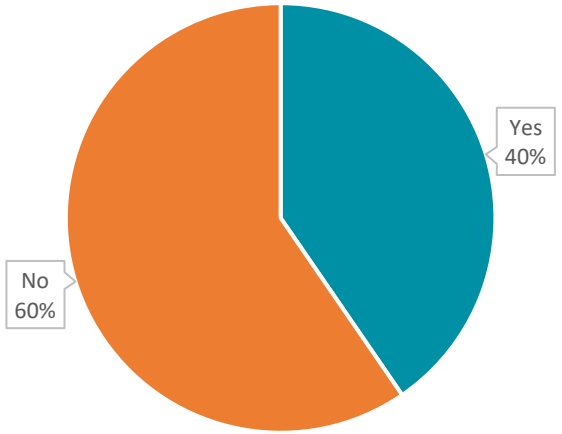
8. Merging of Eastern and Western wards

Based on the question "Do you support merging the Eastern and Western wards and maintaining the current Ashburton ward?"

Supporting information provided for this question was:

"One option we are exploring for the Ashburton District is to merge the Eastern and Western wards into one ward and keep the Ashburton ward as is. This would mean the new ward would elect four councillors and the Ashburton ward the remaining five councillors."

	Number of people
Yes	19
No	28
Total	**47**



8.1 Comments on merging the Eastern and Western wards

Comments
In support of merging wards

Comments
• It may stimulate candidates to stand who would represent the whole of the rural part of the district. Organisations like Fed Farmers elect candidates to represent all farmers of the district, so there should be no reason why rural councillors who are elected are mindful that they are representatives of all parts of the district. At the moment rural councillors are regularly approached by citizens not neccessary from the ward they were elected in.
• If this is more efficient
• Yes as long as the same level of efficiency is achieved and work/results are not 'watered down'.
NOT in support of merging wards
• The consultation document states that an option being explored is merging the Eastern and Western wards into one. MCFF does not support this proposed merge, and questions if the Council is pursuing a predetermined option with including this in early engagement. - While not specifically stated, we assume merging the wards would mean there would be one 'rural' ward and one 'urban'. In our view, this could further enforce the urban/rural divide and lead to division around the Council table when voting. - The Eastern and Western wards each are unique in their landscape, farm types, and climate. Having elected members who can understand and advocate for these different areas of the district is important to our members. - As an example, if all rural councillors were elected from Mayfield, they would not have the breadth of understanding of coastal areas as our current Eastern councillors have. Likewise, if all rural councillors were elected from Lowcliffe, they may not fully understand and appreciate farming the Foothills.
• Representation of the areas needs to be maintained
• The Eastern and Western ward should remain separate and be represented by people from that ward
• Why change something that nots broken It's also a huge area geographically for councillors to cover. I imagine they would divide the zone up between themselves anyway
• Because there would be no guarantees that the east or west of the new ward would have representation. 4 councillors who all live in one part of that ward could be elected. So the other residents would miss out on their voice being heard.
• More diverity of councilors to represent the changing face of the district. Not murging of areas to have yet another older white dude representing a zone.
• I think we should keep them seperate. its a lot of land to cover and a diversity of agriculture
• yeah.. not really too. shall give my answers when im in respectively
• If the Ward system has a reason, it is local knowledge and representation. Therefore it would be better to continue to have more targeted representation.
• They represent different communities affected by different geographical interests, so it is good to keep them separate.

Comments
• why merge. What are you trying to achieve. It works ok now so dont waste time on changing anything.
General
• HMCC objects to the implication in the explanation that “This would mean the new ward would elect four councilors and the Ashburton ward the remaining five councilors” as this suggests a pre-ordained outcome to what is supposed to be a community consultation process. We note that one of the major reasons given for many in our community not engaging with local government is that “they don’t listen to us”. As we have previously stated in submissions to ADC, HMCC believe that genuine transparent community consultation is essential to maintaining local democracy and building a sense of community. Other than this unfortunate accompanying statement, we don’t have strong views either way, and it would appear that both wards could form a common community of interest.
• Don’t give small communities representation
• prefer not to have wards. wards in any form just reinforce the rural-urban split
• As per previous answers
• But hopefully in the future more councillors are appointed
• I have no idea, not enough is explained in question, reasons? advantages, disadvantages?
• who cares
• Six of one half dozen of another
• Just give us people with ability, to hell with where they live