

We share public concerns that citizens are disengaged with Local Government and offer the following submission:

Council staff work for months preparing plans, elected members have weeks, and citizens are provided with four minutes on hundreds of pages of proposals.

No opportunity is provided during this process for citizens to openly discuss proposals or to present new or amended ones. In many cases elected members' discussion is behind closed doors, excluding the citizen from the dialogue. There is a widely held view that agreements are made behind closed doors for rubber stamping at council meetings - in conflict with the concept of open government..

The downward spiral of community engagement is illustrated when submitters' material is ignored in meeting reports.

There is no formal mechanism for community groups to engage directly and effectively with council decision makers beyond the brief public forum. There is concern that councillors have been replaced by council staff in deciding what's best for the city's future.

We hear the people saying "There is no effective community representation". Community Boards would better formally and legally represent our diverse communities and encourage comprehensive and varied grassroots opinions and discussions on their specific neighbourhoods, enabling the City Councillors to have enriched relationships and information to represent them and develop comprehensive plans and strategies and priorities... Building democracy at the local level.

We ask councillors to reject their staff advice (August 2021):

"Effective representation would not be enhanced by establishing community boards, having considered the identified communities of interest in terms of distinctiveness, representation, access and effective governance" and

"If city-wide wards are confirmed, this recognises Hamilton city has a relatively compact geographic area and its communities of interest are not geographically distinct, but rather they are spread across the city and community boards or smaller wards are unlikely to add value."

We support a single city-wide ward. The majority of citizens live in the east while the majority of industry is in the west. Proportional representation and the STV system reinforces the view that only ONE ward should exist. We also believe the Maori ward initiative is flawed. Currently those on the Maori electoral role can vote for the 7 elected member positions on council (mayor plus 6 ward councillors). Under the proposed arrangement this will be reduced to 3 positions (mayor and two Maori councillors).

One of the principals behind the establishment of Wards is that elected members live within the Ward community, having regular dialogue with citizens and representing the thoughts of the citizen to the collective elected membership. LGOIMA 21260 May below clearly illustrates that this underlying principal does not exist, justifying the single city-wide ward structure.

The map also illustrates the lack of community engagement/support facilities in some areas of the city.

A Pathway to Restoring Democracy in Local Government

Establish Community Boards to represent the city's communities of interest and 'neighbourhoods' as illustrated by Statistics Department cells and featured in the August Representation Review Report (refer image below), these to be further defined through community consultation with the advice of the city's Neighbourhood House representatives, Community Waikato, and other interested parties.

We recommend:

1. That ONE ward is established for Hamilton City (replacing the two-ward system)
2. That this city-wide ward has one elected mayor and 12 elected Councillors.
3. That between 1 and 4 Community Boards be established for a trial period of 3 years as **illustrated in the following Hamilton City Council Diagram**. The success of this trial should be measured against the following criteria:
 - a. Community opinion on monthly elected member workshops, or meet the Councillor meetings.
 - b. Successful community projects organised by Community Board.
 - c. Successful budgeting outcomes
 - d. Successful legal support outcomes
 - e. Other criteria decided by the collective Community Boards.

