

Report to:	Council
Date:	6 th September 2023
Subject:	Council Resolution on Electoral System
Prepared by:	Pete Kearney – Senior Manager Corporate Services
Input sought from:	Electionz.com, Will Doughty
Authorised by:	Will Doughty - Chief Executive Officer

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is provide Council with the options and related information associated with making any change to the Electoral system as part of the representation review and preparation for the 2025 elections.

- a) Do nothing - Retain the Status Quo, Council retains use of First Past the Post (FPP) as its means of voting and determination of elected members and Mayor
- b) Change – Change from FPP to Single Transferable Vote (STV)

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves either:

- a) Remain with the status quo electoral system (First Past Post) - *Preferred*
- or
- b) Change to the Single Transferable Vote

3. BACKGROUND

A change to the electoral system, effective for the next 2 elections, can be initiated by the Council by making a resolution or by a poll initiated either by the Council or by electors. The Council does not have to do anything in which case the status quo (FPP) would continue, however, if the Council did wish to make a change to the electoral system it needs to resolve to do so by the 12th September 2023.

It is mandatory for the Council to provide the public notice to the electoral system the Council wishes to use and to inform the public of their right to demand a poll. This public notice must be published by 19th September 2023.

Should the public demand a poll, which would require at least 5% of Kaikoura’s electorate to demand, then the result of the poll is binding and the electoral system must be used for the next two elections and all subsequent elections until the council passes another resolution to change the electoral system (after the next two elections) or a further poll is held. Should a poll be demanded the indicative cost is \$16,000 based on estimates from Electionz.com.

4. FIRST PAST THE POST

This electoral system is well known and widely used with most people being familiar with how it works. First Past the Post in simple terms works as follows:

- a) Receive as many votes as there are positions to fill
- b) Tick the boxes of the preferred candidates i.e. 1 for Mayor and 7 for council members
- c) The candidates with the most votes, up to the number of positions to be filled, are elected
- d) Counting of votes is fast, simple and transparent

5. SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE

The Future for Local Government (FFLG) report has recommended STV to be adopted nationwide as the voting method for local councils. The FFLG report notes that, “STV can be more representative

of voters choices because a vote can be transferred if a preferred candidate does not meet a certain threshold. This transfer of votes avoids wasted ballots. Early research highlights that STV leads to improvements in the representation of women however the report also notes that STV works best where there is a large pool of candidates and wards with more than one seat being contested”.

STV works as follows:

- a) You have a single vote, regardless of number of positions and your vote can be transferred between candidates
- b) You rank as many or as few candidates as desired
- c) If your preferred candidate does not need all the votes they get (i.e. they already have enough to be elected) or they have no chance of being elected your votes transfers to your next preferred candidate
- d) Your vote continues to be transferred, if either your next preferred candidate does not get all the votes or has no chance of being elected, until all positions have been filled
- e) The counting process is determined by the quota of votes needed
- f) First preference votes are counted, any candidate reaching the quote is elected and surplus votes transferred to next preferred
- g) If after this round of transfers not all positions have been filled the candidate with least number of votes is excluded and their votes transferred to next preferred
- h) The transfer/counting process continues till all positions are filled
- i) Counting process is same day but declared later than FPP results
- j) Costs are estimated to be approx. 30% more than FPP (Kaikoura estimate of \$2,000)

6. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Both systems have advantages and disadvantages. FPP is cheaper, simpler and easier to understand but can mean votes are wasted and in some cases the result may not reflect the desires of the majority. STV is argued to have better outcomes as fewer votes are wasted and subject to the preferences identified one is more likely to contribute to at least one candidate being elected. However, with STV, block voting by minority interests can outweigh the votes of the majority spread over many candidates e.g. tactical voting

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Public demand for a poll could see costs in the region of \$16,000 and changing to STV will incur higher costs, in the region of \$2,000, driven by the increased complexity in the counting process.

8. COMMUNITY OUTCOMES SUPPORTED

The work is in support of all community outcomes.



Community

We communicate, engage and inform our community



Development

We promote and support the development of our economy



Services

Our services and infrastructure are cost effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose



Environment

We value and protect our environment



Future

We work with our community and our partners to create a better place for future generations

9. SIGNIFICANCE OF DECISION

This decision is not considered significant in terms of Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

10. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

In order to achieve fair and effective representation at elections, local authorities are required by the Local Electoral Act 2001 to review their representation arrangements at least once every six years.

11. COMMUNITY VIEWS

No community views were sought in relation to this report