

**ALL YOU
NEED TO
KNOW
NGĀ
WHAKAMĀRAMA**

Guide to Local Government

He aratohu mō te Kāwanatanga
ā-Rohe

Ko Tātou
LG NZ.



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About Local Government New Zealand

Mō Te Kāhui Kaunihera o Aotearoa



This is Local Government NZ's guide to the democratic system in Aotearoa.

LGNZ represents all the local authorities (basically, our councils) in New Zealand. Our purpose is to be local democracy's vision and voice. Our vision is for Aotearoa New Zealand to enable/encourage the most active and inclusive local democracy in the world.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a diverse and vibrant nation built on local communities. Success and positive outcomes can only be achieved when those communities are engaged with their decision-makers and empowered to shape their own futures.

That's the core business of local authorities. LGNZ supports this by advocating for national policies and legislation that support effective local governance and providing services that strengthen the governance capability of our elected members – that's all our mayors, chairs, councillors and board members around the motu.

LGNZ is an incorporated society governed by a National Council of 20 elected representatives, headed by a President and Vice President.



**Aotearoa New Zealand
is a diverse and vibrant
nation built on local
communities.**



What is Local Government?

He aha te Kāwanatanga ā-Rohe?

Local government is the way communities make democratic decisions about how their towns, cities and regions work and how they'll develop. It refers to the activities of organisations known as local authorities – city, regional and district councils, as well as community and local boards.

City, district, and regional councils are corporate bodies with the authority to make decisions and set direction in the best long-term interests of their communities. They are governed by elected representatives from the community they serve. Every elected member has a role and responsibility in the exercise of that authority.

While Parliament is elected to deal with issues relevant to the whole of Aotearoa New Zealand, local government enables democratic decision-making by and for, local communities. Elected councillors, Mayors, Chairs and local and community board members are responsible for enhancing the collective social, environmental, economic and cultural wellbeing of their communities - a healthy natural environment, thriving businesses, safe spaces for all and a place that supports every individual's sense of belonging.

General powers are set out in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002). Specific duties tend to be set out in specific statutes, such as the Dog Control Act 1996 or Resource Management Act 1991.

The Purpose of Local Government Te Kaupapa o te Kāwanatanga ā-Rohe

Representation and Governance

The Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) provides councils a broad purpose, which is to:

- Enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities;
- To promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of communities in the present and for the future.

These two intents are more commonly described as 'representation' and 'governance'.

Representation

Te whai kanohi

Representation is to speak on behalf of individuals and organisations in your community, including those who did not vote for you.

Representation means to act in the best interests of the area, making decisions that consider the wider context and the needs of both current and future generations.

Representing involves forming relationships, such as with local iwi and hapū, community groups and organisations, and empowering them to play an active role in local democracy. It is about fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging and ensuring all voices are heard.

Governance

Mana whakahaere

Good governance balances short-term and long-term responsibilities, and the stewardship of the organisation, as well as the knowledge of external opportunities and challenges. It means to focus on the overall performance of the council, such as how it meets community expectations and aspirations, fulfils statutory obligations and looks after its assets.

City, District and Regional Councils

Ngā Kaunihera ā-Tāone, ā-Rohe, ā-Takiwā

There are 78 local authorities in total:

67 territorial authorities (consisting of 13

city councils and 54 district councils), and

11 regional councils.

The functions of territorial authorities include:

- Community facilities and services;
- Libraries;
- Economic development;
- Environmental health and safety;
- Providing infrastructure provision (e.g. water, waste water, stormwater, roads);
- Providing opportunities for recreation and culture;
- Resource management, including land use planning and development control;
- Local regulations (e.g. alcohol, dogs, noise, litter).

Regional councils are responsible for environmental resource management, flood control, air and water quality, pest control, and in some cases public transport, regional parks and bulk water supply.

Six territorial authorities are also known as 'unitary authorities' and have the responsibilities of both territorial authorities and regional councils. They are:

1. Auckland Council
2. Nelson City Council
3. Tasman District Council
4. Marlborough District Council
5. Gisborne District Council
6. Chatham Islands Council

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations

The Local Government Act also sets out principles and requirements for local authorities to meet, to improve outcomes for Māori. The purpose of this is to recognise and respect the Crown's responsibilities to Māori, as set down by the of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Local government has to promote opportunities for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes.

There are provisions in the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) that relate specifically to Māori. Parts 2 and 6 of the Act provide principles and requirements for councils that are intended to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.

Māori wards and constituencies Ngā rohe pōti Māori

Similar to the Māori Parliamentary seats, Māori wards establish areas where only those on the Māori Parliamentary electoral roll vote for the candidates in that ward. The Māori wards sit alongside the general wards of each city or district.

The aim of Māori wards is to ensure Māori are represented in local government decision making, like the dedicated electorate seats in Parliament. They enable Councils to better honour the principle of partnership committed to in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and provide greater opportunities for Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority.

In the 2022 local elections voters on the Māori roll will be able to vote for Māori wards in 29 territorial councils and Māori constituencies in six regional councils. Only three councils had elections for Māori wards and constituencies in 2019; the increase is the result of changes to the Local Electoral Act to make it easier to establish such wards and constituencies. The councils with Māori wards and constituencies are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Northland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Northland Regional Council• Far North District• Kaipara District• Whangarei District | Gisborne / Hawkes Bay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hawkes Bay Regional Council• Gisborne District Council• Hastings District Council• Wairoa District Council |
| Waikato <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waikato Regional Council• Hamilton City• Matamata-Piako District• Ōtorohanga District• Ruapehu District• Taupō District• Waikato District• Waipa District | Manawatū / Whanganui <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Horizons Regional Council• Horowhenua District Council• Manawatū District Council• Palmerston North City Council• Rangitikei District Council• Tararua District Council |
| Taranaki <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taranaki Regional Council• New Plymouth District• South Taranaki District• Stratford District | Wellington <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Masterton District Council• Porirua City Council• Wellington City Council |
| Bay of Plenty <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bay of Plenty Regional Council• Rotorua Lakes• Tauranga City• Whakatāne District | South Island <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marlborough District Council• Nelson City Council |

Any eligible person is able to stand for both Māori or general wards or constituencies – a person does not need to be of Māori descent or be on the Māori electoral roll to stand for a Māori ward or constituency (but has to still be a New Zealand citizen, able to vote in the general elections anywhere in New Zealand and nominated by two electors from the area the person is standing in).

Only people on the Māori electoral roll are able to vote for candidates standing for a Māori ward or constituency. Similarly, only those on the general electoral roll are able to vote for those candidates standing for a general ward or constituency.

In a territorial authority, a person on the Māori roll can vote for:

- The Mayor;
- Any members elected “at large” from the district as a whole;
- Members elected from a Māori ward, and;
- Local or community board members.

In a regional council, a person on the Māori roll can vote for members standing in a Māori constituency.

Once elected, all elected members, whether from General or Māori wards, take a formal oath of office to represent the entire community.

About council structures Mō ngā hanganga kaunihera

Local authorities are governed by a ‘governing body,’ also known as the ‘committee of the whole.’ A council has the discretion to appoint standing committees, special committees or sub-committees. Standing committees (or permanent committees) are responsible for much of council’s work. This includes regulatory services, planning, recreation and safety, as well as promoting economic development.

Information on how councils organise themselves can be found in each council’s Governance Statement, located on each council’s website.

Community boards

These exist to ensure a community’s interests are represented by bringing decision-making closer to citizens. In 2022, there were 110 community boards. Their primary role is to advocate and represent the interests of communities, although many councils delegate a range of local decision-making responsibilities to their boards.

Local boards

Local boards were introduced with the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009. They can comprise between five and 12 members. There are 21 local boards. Each board has to develop a plan of community priorities and preferences for the next three years. These have to be submitted to the Auckland Council for agreement. The Auckland Council owns all property and manages all employee appointments. The Local Government Commission has the authority to establish local boards in other parts of the country during reorganisation processes, should it wish.

About Auckland Council

Auckland Council has a decision-making structure that is different in many aspects to how other councils operate.

The Council consists of a Mayor and 20 councillors (the governing body) and 21 local boards. It is designed as a co-governance model with local boards responsible for local matters and the governing body responsible for matters affecting the overall metropolitan area.

The governing body of the Auckland Council is responsible for region-wide strategic decisions, including regional issues, activities and facilities. Local boards make decisions on local issues such as libraries, local parks, recreation services and facilities. Much of Auckland’s operations are undertaken by Council Controlled Organisations, such as Auckland Transport and Watercare.





By the numbers

Tirohanga tauanga whānui

What local government looks like

Te āhua o te kāwanatanga ā-rohe

After the 2019 local elections, local government looked like this:

Local government in Aotearoa New Zealand is made up of:

78
local, regional and unitary councils



number of elected members (councillors, mayors, community and local board members):

1605

number of mayors:

67

number of community boards:

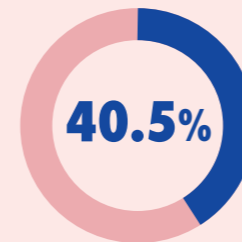
110

number of local boards:

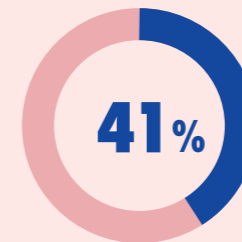
21

(Auckland only)

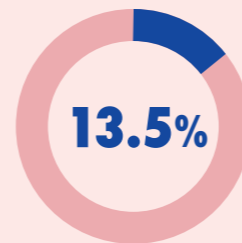
proportion of women elected to local government:



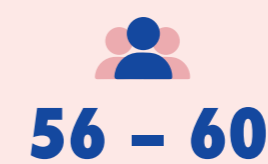
percentage of members elected in 2019 for the first time:



number of members who identify as Māori:

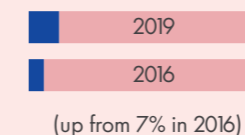


average age of elected members:

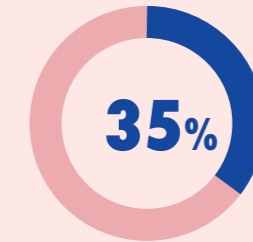


percentage of members under the age of 40:

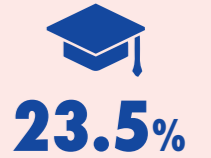
13.9%



proportion of members for whom being an elected member is their primary occupation:



proportion of members who are graduates:



The numbers

Ngā nama

Local government is a major sector of the economy and, in 2020:



had an annual operating income of

\$9.8 billion
(ex GST)



has an operating expenditure of

\$10.4 billion
(ex GST)



owned assets worth

\$140 billion



had liabilities of

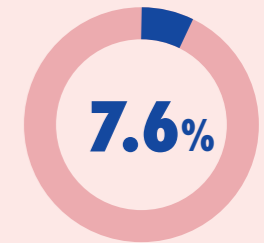
\$26 billion



employed approximately

30,000

full time equivalent staff



spent approximately 7.6 per cent of all public expenditure

See <http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz> for more statistical information.

See <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Elected-member-profile-2019-2022.pdf> for more information

The laws relevant to local government

Ngā ture e hāngai ana ki te kāwanatanga ā-rohe

Te Tiriti o Waitangi The Treaty of Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand’s founding document and is one source of our constitution.

The document has three articles, and is an enduring document which lays the foundations and obligations for an ongoing and sustainable partnership between Māori and the Crown.

Various courts have recognised the principles of Te Tiriti as including: rangatiratanga (chieftainship), reciprocity, partnership, active protection options, mutual benefit the right of development and redress.

Local government has to promote opportunities for Māori and tauwiwi (other members of the public) to contribute to its decision-making processes.

There are provisions in the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) that relate specifically to Māori. Parts 2 and 6 of the Act provide principles and requirements for councils that intend to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.

Learn more about the Treaty of Waitangi and its articles here: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty/the-treaty-in-brief>

The Local Government Act 2002 (the Act)

The LGA 2002 sets out the purpose, powers and principles that councils have to use when making decisions.

It also includes the power to make certain kinds of by-laws. Councils have to also manage their revenues, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and general financial dealings prudently, and in a way which promotes the community’s current and future interests.

Operating revenue has to be set at a level sufficient to meet that year’s projected operating expenses. This includes maintaining the service capability and integrity of assets throughout their useful life, and the funding of depreciation. There can be exceptions where it is demonstrably prudent – for example, a facility that is not meant to be replaced – if various procedural and consultative requirements are met.

Principles of consultation

The LGA extended consultation into a process of engagement which requires councils to work with affected communities at the beginning and end of a process. There are six consultation principles councils have to consider when making decisions:

- Councils should provide those who will or may be affected by a decision with enough information to help them present their views;
- Councils should seek out and welcome the views of those interested in a decision;
- Potential submitters should be told the purpose and focus of the consultation;
- Anyone who wishes to put views before the council should be given a reasonable opportunity to present them in a way appropriate to the needs of the submitter;
- While councils may have working plans in mind they have to be prepared to listen to all submissions with an open mind;
- Councils should provide information to submitters on the reasons for its decisions.

Read the Local Government Act 2022 in full [here](#).

The Local Government (Rating) Act 2002

The purpose of this Act is to:

- Provide local authorities with flexible powers to set, assess, and collect rates to fund local government activities;
- Ensure rates are set in accordance with decisions made in a transparent and consultative manner;
- Provide processes and information enabling ratepayers to identify and understand their liability for rates.

Read the Local Government Act 2022 in full [here](#).

Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA)

This Act means any person can request and receive information held by local authorities unless there is a valid reason for withholding the information. Reasons are specified in the Act. It mirrors that of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The Act also sets standards for local government transparency, requiring that meetings of local authorities be publicly notified and open to the public and that their agendas, reports, and minutes be available to the public. Local authorities can exclude the public from part of a meeting only after a resolution and for specified reasons.

Read the Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 [here](#).

The Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991

This Act requires councils to provide for integrated management of natural and physical resources. This devolution to local authorities is based on the premise decisions on environmental matters are best made by communities directly affected.

Read the Resource Management Act 1991 in full [here](#).

Reform

In 2022, work is underway to reform the resource management system, and the current RMA. The current Government plans to repeal the RMA and replace it with three new pieces of legislation.

Read the resource management system reform by Ministry for the Environment [here](#).

The RMA today

The Act gives councils the means to manage the environmental effects of using and developing resources and codifies many good practice requirements. This includes consultation in planning and decision-making and the use of analytical and evaluation techniques, including assessments of environmental effects of alternatives. In preparing RMA plans, councils are required to consult with iwi and recognise and provide for Māori values in resource management matters important to Māori. Community participation in resource management is a key principle of the RMA.

The RMA focuses on the effects of activities rather than the activities themselves. Its underlying assumption is that a use, development or subdivision should proceed if there are no adverse environmental effects, or if effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.



How local government works

He pēhea te mahi a te kāwanatanga ā-rohe

Local government is how we deliver local democracy, so, it needs to follow the appropriate rules to ensure decision-making is transparent, accountable, and open to all. For example, councils have to use standing orders to regulate how business at council and committee meetings is conducted.

Once every six years, a council is required to review its representation arrangements including the number of elected members, whether there should be community boards and area boundaries. A public consultation is part of this process so councils need to develop a proposal and take it to their communities.

Read more about representation reviews [here](#).

**Local government is
the delivery of local
democracy**



About Council meetings Mō ngā hui Kaunihera

Councils have to publish monthly schedules of meetings, including all committee and sub-committee meetings giving the time and place. Alternatively, meetings held after the 21st of any month can be publicly notified not more than 10, or less than five, working days before the day of the meeting. There are exceptions to these rules for extraordinary meetings. There is no actual requirement to meet monthly.

Meetings

There are two kinds of meetings – ordinary and extra-ordinary.

Ordinary meetings are regular meetings of the council. Councillors have to be given notice of the time and place of the meeting not less than 10 working days before it happens. Councils can also set advance schedules of ordinary meetings but they need to give councillors at least 10 days working notice before the first meeting in the schedule. Most councils provide a period at the beginning of their ordinary meetings for public presentations.

Extraordinary meetings, are called when something urgent comes up. They can be called by:

- a resolution of the local authority;
- the mayor or chairperson making a request in writing to the chief executive officer;
- not less than one-third of the councillors making a request in writing to the chief executive officer.

An extraordinary meeting can be called by the mayor, chair, or the chief executive (if the mayor/chair is absent) if there are matters which have to be dealt with that require shorter notice.

Standing orders

Councils have to use standing orders as a requirement of the LGA 2002. Standing orders apply to full council meetings and committee meetings. They provide the basis for the orderly conduct of meetings and contain rules defining the rights of chairs and members to address meetings. Councils also use standing orders to deal with the many matters they manage that are not covered by legislation. Councils can amend or suspend any part of their standing orders on the vote of three-quarters of the members present. A copy of a council's standing orders can usually be found on its website.

Order papers

Apart from the first meeting following an election, legislation allows councils to determine their own order of business. The chief executive prepares an agenda for each meeting distributed to members before the meeting. Business is dealt with in the order set out in the agenda unless the chair gives precedence to a particular item of business. If there is business from which the public is excluded, this is usually dealt with at the end of the meeting.

Motion

A formal proposal put forward for debate and usually a vote.

Voting

The chair calls for an expression of opinion or takes a show of hands. Once the council's opinion has been determined, the chair announces whether a motion has been carried or defeated. A member can request their vote against a motion be recorded in the minutes. All present at the meeting have to be able to see (or hear) how individual councillor's vote. Secret ballots are not allowed.

Casting vote

The default position in the LGA 2002 is there is no casting vote for the mayor or chair of meetings. Councils can, however, use a casting vote if they include it in their standing orders either when adopting their standing orders immediately after an election, or through an amendment to their standing orders at a later date. Most councils have amended their standing orders to include casting vote.

Minutes

Minutes are the official record of a meeting. They are approved at the following meeting and signed by the chair, after which they become the legal evidence of the proceedings.

Workshops

Many councils hold workshops or informal meetings to brief elected members on emerging issues or get an indication of councillor preference before initiating a policy project. Meeting procedures and LGOIMA do not apply to workshops, and it is common for them to exclude media and the public. Workshops cannot be used to make decisions.

About plans and statements Mō ngā mahere me ngā tauākī

Much of a council's work involves planning for the future, whether it is determining where a city or town will grow or making provision for the on-going maintenance and renewal of a community's infrastructure.

Pre-election reports

As defined in the Local Government Act 2002 s99A (4), the purpose of the pre-election report is to provide information and promote discussion about the issues facing the local authority. The reports have to be prepared and signed-off by each chief executive no later than two weeks before nomination day.

The pre-election report has to contain, for the three years preceding the election and the three years following the election:

- The funding impact statement;
- A summary balance sheet;
- A statement setting out the extent to which the authority has complied with limits in its financial strategy;
- Information on planned major projects.

Local governance statements

Within six months of the election, councils have to publish a local governance statement that outlines, amongst other matters, members' roles and conduct; governance structures and processes; membership and delegations; meeting processes; policies on consultation and, the relationship between management and elected members.

The Long Term Plan (LTP)

An LTP is a council's primary strategic planning document and the main opportunity for the public to participate in local decision-making. The LTP sets out the council's priorities over the medium to long-term, outlining how the council intends to achieve its purpose. Some decisions and actions can only be undertaken if they are included in an LTP, or amendment to an LTP, such as transferring ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the local authority.

Councils produce a new LTP once every three years. The LTP has to cover a period of at least 10 years. This means councils will undertake a major consultative process at least one year in three, and a smaller consultative exercise in the second and third years focusing on amendments to the LTP, or on the annual plan. Once adopted, an LTP can be amended but not revoked.

Councils have to also adopt a range of funding and financial policies, many of which are to be included in the LTP, such as their policy on development contributions.

The Annual Plan

Although the main planning document is now the LTP, Councils still prepare annual plans to guide operating and financial priorities. This contains the annual budget and is a link to the rate-setting process. It includes:

- a proposed annual budget including estimated costs and revenues
- a funding impact statement for the year
- forecast financial statements for the year
- statements setting out service levels and performance measures
- details of any changes from the information in the LTCCP (including the reasons for change).

Councils cannot make significant changes to their work programme or budget through the annual plan; they can only do so through the LTP or an amendment to the LTP.

Annual plans have to be adopted by June 30 each year. There is no penalty for councils that fail to meet the June 30 deadline.

The Annual Report

The annual report outlines how the council performed against their annual plan; they need to be audited and adopted by 31 October each year. They include (amongst other things) detail on capital expenditure, an audited statement of financial and non-financial performance; reports on the performance of council-controlled organisations and information on remuneration.

Councils also need to produce a summary of the annual report with simplified financial and performance information. This needs to be audited and publicly released within one month of the annual report being adopted.

Financial strategies

Sets the overall direction of the financial aspects of the LTP and provides elected members with the opportunity to set financial parameters for their council. It should contain a summary of the financial issues facing each council as well as the financial implications of any capital and operational decisions.

The purpose of the financial strategy is to facilitate:

- Prudent financial management and provide a guide to consider proposals for funding and expenditure against;
- Consultation on council proposals for funding and expenditure by making the implications of a council's financial choices clear and transparent (see S.101A).

The information to be included in a financial strategy include planned rate increases, borrowing limits and an assessment of the ability of a council to meet planned service levels within those limits. If a council doesn't meet expected limits, they need to publicly explain the reasons for non-compliance.

Infrastructure strategies

Since 2014 councils have been required to develop 30-year Infrastructure strategies. The infrastructure strategy identifies significant infrastructure issues facing the council, options for managing those issues and the implications of those options.

It should outline how each local authority intends to manage its assets taking into account the need to respond to changes in its community, the need to renew or replace assets and how it will maintain or improve public health and environmental outcomes or mitigate adverse effects on them.

Infrastructure strategies can be found on councils' websites. They are underpinned by Asset Management Plans (AMPs).

Significance and engagement policy

Local authorities have to have a Significance and Engagement policy setting out their criteria for deciding how significant a proposal and decision is, and how they will engage with communities about it.

The purpose of the policy is to enable people to identify the significance of a particular issue, proposal, asset, decision or activity; provide clarity about how and when communities can expect to be engaged in decisions about these things, and inform the local authority about the type and extent of any public engagement expected before a particular decision is made.



Councils are required to think of the inter-generational benefits of their activities

How councils are funded Te whiwhinga pūtea a ngā kaunihera

Councils' primary source of funding comes from rates paid by property owners. Rates make up around 60% of all operational expenditure, but this varies from council to council.

Remaining revenue comes from user charges, investment income, regulatory fees and roading subsidies. Councils are required by law to balance their budgets, unless there is reason not to do so, and borrowing is undertaken to fund capital expenditure.

Councils own assets worth more than \$145 billion and their level of debt is approximately \$20 billion. Councils are required to think of the inter-generational benefits of their activities. Borrowing to fund assets that have a long life is a way of sharing the cost of long-life assets over future generations that will benefit from the investment. Most councils borrow from the Local Government Funding Agency, which raises bonds (a loan from an investor to a borrower) and can lend to councils at lower interest rates than those charged by the banking sector.

Local authorities have two sorts of general rating powers:

- General rates – these are determined by the land, capital or rental value of a property;
- Uniform annual general charges – this is a fixed dollar charge for each rating unit or 'separately used' part of a rating unit.

'Separately used' refers to a property or building used by a person other than the owner, who has the right to use that portion through a tenancy, lease, licence or other agreement. Councils have to include a definition of 'separately used or inhabited' in their LTP.

General rates can be set at the same rate in the dollar for all rating units or differentially. This means some properties might pay more, or less, than the average rate, even though they have the same value. The rural differential is an example. This is where rural properties are charged a lower rate because they use fewer council services. Some councils have a business differential where businesses might be charged at a higher rate in the dollar because they use a greater range of services.

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Targeted rates

These are set to fund a specific function or group of functions. If a council sets a targeted rate it cannot use the revenue for any other purpose. An irrigation scheme would be a typical activity. Targeted rates ensure only those properties benefiting from the scheme pay the rates to fund it.

Councils can set a targeted rate on all rating units in their area or exclude particular groups of rating units. Examples include a targeted rate for security, street-cleaning or beautification in the central business district.

The Local Government Rating Act also places a 30 per cent cap on the portion of council's total revenue which comes from uniform charges and targeted rates (except those made for water supply and sewage disposal).

Non-rateable land

Councils are unable by law to rate certain classes of land. These include national parks; local authority land; education land; DHB land; institutions used as a place of religious worship; cemeteries and crematoria; Māori customary land; roads; airports; wharves; railways, and land for charitable institutions.

Development contributions

Many territorial authorities in New Zealand face pressures on services they provide due to growth. The LGA 2002 provides territorial authorities with a tool – development contributions – for collecting revenue from those who cause the need for additional infrastructure. Without development contributions, the cost of putting in new infrastructure would be spread across existing ratepayers.

How funding decisions are made

How councils make decisions are subject to a number of rules and regulations set out in the LGA 2002 and other statutes.

Some critical ones are:

- Decision-makers have to be informed by the views of those affected by the decision;
- Decision-makers have to consider reasonable practicable options;
- Decisions have to be made in public unless there are specific grounds for excluding the public;
- Decision-making processes have to acknowledge the diverse needs of the community.

Elected members have little individual authority. It is only when acting together that they can implement policies and make a difference.



How people are voted onto council

Te pōti tangata ki te kaunihera

Local authority elections are held on the second Saturday in October every three years and conducted by postal vote. See the timeline on the next page for the 2022 elections.

Each election is run by an electoral officer who is often a council employee, although some councils use contractors to do this. Sitting elected members, and anyone standing for election, cannot be an electoral officer. Electoral officers are independent statutory officers for the period of the election. During this time they do not take instruction from either their council or its senior management. The electoral officer also writes to all candidates once the final election result is known.

In addition, the Hutt City Council is holding a poll in the 2022 elections, on whether it should shift to an STV system for future elections.

Councils using STV are:

- Far North District Council (1st time)
- Kaipara District Council
- Hamilton City Council (1st time)
- Gisborne District Council (1st time)
- Tauranga City Council
- Ruapehu District Council
- New Plymouth District Council
- Palmerston North City Council
- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Porirua City Council
- Wellington City Council
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Marlborough District Council
- Nelson City Council (1st time)
- Dunedin City Council

Most council elections are conducted using the 'First Past the Post' system (FPP). This year, 15 councils will use the Single Transferable Voting system (STV).

Key dates for the local government elections

Ngā rā matua

15 July	Electoral rolls open for inspection
15 July	Candidate nominations open
12 August	Candidate nominations close (12 noon) and electoral roll closes
15 - 20 August	Public notice of candidates' names by Electoral Officers
16 - 21 September	Voting documents delivered
16 September – 8 October	Scrutiny and early processing
8 October	Voting closes 12 noon
8 October	Preliminary results
8 October	Collation and analysis of results – LGNZ
13 - 19 October	Declaration of results
November	Councillor swearing-in ceremonies
Mid-December	Return of election expenses forms – Electoral Officer



About elections

Mō ngā pōtitanga

About the voting systems

Mō ngā pūnaha pōti

Single Transferable Vote

Voters rank candidates in order of preference. Candidates have to reach a quota of votes in order to be elected. If a candidate gets more votes than the allocated quota, part of that vote is then transferred to a voter's second choice until enough candidates have passed the quota to fill all vacancies.

The number of vacancies and votes determines the quota a candidate have to reach to be elected. The formula for deciding the quota is the total number of valid votes, divided by the number of vacancies plus one. See www.stv.govt.nz for more information.

First Past the Post

FPP gives voters three votes for up to three candidates. The candidate with the most votes wins. A criticism of FPP is while a candidate may receive more votes than other individuals, they still receive fewer votes than other candidates put together. This can lead to a winner having a minority of the votes.

About the candidates

Mō ngā kaitono

To be eligible to stand for election candidates have to be:

- A New Zealand citizen;
- Enrolled on the parliamentary electoral roll (anywhere in New Zealand), and;
- Gave lived at their current address for at least one month however, they do not need to live in the area in which they wish to stand;
- Nominated by two people (a candidate cannot nominate themselves).

A person cannot stand if they are currently serving a prison term of three years or more.

LGNZ has a comprehensive Candidate's Guide that provides all the information a person would need to stand for election. The Guide, and for information on candidates go to www.votelocal.co.nz or www.policylocal.nz

Election spending

Te whakapau moni mō ngā pōtitanga

There are limits to the amount of money candidates can spend on their election campaigns, which includes donations and joint campaigning. The maximum amount spent must not exceed the limits set out below.

Council population	Expenditure limit
Up to 4,999	\$3,500
5,000 – 9,999	\$7,000
10,000 – 19,999	\$14,000
20,000 – 39,999	\$20,000
40,000 – 59,999	\$30,000
60,000 – 79,999	\$40,000
80,000 – 99,999	\$50,000
100,000 – 149,000	\$55,000
150,000 – 249,999	\$60,000
250,000 – 1,000,000	\$70,000
1,000,000 or more	\$100,000*

*Plus 50 cents for each elector. (These figures are GST inclusive.)

If a candidate is standing for more than one position such as mayor and councillor, the higher limit applies (not both combined).

Historical voter turnout

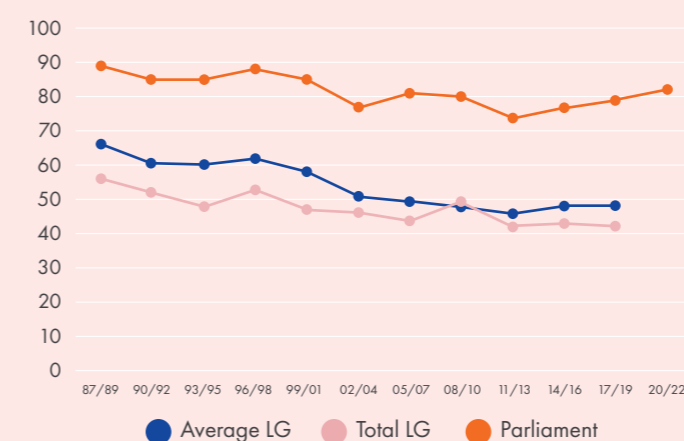
Tauanga kaipōti o mua

Total turnout (the number of voters as a percentage of the number of people enrolled to vote) in the 2019 local elections fell slightly from 43 per cent to 41.7 per cent. The figure is heavily influenced by turnout in our four or five biggest councils, as they make up half of all voters.

To measure voter interest across Aotearoa New Zealand, a better approach is to find the average turnout for all councils. In 2019 average turnout was 48.3 per cent, largely unchanged from 2016.

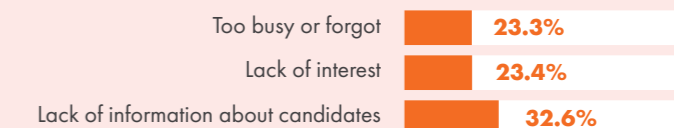
In contrast turnout in parliamentary elections continues to increase since its lowest point in 2011, reaching just over 82 per cent in 2020, up from 77 per cent in 2017.

Voter turnout

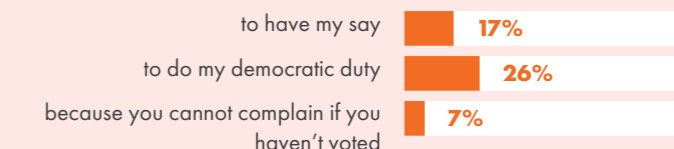


Both LGNZ and Auckland Council have undertaken post-election surveys in the past to identify as much as possible the types of people who voted, who didn't and why.

The reasons most commonly given for not voting are:



The main reasons for voting were:



**Total turnout in the
2019 local elections
was 41.7%**



Helpful links for more information

He hononga āwhina mō ētahi atu kōrero

Council websites and maps:

Te Ika-a-Māui North Island

- [Auckland Council ▶](#)
- [Bay of Plenty Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Carterton District Council ▶](#)
- [Central Hawke's Bay District Council ▶](#)
- [Far North District Council ▶](#)
- [Gisborne District Council ▶](#)
- [Greater Wellington Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Hamilton City Council ▶](#)
- [Hastings District Council ▶](#)
- [Hauraki District Council ▶](#)
- [Hawke's Bay Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Horizons Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Horowhenua District Council ▶](#)
- [Hutt City Council ▶](#)
- [Kaipara District Council ▶](#)
- [Kāpiti Coast District Council ▶](#)
- [Kawerau District Council ▶](#)
- [Manawatu District Council ▶](#)
- [Masterton District Council ▶](#)
- [Matamata-Piako District Council ▶](#)
- [Napier City Council ▶](#)
- [New Plymouth District Council ▶](#)
- [Northland Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Ōpōtiki District Council ▶](#)
- [Ōtorohanga District Council ▶](#)
- [Palmerston North City Council ▶](#)
- [Porirua City Council ▶](#)
- [Rangitikei District Council ▶](#)
- [Rotorua Lakes Council ▶](#)
- [Ruapehu District Council ▶](#)
- [South Taranaki District Council ▶](#)
- [South Waikato District Council ▶](#)
- [South Wairarapa District Council ▶](#)
- [Stratford District Council ▶](#)
- [Taranaki Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Taranaki District Council ▶](#)
- [Taupō District Council ▶](#)
- [Tauranga City Council ▶](#)
- [Thames-Coromandel District Council ▶](#)
- [Upper Hutt City Council ▶](#)
- [Waikato District Council ▶](#)
- [Waikato Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Waipa District Council ▶](#)
- [Wairoa District Council ▶](#)
- [Waitomo District Council ▶](#)
- [Whanganui District Council ▶](#)
- [Wellington City Council ▶](#)
- [Western Bay of Plenty District Council ▶](#)
- [Whakatāne District Council ▶](#)
- [Whangarei District Council ▶](#)

Te Waipounamu South Island

- [Ashburton District Council ▶](#)
- [Buller District Council ▶](#)
- [Central Otago District Council ▶](#)
- [Chatham Islands Council ▶](#)
- [Christchurch City Council ▶](#)
- [Clutha District Council ▶](#)
- [Dunedin City Council ▶](#)
- [Environment Canterbury ▶](#)
- [Environment Southland ▶](#)
- [Gore District Council ▶](#)
- [Grey District Council ▶](#)
- [Hurunui District Council ▶](#)
- [Invercargill City Council ▶](#)
- [Kaikōura District Council ▶](#)
- [Mackenzie District Council ▶](#)
- [Marlborough District Council ▶](#)
- [Nelson City Council ▶](#)
- [Otago Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Queenstown Lakes District Council ▶](#)
- [Selwyn District Council ▶](#)
- [Southland District Council ▶](#)
- [Tasman District Council ▶](#)
- [Timaru District Council ▶](#)
- [Waimakariri District Council ▶](#)
- [Waimate District Council ▶](#)
- [Waitaki District Council ▶](#)
- [West Coast Regional Council ▶](#)
- [Westland District Council ▶](#)

Maps

The maps below outline the boundaries for all regional, district and city councils in New Zealand.

- [North Island map ▶](#)
- [South Island map ▶](#)



Key terms

Ngā kupu matua

Community boards – carry out functions and powers delegated by their councils, representing and advocating on behalf of their communities. There are approximately 109 community boards in New Zealand. Community boards can have between four and 12 members, at least four of whom, or more than half, must be elected. Some members may be appointed by the territorial authority.

Community outcomes – adopted by councils in their LTPs. These are the outcomes councils seek to achieve through the services and infrastructure priorities set out in their long term plans.

Consultation – a process by which councils seek the views of citizens about a proposal. When considering submissions, as part of a consultation exercise, elected members must keep an open mind.

Council-Controlled Organisation (CCO) – an organisation in which one, or more, local authority owns or controls 50 per cent, or more, of the voting rights or has the right to appoint 50 per cent, or more, of the directors of the organisation.

Council-Controlled Trading Organisation (CCTO) – is a CCO that has been established to make a profit.

District plans – city and district councils and unitary authorities have to prepare a district plan for the sustainable management of the district's resources, to enable them to manage their significant resource management issues. District plans have to give effect to any national policy statement, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, and regional policy statements. District plans have to also be consistent with regional plans.

Funding Impact Statements (FIS) – sets out the funding council requires, the mechanisms required to raise the funding, and how much each mechanism or funding tool will raise. This has to be provided in LTPs and annual plans.

Local boards – established as part of the re-organisation of Auckland local boards are part of the co-governance structure with the governing body. Similar to community boards, but with greater decision-making authority, local boards in Auckland have responsibility for libraries, local facilities and local parks.

Local governance statement – contains information about the way in which each council works, makes decisions and organises itself. Governance statements can be found on council websites.

Local Government Commission – appointed by the Government, the Commission is responsible for considering re-organisation proposals, boundary adjustments and considering appeals and objections to councils' representation reviews. www.lgc.govt.nz

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) – an incorporated society which represents all local authorities in New Zealand. Membership is voluntary and activities are funded through an annual subscription. The organisation's primary focus is advocacy, providing value added services and policy development. www.lgnz.co.nz

National Environmental Standards (NES) – is a tool to set mandatory bottom line standards for specified activities under the RMA, for example, standards for air quality and electricity transmission.

National policy statements – national policy statements are statutory documents in which the Minister for the Environment can state policies of national resource management significance, for example, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS).

Taituarā – the professional development body representing senior managers within the local government sector.

Special Consultative Procedure (SCP) – a formal process that sets out the steps a local authority has to follow when consulting on major issues.

Statement of Intent (SOI) – sets out objectives, expected activities, and forecast CCO performance for the coming year. It is negotiated between councils and each of their CCOs.

Statement of proposal – a document that provides the basis for consultation under the SCP, by setting out a local authority's proposals.

Strategic asset – an asset or group of assets held by the local authority to maintain its capacity to promote outcomes it considers important.

Regional plans – regional plans deal with specific resource management issues such as air, water, or land management. Regional plans have to give effect to any national policy statements, the NZCPS and regional policy statements.

Regional policy statements – The RMA requires regional councils and unitary authorities to prepare a regional policy statement for the sustainable management of the region's resources.

Triennial agreement – an agreement, negotiated after each election, which sets the basis for communication and co-ordination between territorial councils and their regional authorities.

Additional Websites

www.localcouncils.govt.nz – for information about local government, councils and useful links, maintained by the Department of Internal Affairs.

www.vote.local.co.nz – for information on the 2020 local authority elections.

www.legislation.govt.nz – for information about the legislation.

www.stv.govt.nz – for information about single transferable voting.

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