

Feedback on the Justice and Electoral Select Committee's "Inquiry into the 2016 local authority elections".

From: The Waitematā Local Board

Date: 11 April 2017

Background

The Justice and Electoral Select Committee conducts an enquiry following each election. Auckland Council proposes to make a submission to the Committee regarding the 2016 election. Local board input into submissions to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee's "Inquiry into the 2016 local authority elections" has been requested to help inform Council's submission.

Waitematā Local Board Feedback:

The Waitematā Local Board provides the following feedback in relation to Justice and Electoral Select Committee's "Inquiry into the 2016 local authority elections":

Vacancies occurring within six months of an election

That caution be applied to allowing making appointments to vacancies occurring within six months of an election. Any such appointments should only be made by the actual body having the vacancy; that it can only be the highest polling unsuccessful candidate; and that in general any such appointed person must have come close to being elected, for example gaining a vote within 20% of the vote of the lowest successful candidate.

This is to ensure there is no presumption that there will automatically be an appointment (rather than a by-election) and to avoid having to appoint someone who is unpopular, inappropriate, hostile or unwilling to collaborate on the body concerned - they might be someone whose personality and value system is clearly unacceptable to most voters.

Timing of school holidays

That if a change is made to avoid the school holidays it would be preferable to move the elections to a week later in October rather than have the last working year of the local authority term even further truncated than it is at present.

Electronic transmission of voting documents to and from voters overseas

We support electronic transmission of voting documents to and from voters overseas. We also advocate that all local authorities be empowered, if they wish and have adequate security, to provide the range of on-line, postal and ballot box voting suitable for all voters to encourage greater turnout.

Electoral Officer to have access to the supplementary roll

We support the Electoral Officer having access to the supplementary roll

Access to data associated with electoral roll

We support having access to non- individualized data associated with the electoral roll.

Electronic nominations and candidate profile statements

We support an option to submit nominations and profile statements electronically as the current system leads to poor quality photograph reproductions and unnecessary errors in candidate statements. It is also more efficient to submit electronically.

Legislative confirmation that local authorities may promote elections

We support confirmation that local authorities can promote elections

Electronic access to electoral rolls for election staff

We support electronic access to electoral rolls for election staff.

Close of voting time

We strongly support creating one full voting day on the final Saturday, consistent with parliamentary elections from 9am until 7pm that day.

Discourage inappropriate use of elections

We do not support any methods to discourage candidates. No further barriers should be put in the way of potential candidates who wish to participate in the democratic process.

Separation of DHB elections

We support either having the DHB elections on a different ballot paper, posted separately; or at a different time in the three year term; or alternatively requiring them to use the same voting method as their predominant local authority.

This would mean usually having a first past the post-election conducted in wards. Auckland DHB elections had a higher and more informed turnout when elected from a northeastern ward with two members, a northwestern ward with two members and a southern ward with three members – all wards had a much less daunting array of less than 10 candidates each.

Candidate information in different languages

We support the current 150 limit for the candidate profile statement in English and Maori as the official languages of New Zealand.

We oppose allowing up to 150 more words in each of a range of languages. Well-resourced candidates would naturally provide translated statements in each of English, Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Mandarin, Hindi, Tagalog, Spanish, Fijian, Rarotongan, Urdu, and Korean as a bare minimum, making the candidate profiles unwieldy, the booklet too long and expensive and also unfairly advantaging well-resourced candidates who could afford paying for translations. Limited use of other languages within the 150 word limit may be acceptable.

Consistency between Electoral Regulations and Local Electoral Regulations

Enabling telephone dictation and other appropriate assistance for voters with a disability is really important for their ready participation in voting.

Relationship with Electoral Commission

In the light of the experience with the non- delivery of the ballot papers in Arch Hill/Grey Lynn the electoral officers should be enabled to distribute replacement ballot papers throughout geographical areas demonstrated not to have received ballot papers.

Review of representation

In terms of the review of representation arrangements the Auckland legislation should be amended so that no particular number is provided for in the legislation, in line with every other local authority in New Zealand. This would allow Council to recommend whatever number it believed appropriate to the Local Government Commission. Without in any way prejudging either issue it would allow Council to propose additional Māori Wards and/ or a Gulf Island Ward with less disruption of ward boundaries if the total was restricted to 20 members.

Authorisation

The feedback was prepared by Chairperson Coom and Member Northey based on resolution WTM/2017/1 and will be ratified by the Board at a business meeting on April 11 2017.

Pippa Coom

Chairperson
Waitematā Local Board
Date: 05 April 2017

Contact Details

Name: Waitematā Local Board, Auckland Council

Postal Address: C/- Senior Local Board Advisor
Waitematā Local Board
Auckland Council, Private Bag 92300
Auckland 1142

Email contact: simon.tattersfield@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz