

AGENDA

SUPPLEMENTARY

Council
Tuesday 18 February 2020 at 10.30am

Northland Regional Council Supplementary Agenda

Meeting to be held in the Council Chamber
36 Water Street, Whangārei
on Tuesday 18 February 2020, commencing at 10.30am

Recommendations contained in the council agenda are NOT council decisions. Please refer to council minutes for resolutions.

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TITLE: Receipt of Late Report: LGNZ Remit

ID: A1287161

From: Chris Taylor, Governance Support Manager

Executive summary

This report was unable to be completed in time for the circulation of the council agenda.

Recommendation

That as permitted under section 46A(7) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 the following tabled/supplementary report be received:

- LGNZ Remit

Authorised by Group Manager

Name: Chris Taylor

Title: Governance Support Manager

Date: 14 February 2020

TITLE: LGNZ Remit
ID: A1285993
From: Linda Harrison, Organisational Project Manager

Executive summary/Whakarāpopototanga

The purpose of this report is to confirm council's support to make a Remit to Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) proposing to extend the local government election cycle from three to four years.

Recommendations

1. That the report 'LGNZ Remit' by Linda Harrison, Organisational Project Manager and dated 12 February 2020, be received.
 2. That a remit to extend the local government election cycle from three to four years is prepared and submitted to Local Government New Zealand.
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Background/Tuhinga

The election cycle, or term of office, refers to the number of years an elected representative serves between local government elections. In New Zealand, the length of the term of office of a local government elected representative is three years.

At a council workshop on 11 February 2020, Councillor Stolwerk promoted a discussion on the merits of extending that term from three to four years. It is considered that the most effective vehicle for promoting discussion on this topic is to make a remit to Local Government New Zealand.

Advocates for extending the election cycle to four years would say that a longer electoral term:

- Promotes longer term thinking and decision making by councillors. An example of this would be a longer electoral cycle would encourage councillors to lengthen their investment horizon when making financial investment decisions;
- Allows for more time to implement a local government vision by extending the productive working time of a council and reducing councillor turnover;
- Gives more time for new councillors to learn and conduct their duties thereby increasing councils' overall productivity as councillors spend more time governing and less time campaigning;
- Reduces voter fatigue and in turn may result in increased voter turnout;
- Reduces the administration costs of setting up and inducting a new council thereby increasing operational efficiency – particularly of governance staff;
- Provides more opportunity to direct energy and provide certainty for longer term planning and more significant activities such as large capital projects;
- More stable decision-making framework for council through greater opportunity for long term planning;
- Enables implementation of longer term council policies within a single term of office;
- Less pressure on new councillors to get up to speed;
- Longer terms have the potential to be more conducive to stable governance; and

- Provides cost savings by reducing the number of elections. The cost of the last election was approx. \$180,000 – a four year cycle would save this complete amount each third electoral cycle.

Opponents would say that:

- A longer electoral term is a barrier to participation as potential councillors must make a longer commitment to their term in office;
- There is additional expense to educate the public of the change as New Zealanders are very accustomed to three year electoral cycles for both local and national government;
- The shorter term enforces more accountability on elected representatives who face getting voted out if they don't perform as expected;
- Elected representatives must engage more frequently with constituents as they seek to stay top of mind for the next election;
- A longer term may be seen by some as reducing accountability as the community must wait a year longer to judge their council's performance through the voting process; and
- A longer time between elections gives voters less opportunity to express their opinions on the performance of their elected officials.

Should council see merit in canvassing the suggestion of extending the electoral cycle from three to four years more widely, staff could prepare a remit to be submitted to Local Government New Zealand. The dates and agenda deadlines for this meeting are expected to be released later this week.

The matters are set down for discussion.

Considerations

1. Options

No.	Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	Do not submit a remit to extend the electoral cycle	Avoids cost of change and associated education. The status quo is familiar to everyone.	Does not access any of the benefits listed in this paper.
2	Submit a remit to LGNZ.	Provides the opportunity to gauge the support of others in the sector and discuss appropriate next steps.	At this early stage, there are no real disadvantages in making this decision at this time.

The staff's recommended option is option 2.

2. Significance and engagement

In relation to section 79 of the Local Government Act 2002, the decision to submit a remit to LGNZ is considered to be of low significance because it is part of council's day to day activities.

3. Policy, risk management and legislative compliance

The activities detailed in this report are part of the normal operating of the governance function and as such have been approved in the 2018–28 Long Term Plan approved in accordance with council's decision-making requirements of sections 76-82 of the Local Government Act 2002.

Further considerations

Being a purely administrative matter, Community Views, Māori Impact Statement, Financial Implications and Implementation Issues are not applicable.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Nil

Authorised by Group Manager

Name: Jonathan Gibbard
Title: Group Manager - Strategy, Governance and Engagement
Date: 14 February 2020