

Representation Review 101

NOTE: Standing orders do not apply to this workshop; it is primarily for the provision of information and discussion and will not make any decisions or pass any resolution

FACILITATED BY: Tasha Paladin & Stephen Hill

21 October 2026

Council Chambers, Huia Street, Taumarunui



LIVE STREAMING & AV LINK

The topic of this workshop is of public interest and will be live streamed to the Council's website. By participating in this workshop, attendees agree to be recorded.

We kindly ask all speakers to avoid making defamatory comments or sharing personal or contractual information about others without their prior consent. To assist viewers following the live stream, we also ask that, wherever possible, staff are referred to by their position title rather than by name — role titles give the public watching context that individual names do not.

Opinions and statements expressed during the workshop are those of the individuals concerned and do not necessarily reflect the views of Ruapehu District Council. The Council accepts no liability for opinions or statements made by individuals; however, as the publisher of the live stream, the Council may be held responsible if defamatory material is broadcast, even inadvertently.

The Chair may suspend or terminate the live stream where continuing to broadcast would create a material legal risk to the Council, including the broadcast of defamatory content or a breach of privacy or confidentiality. The Chief Executive will give effect to any such direction. Suspension or termination of the live stream does not suspend or limit the workshop discussion itself, which continues in the room.

The afternoon includes a hands-on communities of interest exercise, looking at where people go, where they belong, and how the land and distances shape communities across the district. We would love you to join us in person if you can.

Zoom Meeting Details

<https://ruapehudc-govt-nz.zoom.us/j/83981645712?pwd=hBSnUAG5yMccPjOTASHLRScxyYyJmM.1>

Meeting ID: 839 8164 5712

Passcode: Wkshp2528

Representation Review 101

1 INTRODUCTION

Council must review its representation arrangements before the local elections on 14 October 2028. The Local Electoral Act 2001 requires a review at least every six years, and our last review was for the 2022 elections.

This is the first of four elected member workshops in the review. It is about foundations: what a representation review is, what it can and cannot change, where Ruapehu is starting from, what we learned last time, and how you want to be involved from here. The afternoon starts the evidence gathering, with a mapping exercise on our communities of interest.

No decisions on representation arrangements are sought today. The only direction sought is on how elected members and iwi want to be involved in the work ahead.

2 OBJECTIVE & OUTCOMES

Objective: to build a shared understanding of the representation review before any options are developed, and to agree how elected members want to take part.

By the end of the session, Elected Members will:

1. understand the statutory framework and the three tests every proposal is measured against
2. know what is in scope, and what is already settled
3. understand our starting point: current arrangements, current population figures, and what the Local Government Commission decided in 2022
4. know the timeline to October 2028 and where the key decisions sit
5. have mapped their knowledge of the district's communities of interest, as the first layer of evidence for the review
6. have given officers a steer on an involvement model and on who we need to hear from

Outcome for officers: direction to prepare terms of reference for the preferred involvement model, ahead of the project team's first meeting on 11 November 2026.

3 RUN SHEET

Time	Activity	Facilitator
10:00	Welcome and Karakia	
10:05	Introductions	
10:20	Why we are here, and what today is (and is not) for	Executive Manager Community, Governance & Resilience
10:30	Representation reviews explained: the law, the tests, what is in scope	Stephen Hill, electionz.com
11:15	Ruapehu's starting point: current arrangements, the 2022 determination, population	Executive Manager and Stephen Hill
12:00	The road to October 2028: timeline and how we will build the evidence	Executive Manager Community, Governance & Resilience
12:30	Break for Lunch	
13:00	Mapping our communities of interest: group exercise	Facilitated, with Stephen Hill
14:00	Kōrero: how involved do you want to be?	Facilitated discussion
14:45	Summary and next steps	Executive Manager Community, Governance & Resilience
15:00	Karakia and close	

4 WHY WE ARE REVIEWING NOW

The Local Electoral Act 2001 requires a review at least every six years. Our last review was for the 2022 elections, completed when the Local Government Commission issued its determination on 4 April 2022.

Whatever arrangements come out of this review will apply to the 2028 and 2031 elections, unless reform changes the picture.

5 WHAT THE REVIEW DECIDES — AND WHAT IT DOES NOT

In scope	Out of scope
The total number of councillors (the law allows 5 to 29, plus the mayor)	Whether a Māori ward exists: this was already settled by the binding poll at the 2025 elections.
How councillors are elected: at large (district-wide), by wards, or a mix	The electoral system, unless a poll is demanded by December 2026: Council resolved at its August 2026 meeting to retain Single Transferable Vote for the 2028 elections
If wards: how many, their names, boundaries and members per ward	Community board delegations and budgets. These are set by Council outside the review and can be amended follow the outcome of the Representation Review process, although how boards have worked is important evidence for it
The number of Māori ward members and the Māori ward configuration	Simplifying Local Government reform: a separate government process
Community boards: whether we have them, how many, names, boundaries, members, and any subdivisions	

The Māori Ward

The 2025 poll settled that Ruapehu keeps its Māori ward for the 2028 and 2031 elections. What the review can change is its configuration: whether it stays at large (district-wide), and the number of members, which follows by formula from the number of councillors elected from wards (section 8).

6 SIMPLIFYING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DON'T

What we know	What we don't know yet
Ruapehu did not submit an outline proposal under the Head Start pathway. The Government has announced that Head Start proposals will not proceed at this time. For regional councils, the Government has signalled that regional councillors will not be elected at the 2028 local elections, and that the backstop process for regional reorganisation will begin after the elections. Taituarā's Electoral Reference Group advises business as usual. The law has not changed, and councils must still complete their representation reviews. The Electoral Reference Group notes that communities of interest work done for representation reviews may be useful for any later Head Start design or the backstop process.	What any backstop process will mean for district councils such as Ruapehu. Whether Head Start will be revisited, and when. Whether arrangements set in this review will be in place for the full 2028 and 2031 cycle.

7 THE THREE TESTS

The Commission's guidelines identify three key factors for every proposal, referred to in this reader as the three tests. The Commission recommends working through them in order. Under each test below is what the Commission found in its 2022 determination for Ruapehu.

TEST 1: COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

There is no fixed definition. The Commission's current guidelines describe two dimensions, and we have added a third, geographical lens:

- Perceptual:** a sense of identity and belonging to a defined area, as a result of factors such as distinctive geographical features, local history, demographics, and economic and social activities
- Functional:** the ability of an area to meet community needs for services such as local schools, shopping areas, community and recreational facilities, employment, and transport and communication links
- Geographical:** how the physical landscape, such as mountains, rivers, roads and distance, shapes where communities form and how they connect. This is closely related to the other two, and it is a helpful lens in its own right

The Commission previously included a third dimension, political. Its current guidelines say this is not a determinant of community of interest; the ability of the elected body to represent communities

of interest is now considered as part of effective representation (Test 2).

The Commission notes that councils, communities and individuals tend to focus on what they feel their communities are, and that functional evidence matters just as much. It also expects evidence of how neighbouring communities **differ**, not only how they connect.

In 2022 the Commission:

- was satisfied that Council had adequately identified the district's communities of interest
- saw three general groupings shaped by the district's natural geography; south of Tongariro National Park (the former Waimarino-Waiouru Ward), west of the mountains (the former National Park Ward), and north-west of the mountains (the former Ōhura and Taumarunui Wards), with a district-wide community of interest at a higher level
- agreed with appellants that the proposed north-south ward boundary split Kakahi and separated Ōwhango from Taumarunui, which Ōwhango residents identify with
- having looked closely at the Ōwhango-National Park boundary, encouraged Council and the boards to closely monitor whether the community board boundaries remain appropriate

TEST 2: EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

This covers the total number of councillors and how they are elected. The Commission's guidelines list factors to consider:

- a. avoiding arrangements that create barriers to participation
- b. not splitting a recognised community of interest
- c. not grouping communities that have little in common
- d. the accessibility, size and configuration of an area, including people's access to their elected members

The Commission also expects councils to consider the right number of members for the district as a whole first, rather than adding up members ward by ward.

How councillors can be elected

There are three options:

Option	How it works	What it reflects and what to weigh
At large (district-wide)	All councillors are elected by voters across the whole district	Reflects a district-wide community of interest. Voters choose from every candidate, and it is easier for councillors to act in the interests of the district as a whole. Under Single Transferable Vote, groups spread across the district can still elect members. Can involve more time and cost for candidates than wards
Wards	The district is divided into areas, each electing its own councillors	Reflects local connection and identity, and gives a direct link between an area and its councillors. Can help smaller or isolated communities be represented. Each ward must meet the 10% rule, or justify not doing so, and should not split a community of interest
Mixed	Some councillors are elected from wards and some at large (district-wide)	Combines local and at large (district-wide) representation. The 10% rule applies to the ward members only. Can mean larger wards

Because Ruapehu has a Māori ward, the district must also have at least one general ward. Our current model uses one general ward covering the whole district, alongside the at large (district-wide) Māori ward. Geographic general wards and mixed models remain open to Council. In 2022, however, the Commission concluded that none of the geographic ward models it considered was likely to provide more effective representation than at large (district-wide) election. Its reasons included communities being split from the places they identify with, and large departures from the 10% rule.

In 2022 the Commission:

- noted that no reasons were given for preferring eleven councillors over nine or ten, and that twelve had not been considered
- set Māori ward members at about one third of Council, in line with the Māori electoral population's share of the district
- supported at large (district-wide) wards partly because of Council's plan for strengthened community boards with increased delegations and budget, encouraged the incoming Council to give effect to that plan, and said it would be interested to see how it was implemented
- strongly encouraged Council to consider additional education on Single Transferable Vote for candidates and voters
- set the three boards at an equal size, as no strong reason had been given for boards of different sizes

TEST 3: FAIR REPRESENTATION — THE PLUS OR MINUS 10% RULE

Where there are wards, or community board subdivisions, each member should represent roughly the same number of people. Population per member must sit within 10% of the average. For example, a district of 10,000 people with 10 councillors elected from wards has an average of 1,000 people per councillor. Each ward must then have between 900 and 1,100 people per councillor.

The rule is not absolute. A council can depart from it for island or isolated communities, or where complying would split a community of interest or group communities with little in common. Any such proposal goes to the Commission for decision, and the case must be backed by evidence.

In 2022 the Commission confirmed that the rule does not apply to a single at large (district-wide) general ward alongside a single at large (district-wide) Māori ward, which is our current model. It becomes a live issue only if geographic wards or subdivided boards are considered. The Commission found that keeping the four former wards would have produced variances from +33.27% to -44.56%, and that a three-ward model based on the board areas would have put a National Park ward at -37.88%. It did not consider the district's isolation enough to justify departures of that size.

8 WHERE WE ARE STARTING FROM

Current arrangements (since 2022)

Council is the Mayor plus nine councillors, all elected at large (district-wide): six from the Ruapehu General Ward and three from the Ruapehu Māori Ward. Three community boards cover the whole district, each with five elected members and one appointed councillor.

Population

Ward	Population (2025 estimate)	Councillors	Population per councillor
Ruapehu General Ward	9,330	6	1,555
Ruapehu Māori Ward	4,110	3	1,370
District	13,440	9	1,493

Source: Local Government Commission representation tables, 2025 estimates on a 2023 Census base, 2026 boundaries.

The 2022 determination used 2020 estimates: 8,980 general and 3,830 Māori electoral population, 12,810 in total.

On the 2025 figures the district has grown by around 630 people (4.9%): the general electoral population by 3.9% and the Māori electoral population by 7.3%. The two sets use different Census bases, so treat the comparison as indicative.

Statistics New Zealand releases 2026 population estimates in October 2026 (not available at the time this reader was created). These will replace the 2025 figures for all options work.

How council size sets Māori Ward numbers

Schedule 1A of the Local Electoral Act 2001 sets the number of Māori ward members as:

Māori electoral population ÷ (Māori electoral population + general electoral population) × number of councillors elected from wards

The mayor, and any councillors elected at large under a mixed model, are not counted. The result is rounded to the nearest whole number. On the 2025 figures, the Māori electoral population is 4,110 of 13,440, or 30.6%. Because the number of Māori ward members follows from the total, the table shows the split between Māori ward and general ward members at each council size from 7 to 13, and how any decision on the total number of councillors changes the balance between the two wards.

Total Councillors	Formula Result	Māori Ward Councillors	General Councillors
7	2.14	2	5
8	2.45	2	6
9 (current)	2.75	3	6
10	3.06	3	7
11	3.36	3	8
12	3.67	4	8
13	3.98	4	9

In 2022 the Commission chose nine members to keep a strategically focused Council while giving Māori ward members about one third of the seats, in line with the Māori electoral population's share.

Community Boards

Community	Population (2025 estimate)	Members (Elected)	Population per Elected Member
Taumarunui-Ōhura	7,400	5	1,480
Waimarino-Waiouru	4,840	5	968
Ōwhango-National Park	1,200	5	240

The Commission set equal board sizes in 2022. Population per elected member now ranges from 240 to 1,480. The plus or minus 10% rule does not apply between separate boards, but board size and boundaries are within scope and members may want to explore them.

Board names are also within the scope of the review. In December 2024 the Minister for Land Information, following a process run by Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa New Zealand Geographic Board, made Waimarino the official name for the village previously known as National Park. The railway station remains National Park Station. As a result, the name Waimarino now refers to a village within the Ōwhango-National Park Community, while also forming part of the name of the Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board to the south.

The rules for community boards

Every review must consider whether there should be community boards and, if so, the communities they cover and how they are made up.

The main rules are:

- a. a board has between 4 and 12 members, with at least 4 elected
- b. appointed members must be councillors representing a ward in which the board is located, and must be fewer than half of the board
- c. a board may be divided into subdivisions for electoral purposes, and the 10% rule then applies between subdivisions
- d. ward and community boundaries should coincide as far as practicable
- e. a board can be established outside a review, following a proposal from the community concerned, but can only be abolished or have its boundaries changed through a representation review or a reorganisation
- f. a board's role is set by section 52 of the Local Government Act 2002 (see below); Council decides what else to delegate and can withdraw delegations
- g. Council cannot delegate the power to make a rate, make bylaws, borrow money, or buy or sell assets other than in line with the Long-Term Plan

What Community Boards do now

Council adopted the current roles and responsibilities of community boards in June 2022. In summary:

Area	Roles and responsibilities (June 2022)
Statutory role	Under section 52 of the Local Government Act 2002: represent and advocate for the community; consider and report on matters referred by Council or of local concern; maintain an overview of Council services in the area; make an annual submission on local expenditure; communicate with community organisations; carry out delegated responsibilities
Approvals (in conjunction with Council staff)	Temporary road closures for events (subject to administrative requirements); street names; parades, collections and special uses of roads; changes to speed restrictions on local roads (subject to New Zealand Transport Agency rules); road closures
With Council staff	Provide input to the Long-Term Plan; consider officer reports on the footpaths programme, parks and reserves discretionary spend, and public information signage in the area, and approve which items proceed within the existing budget
Leadership	The first place the community turns to; local input on bylaws and asset disposals; community funding outside policy criteria; approval of new plantings in parks and reserves, with Council officers; kept informed of liquor and gambling licences and local events; Chair speaking rights during deputations at Council meetings on items affecting the board area; members invited to Council workshops unless the workshop chair decides otherwise.
Planning	Primary role is place-making and community wellbeing; deliver prioritised community plans; work with communities on local plans that feed into Annual Plan, Long-Term Plan and District Plan processes

Area	Roles and responsibilities (June 2022)
Budgets	Boards do not hold budgets of their own. Funding sits within the Long-Term Plan, including district-wide town revitalisation allocations, and boards prioritise community plan projects through that process

How Ruapehu compares

The table compares Ruapehu with six district councils: four nearby rural districts (Waitomo, Stratford, Ōtorohanga and Rangitikei) and two councils close to Ruapehu in population (Gore and Hurunui). It shows the arrangements they used at the 2025 elections, and each district's land area. Councillor numbers exclude the mayor; figures in brackets are the number of members elected from that part.

Council	Population (2025)	Land area (km ²)	Councillors	People per councillor	How councillors are elected	Community boards
Waitomo	9,950	3,535	6	1,658	2 wards	None
Stratford	10,480	2,163	11	953	2 general wards (10), 1 Māori ward (1)	None
Ōtorohanga	10,800	1,999	9	1,200	5 general wards (7), Māori ward (2)	2
Gore	12,970	1,254	11	1,179	3 wards (8), at large (3)	1
Ruapehu	13,440	6,734	9	1,493	At large (district-wide) general ward (6), Māori ward (3)	3
Hurunui	14,360	8,641	10	1,436	3 wards	2
Rangitikei	16,010	4,484	11	1,455	3 general wards (9), 2 Māori wards (2)	2

Source: Local Government Commission, Representation tables: 2025 estimates, 2023 Census base, 2026 boundaries (version 2), 19 December 2025. Land area: Stats NZ, Territorial Authority 2026 boundaries (land area, square kilometres)

Across these six councils, the number of councillors ranges from 6 to 11 and people per councillor from 953 to 1,658. By land area, Ruapehu is the second largest of the seven, after Hurunui. Ruapehu is the only one of the seven that elects all its general councillors from a single at large (district-wide) ward, and the only one whose community boards cover the whole district.

Remuneration (for information)

Remuneration is not one of the criteria in the Local Electoral Act 2001; the principle is fair and effective representation. It is included here for transparency. All rates are set by the Remuneration Authority in the Local Government Elected Members (2026/27) Determination 2026.

Role	Remuneration as at 1 July 2026
Mayor	\$137,377
Deputy Mayor	\$56,161
Councillor	\$43,476
Taumarunui-Ōhura Community Board: Chair / Member	\$16,194 / \$8,097
Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board: Chair / Member	\$16,194 / \$8,097
Ōwhango-National Park Community Board: Chair / Member	\$7,349 / \$3,574

Councillor remuneration, including the Deputy Mayor, comes from a governance pool of \$403,969 set by the Remuneration Authority. The pool reflects the size of the council's governance role rather than the number of councillors, so a change in the number of councillors changes what each is paid. The Authority also sets a minimum allowable remuneration of \$33,664 per councillor. Because the pool does not change with the number of councillors, fewer councillors would not reduce the cost to ratepayers, and more councillors would not increase it, unless pay per councillor would fall below the Authority's minimum, in which case the pool may be adjusted. Community board remuneration is based partly on the population each board represents.

9 WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME: 2021 TO 2022

Date	Step
9 June 2021	Workshop 1: communities of interest analysis and possible options
23 June 2021	Workshop 2: communities of interest analysis and possible options
4 August 2021	Council meeting: preliminary resolution on preferred arrangements, subject to further input. Six general and two Māori ward councillors elected at large (district-wide); four community boards
3 to 12 August 2021	Informal engagement: National Park and Waimarino-Waiouru community board hui; hui on Māori wards at Raetihi Marae (11 August) and Morero Marae (12 August)
25 August 2021	Initial proposal: eight councillors from at large (district-wide) general (6) and Māori (2) wards; four community boards, each with four elected members and one appointed member
8 September to 8 October 2021	Consultation: 85 submissions, 23 submitters heard on 20 October
10 November 2021	Final proposal: eleven councillors: Taumarunui-Ōhura General Ward (4), Waimarino General Ward (4), Ruapehu Māori Ward (3); three community boards of different sizes
From 11 November 2021	Final proposal publicly notified; three appeals and two objections received and referred to the Local Government Commission
8 February 2022	Commission hearing
4 April 2022	Determination: nine councillors from at large (district-wide) general (6) and Māori (3) wards; three community boards, each with five elected members and one appointed member

The main themes in submissions were:

- council size (38 submissions sought nine members)
- Māori representation (32 sought more Māori ward members)
- geographic representation (37 opposed a single at large (district-wide) general ward), and
- support for the proposed community boards (29 submissions).

10 THE ROAD TO OCTOBER 2028

Date	Milestone	Who
21 October 2026	Workshop 1: Representation Review 101 (today)	Councillors and iwi
22 October 2026	Community Board Workshop: key points and what the review means for boards	Community board members
11 November 2026	Project team first meeting: terms of reference, work programme and decision rights, following the 21 October steer	Officers
18 November 2026	Review webpages live; survey soft launch	Officers
25 November 2026	Council meeting, held as a contingency to adopt terms of reference for the involvement model	Council
2 December 2026 to 3 February 2027	Passive survey collection over summer. 3 February is the first usable cut of evidence	Community
8 February 2027	Active survey campaign begins	Community
8 February to 14 April 2027	Community mapping sessions across the three community board areas (part of preliminary engagement)	Community
10 March 2027	Workshop 2: Findings from the first cut of the survey (responses to 3 February); 2026 population data against current arrangements; draft options; steer on which options go out to be tested	Councillors and iwi
15 March to 14 April 2027	Preliminary engagement on options, alongside the Long-Term Plan	Community
14 April 2027	Survey closes, alongside the end of in-person engagement	Community
5 May 2027	Workshop 3: Findings from preliminary engagement; options analysis; communities of interest; population data; establishing a preferred scenario	Councillors and iwi
Week of 10 May 2027	Proposed boundary options submitted to Statistics New Zealand	Officers
Late May 2027	Statistics New Zealand confirms populations on proposed boundaries	Officers
9 June 2027	Workshop 4: Guidance to officers on the preferred option for report to Council	Councillors and iwi
23 June 2027	Council adopts the initial proposal (statutory deadline 31 July 2027)	Council
7 July to 1 September 2027	Formal consultation: public notice and submissions open on 7 July; eight weeks open (statutory minimum is one month)	Community
14 to 16 September 2027	Hearings, held over two days	Council
6 October 2027	Council adopts the final proposal	Council
13 October 2027	Public notice of final proposal; appeals and objections open for at least one month	Community
By 3 December 2027	Appeals and objections close. If none are received and the proposal complies, the final proposal stands	Community

Date	Milestone	Who
By 20 December 2027	If there are appeals or objections: referred to the Local Government Commission	Officers
By 11 April 2028	Commission determination (if referred)	Commission
14 October 2028	Local elections	

Statutory limits

The Local Electoral Act 2001 sets the outer limits for each step. Our programme sits inside all of them, with the initial proposal adopted just over five weeks before the latest date allowed.

Step	Statutory limit	Our date
Resolve the initial proposal	No earlier than 20 December 2026 and no later than 31 July 2027	23 June 2027
Public notice of the initial proposal	Within 14 days of the resolution, and no later than 8 August 2027	7 July 2027
Submissions	Open for at least one month from public notice	7 July to 1 September 2027
Public notice of the final proposal	Within eight weeks of submissions closing	13 October 2027
Appeals and objections	At least one month from notice of the final proposal, closing no later than 3 December 2027	By 3 December 2027
Referral to the Commission (if needed)	No later than 20 December 2027	By 20 December 2027
Commission determination (if needed)	Before 11 April 2028	By 11 April 2028

11 BUILDING EVIDENCE

Why evidence matters

Every proposal has to provide fair and effective representation for individuals and communities, measured against the three tests in section 7. Council must also consider every submission, and be able to show this by giving reasons for accepting or rejecting them.

If a proposal is appealed, or does not comply with the 10% rule, the Local Government Commission makes the final decision. The Commission does not just check that Council followed the right process. It forms its own view on every matter in scope, not only the points raised in appeals. When a proposal is referred, Council must send the Commission the information it holds on communities of interest and population. The Commission decides what weight to give Council's proposal.

The number of submissions on a point is not what decides it. The Commission's guidelines note that a single well-supported submission can be enough to settle an issue. Advice to Council in 2021 was that a good process - being aware of and considering all options, listening to community views, and reaching a considered decision - makes the Commission more likely to endorse a council's final proposal.

Evidence first, options second

The review gathers evidence about how communities live, connect and organise themselves before any options are drawn. Options are then built from that evidence and tested with the community.

The order matters. Preliminary engagement, before Council adopts its initial proposal, is the only stage where several options can be tested with the community. Once Council adopts its initial proposal, formal consultation is on that single proposal.

We are not starting from scratch. In 2022 the Commission found that Council had adequately identified the district's communities of interest. This review tests whether that picture still holds, and what has changed since.

Pre-engagement: November 2026 to February 2027

Before any options exist, pre-engagement asks communities how they see the current arrangements and where their communities of interest lie. No options are presented at this stage.

Survey.

One survey runs from 18 November 2026 to 14 April 2027, at two levels of intensity. The review webpages go live and the survey soft-launches on 18 November. Responses are collected passively over summer, from 2 December 2026 to 3 February 2027, and 3 February is the first usable cut of evidence.

An active campaign starts on 8 February 2027 through social media, library posters and Antenno, and continues into the in-person engagement in March and April. The questions are built on the Commission's dimensions of communities of interest (the draft questions are in the Appendices).

The survey also asks people what they call the area they live in, without offering options, as evidence for community board names.

Preliminary engagement on options: 15 March to 14 April 2027

The draft options that councillors agree to test on 10 March go to the community, alongside the Long-Term Plan. The engagement includes community board kōrero sessions in each board area covering both the Long-Term Plan and the review, and drop-in sessions. The survey remains open until 14 April 2027, closing alongside the end of in-person engagement.

Community board names are put to the community in this round, not earlier. In December 2024 the village of National Park was officially renamed Waimarino. The community board names were not changed: the Ōwhango-National Park Community Board still uses the village's former name, while Waimarino also forms part of the Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board's name, covering a different area. The engagement will explain this and ask the community about board names, drawing on the survey responses about what people call the area they live in.

Community mapping sessions form part of preliminary engagement. They start on 8 February 2027, alongside the active survey campaign, and continue through the kōrero sessions and drop-ins to 14 April 2027. The mapping exercise at this workshop (section 13) is repeated across the three community board areas, including at community board meetings and local events. Every session uses the same three questions and the same base map, so the results can be combined.

Each map is recorded with its location and date, and combined with the maps from this workshop into one evidence layer. It is qualitative evidence that sits alongside the survey and Council data. The results come to the Representation Arrangements Part 2 workshop on 5 May 2027, where they also show how well the draft options match how communities describe themselves.

What councillors receive, and when

Workshop	What comes to it
Workshop 2, 10 March 2027	Findings from the first cut of the survey (responses received by 3 February), and the maps from this workshop. 2026 population data against current arrangements. Draft options, for a steer on which go out to be tested
Workshop 3, 5 May 2027	Findings from preliminary engagement on options, including the full survey to 14 April, the community mapping sessions and community views on board names. Options analysis, communities of interest and population data, to establish a preferred scenario
Workshop 4, 9 June 2027	Populations for the proposed boundaries, confirmed by Statistics New Zealand in late May. Guidance to officers on the preferred option for the report to Council on 23 June

Where the evidence will come from

Source	When	What it tells us
Elected member and iwi knowledge	21 October 2026	First-hand knowledge of where people go, where they belong and who represents them, recorded from the mapping exercise at this workshop (section 13)
Community survey	18 November 2026 to 14 April 2027; first cut 3 February; active campaign from 8 February	How residents see current arrangements and where their communities of interest lie, using the Commission's dimensions. It does not ask about options, because none exist yet
Community mapping sessions	8 February to 14 April 2027	How communities themselves describe where people go, where they belong and who represents them, using the same questions as the workshop exercise
Community boards	Throughout	Local knowledge of how communities organise themselves and what they prioritise
Data Council already holds	Throughout	Service use, facility catchments, schools, transport routes and emergency management community response planning, showing how communities connect in practice
Preliminary engagement	15 March to 14 April 2027	Community views on draft options and community board names. Run alongside the Long-Term Plan: board kōrero sessions in each board area and drop-in sessions, with the survey open until 14 April
Population data	October 2026 and May 2027	Statistics New Zealand 2026 population estimates, then confirmed populations for any proposed boundaries
Formal submissions	7 July to 1 September 2027	Views on Council's initial proposal, with submitters able to be heard at hearings in September

A note on boundaries and population

Any ward or community boundary must follow meshblock boundaries. Meshblocks are the small areas Statistics New Zealand uses to count population. Statistics New Zealand confirms the populations of any proposed boundaries before a proposal is submitted. Our programme schedules this for May 2027, ahead of the 9 June workshop.

12 ROLES

Who	Role in the review
Council	Gives direction at workshops; adopts the initial proposal (23 June 2027); hears submissions; adopts the final proposal (6 October 2027)
Community boards	Local insight; encourage participation; advocate for their communities. Board arrangements are themselves in scope
Iwi and hapū	Partners in understanding communities of interest; views on council size and the Māori ward configuration
Community	Evidence and views through the survey, preliminary engagement and formal submissions
Officers	Run the process; gather and analyse evidence; develop options; prepare reports and statutory notices
electionz.com	Independent technical advice; reviews key material; attends workshops and Council meetings
Local Government Commission	Decides the final arrangements if there are appeals or objections, or if a proposal does not comply with the 10% rule

Between workshops, elected members can support the review by:

- taking part in local engagement events, including community board kōrero sessions
- using their networks to encourage people to complete the survey and make submissions
- helping people understand what the review is, and what it can and cannot change
- bringing local knowledge back to workshops

Councillors will make the decisions on the initial and final proposals, and are asked to keep an open mind, explore all options and take a district-wide view.

13 MAPPING OUR COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST (EXERCISE)

Purpose. To start gathering evidence on communities of interest, using the local knowledge in the room, before the survey launches. This is not about options, and no boundaries are being drawn for decision.

How it works. Mixed groups of councillors, iwi representatives and community board members work around large maps of the district, in three rounds: the Commission's two dimensions, plus a geographical lens:

Round	Question	What groups mark on the map
Functional	Where do people go?	Where people travel for shopping, schooling, health, sport, work and marae; the towns each area relies on
Perceptual	Where do people belong?	Places with a strong identity; where one community ends and the next begins
Geographical	What shapes the area?	Mountains, rivers, ranges, roads and travel distances, and how they connect or separate communities

Each group then reports back on:

- where they agreed and where they differed
- any places that feel split from their community, or grouped with communities they have little in common with. Ōwhango and Kakahi, both raised in the 2022 determination, are places to test
- what has changed in our communities since 2022 that this review should look at closely
- who we most need to hear from, and how we reach them

Iwi representatives may prefer to share information in their own way and at their own pace. The exercise will respect that.

What happens next. Officers will record the maps as the first evidence layer, and they come to the workshop on 10 March 2027 with the first cut of the survey. The same exercise will be run with communities from 8 February to 14 April 2027 (section 11), and the combined results come to the workshop on 5 May 2027.

14 HOW INVOLVED DO YOU WANT TO BE?

The question for this session: which involvement model do you prefer, and who would take part? Preliminary engagement on options opens on 15 March 2027, five days after the Representation Arrangements Part 1 workshop. Draft options will be prepared in late February, from the survey responses received by 3 February and the maps from this workshop, so councillors will see them for the first time at that workshop, shortly before they go out to the community.

Model	What it looks like	Strengths	Watch-outs
Full Council workshops only	All members engage at the four scheduled workshops	Simple; everyone hears the same information	Members see near-final options on 10 March, with little chance to shape them earlier
Reference group	Mayor and two or three councillors review interim work in January and February. No decision rights; reports back to full Council	Light touch; fits the tight window; used successfully by other councils	Needs clear terms of reference so the wider Council does not feel bypassed
Working party	Councillors, iwi representatives and community board chairs, meeting three or four times through the review	Broad voice early; brings iwi and boards into the development work	Larger time commitment; slower to convene over summer
Champions	One or two members act as liaison with officers and as a public face for the review	Low commitment; strong community visibility	Depends heavily on the individuals involved
Hybrid	For example, a reference group for options work plus champions for engagement	Can be matched to each phase	Needs clear roles to avoid overlap

Whatever the model, decisions on the initial and final proposals rest with full Council. The groups described above would advise, not decide.

Officers recommend that terms of reference for the preferred model are adopted by Council resolution at the next Council meeting. This makes the group's role, membership and limits clear to all elected members, iwi and the community, and avoids any sense that the wider Council has been bypassed.

15 NEXT STEPS

- 22 October 2026: community board session, carrying forward today's key points
- Following the workshop: officers record the community mapping as the first evidence layer
- 11 November 2026: project team confirms the work programme and drafts terms of reference for the involvement model
- 18 November 2026: review webpages and survey go live
- 25 November 2026: Council meeting to adopt the terms of reference (if needed)

16 GLOSSARY

Term	Meaning
Basis of election	How councillors are elected: at large (district-wide), by wards, or a mix
Communities of interest	Groups of people who share identity, services or interests, usually tied to place
Determination	The Local Government Commission's binding decision where a proposal is appealed or does not comply
Electoral population	The population figure used for representation. It includes people not on the roll, such as under-18s
Final proposal	Council's proposal after hearing submissions. It is open to appeals and objections
Formal consultation	The statutory consultation on Council's initial proposal, open for at least one month
General electoral population	The district's total population minus the Māori electoral population
Initial proposal	Council's formal proposal for consultation, resolved under section 19H of the Local Electoral Act 2001
Meshblock	The smallest area Statistics New Zealand uses to count population. Ward and community boundaries must follow meshblock boundaries
Māori electoral population	An estimate derived by applying the proportion of people of Māori descent on the Māori electoral roll to the total population of Māori descent. Used to set Māori ward numbers
Preliminary engagement	Informal engagement before Council adopts its initial proposal. The only stage where several options can be tested
Single Transferable Vote	A voting system where voters rank candidates in order of preference

Representation Review 2028

Workshop 1: Representation Review 101
Wednesday 21 October 2026



Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Ruapehu

The Ruapehu District ... we are proud of the place we call home

Today

1

Why we are here

Two triggers for a review

2

The law and the three tests

What is in scope and what is settled

3

Our starting point

Current arrangements, 2022 decision, population

4

The road to 2028

Timeline and how we build evidence

5

Mapping our communities (after lunch)

Group exercise on the district map

6

Kōrero

How involved do you want to be?

No decisions today

The one steer we are seeking is how elected members and iwi want to take part in shaping the review.

Why we are reviewing now



The six-year cycle

The Local Electoral Act 2001 requires a review at least every six years. Our last review was for the 2022 elections, finalised by the Local Government Commission on 4 April 2022.



Already settled

The 2025 poll settled that Ruapehu keeps its Māori ward. Council resolved in August 2026 to keep Single Transferable Vote.

Whatever comes out of this review applies to the 2028 and 2031 elections.

What the review decides, and what it does not



In scope

- Total number of councillors (5 to 29, plus the Mayor)
- How councillors are elected: at large (district-wide), wards, or a mix
- If wards: number, names, boundaries, members per ward
- Number of Māori ward members and the ward configuration
- Community boards: whether, how many, names, boundaries, members, subdivisions

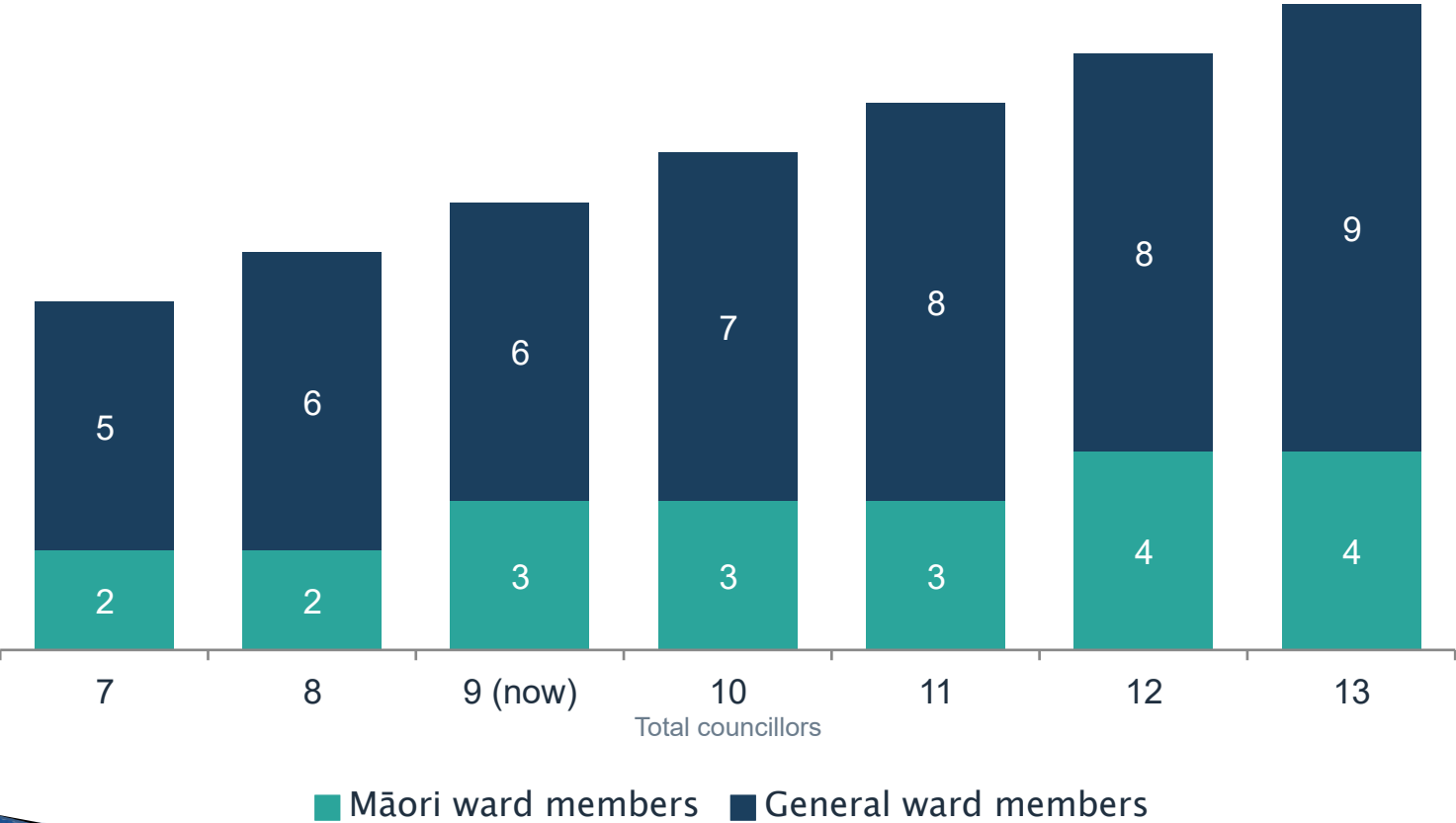


Settled or separate

- Whether a Māori ward exists: settled by the poll
- Electoral system: Single Transferable Vote, resolved August 2026
- Board delegations and budgets: set by Council outside the review
- Simplifying Local Government reform

Council size decides Māori ward numbers

Schedule 1A formula, using 2025 population estimates (Māori electoral population 30.6% of total)



2.75

formula result at 9 councillors,
rounded to 3

In 2022 the Commission chose nine members for a strategically focused Council, with Māori ward members at about one third, in line with population share.

Simplifying Local Government



What we know

- Ruapehu did not submit a Head Start proposal
- Head Start proposals will not proceed at this time
- Government has signalled regional councillors will not be elected in 2028; the regional backstop begins after the elections
- Taituarā advice: business as usual. The law has not changed and reviews must be completed



What we don't know yet

- What any backstop means for district councils such as Ruapehu
- Whether Head Start will be revisited, and when
- Whether these arrangements run the full 2028 and 2031 cycle

Every proposal is measured against three tests

The Local Government Commission recommends working through them in order



1 Communities of interest

Who belongs together, and why.
The building block for everything else.



2 Effective representation

How many councillors, and how
they are elected, so communities
are well served.



3 Fair representation

Where there are wards, each
member represents a similar
number of people.

Test 1: Communities of interest

Perceptual

A sense of identity and belonging to a place

Functional

Everyday needs: schools, shops, services, transport

Geographical

How mountains, rivers, roads and distance shape communities
(electionz.com lens)

What the Commission told us in 2022

Councils, communities and individuals tend to focus on what they feel their communities are. Functional evidence matters just as much, and so does evidence of how neighbouring communities differ.

Test 2: Effective representation

Factors the Commission's guidelines ask councils to consider

- Consider the total for the district as a whole first, not ward by ward
- Avoid arrangements that create barriers to participation
- Do not split a recognised community of interest
- Do not group communities that have little in common
- Consider accessibility, size and configuration, including access to elected members

6,734 km²

district area

13,440

people (2025 estimate)

How councillors can be elected

Part of Test 2: the basis of election



At large (district-wide)

All councillors elected by voters across the whole district

Reflects a district-wide community of interest. Voters choose from every candidate. Under Single Transferable Vote, groups spread across the district can still elect members



Wards

The district is divided into areas, each electing its own councillors

Reflects local connection and identity. Can help smaller or isolated communities. Each ward must meet the 10% rule, or justify not doing so, and should not split a community of interest



Mixed

Some councillors from wards, some at large (district-wide)

Combines local and at large (district-wide) representation. The 10% rule applies to ward members only. Can mean larger wards

With a Māori ward, there must also be at least one general ward. Geographic and mixed models remain open, but in 2022 the Commission found none of those proposed gave more effective representation than at large (district-wide) election.

Test 3: Fair representation, the plus or minus 10% rule



The rule

- Where there are wards or board subdivisions, population per member must be within 10% of the average
- Departures are allowed for island or isolated communities, or to avoid splitting or wrongly grouping communities
- Any departure goes to the Commission and must be backed by evidence



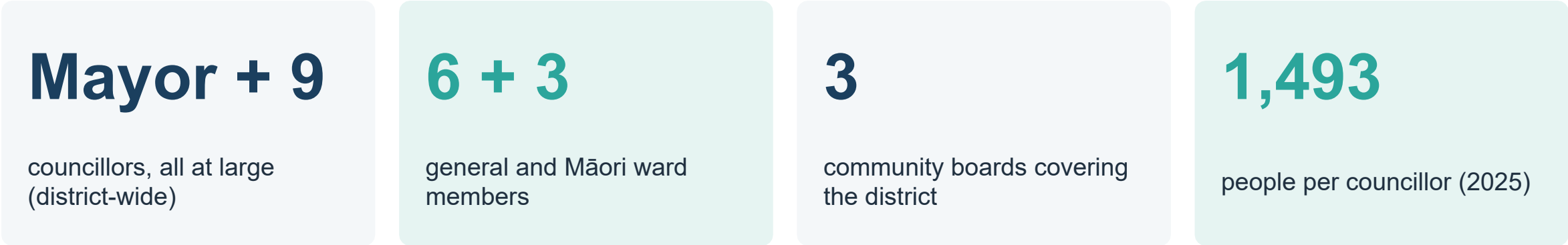
How it applies to Ruapehu

- It does not apply to our current model: one at large (district-wide) general ward and one at large (district-wide) Māori ward
- It becomes live only if geographic wards or subdivided boards are considered

Example: 10,000 people and 10 ward councillors = an average of 1,000 per councillor. Each ward must sit between 900 and 1,100 per councillor.

Where we are starting from

Current arrangements, in place since the 2022 elections

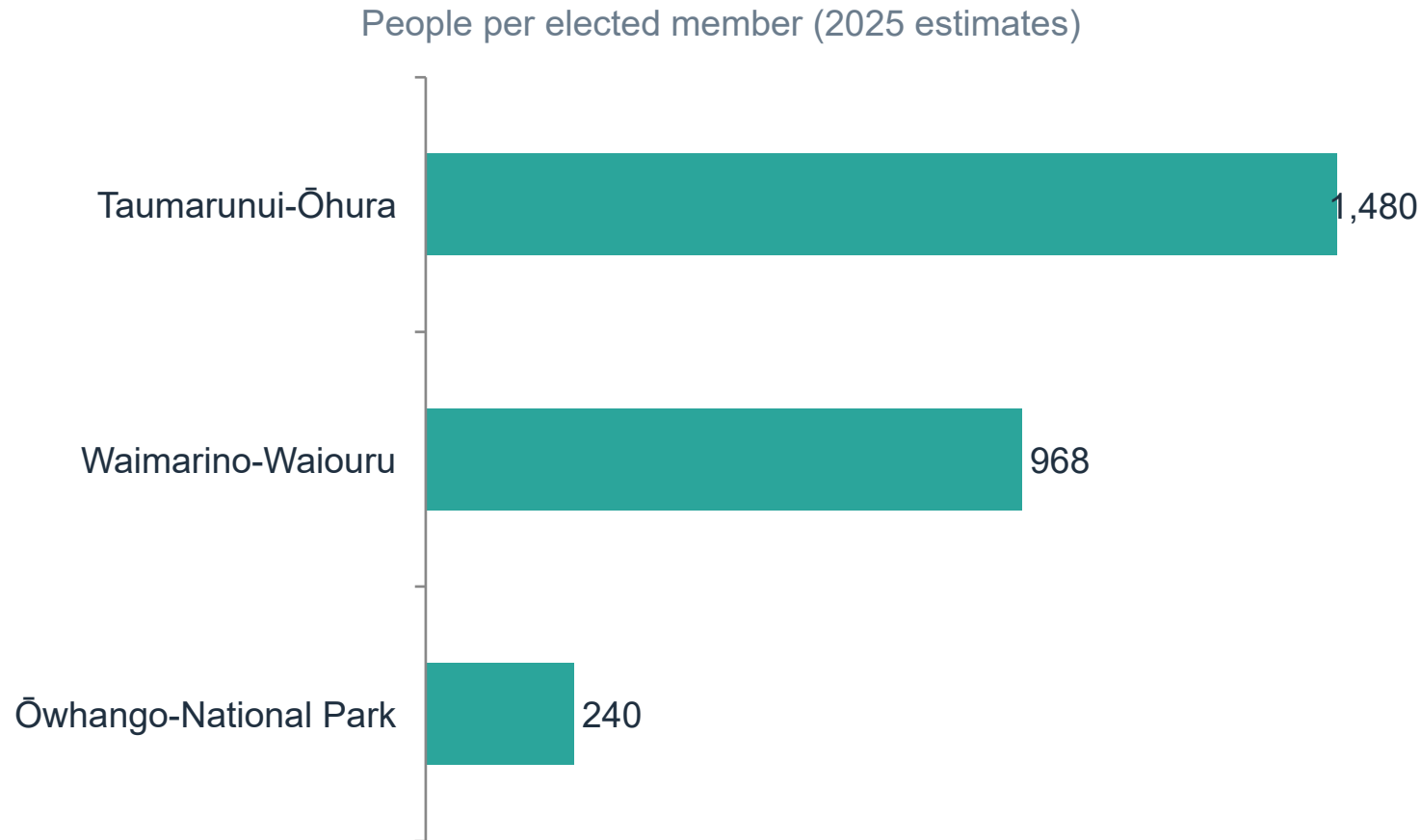


Ward	Population (2025)	Councillors	Per councillor
Ruapehu General Ward	9,330	6	1,555
Ruapehu Māori Ward	4,110	3	1,370
District	13,440	9	1,493

Source: Local Government Commission representation tables, 2025 estimates. 2026 estimates arrive in October.

Community boards: same size, very different populations

Each board has five elected members and one appointed councillor



Worth exploring

- The 10% rule does not apply between boards, but board size and boundaries are in scope
- The Commission asked us to watch the Ōwhango and Kakahi boundary
- Board names are in scope: National Park village became Waimarino in December 2024

The rules for community boards

Every review must consider whether there should be boards, and how they are made up

4 to 12

members per board

At least 4 elected. Appointed members must be councillors, and fewer than half the board.

- Boards can be divided into subdivisions; the 10% rule then applies between them
- Ward and community boundaries should line up as far as practicable
- A board can be established outside a review, but only abolished or have its boundaries changed through a review or reorganisation
- Section 52 of the Local Government Act 2002 sets the role; Council decides what else to delegate, and can withdraw it
- Council cannot delegate rates, bylaws, borrowing, or buying and selling assets outside the Long-Term Plan

What community boards do now

Roles and responsibilities adopted by Council, June 2022



Approvals (with staff)

Event road closures, street names, parades and special road uses, local speed restrictions, road closures



With staff

Long-Term Plan input, and approving which footpath, parks and signage items proceed within existing budgets



Leadership

First place the community turns to; local input on bylaws and asset disposals; Chair speaking rights at Council



Planning

Place-making and wellbeing; deliver prioritised community plans that feed the Long-Term Plan

Boards do not hold budgets of their own. Funding sits within the Long-Term Plan.

How Ruapehu compares

Four nearby rural districts and two councils close in population, arrangements at the 2025 elections

Council	Population (2025)	Land area (km ²)	Councillors	People per councillor	How councillors are elected	Community boards
Waitomo	9,950	3,535	6	1,658	2 wards	None
Stratford	10,480	2,163	11	953	2 general wards (10), 1 Māori ward (1)	None
Ōtorohanga	10,800	1,999	9	1,200	5 general wards (7), Māori ward (2)	2
Gore	12,970	1,254	11	1,179	3 wards (8), at large (3)	1
Ruapehu	13,440	6,734	9	1,493	At large (district-wide) general ward (6), Māori ward (3)	3
Hurunui	14,360	8,641	10	1,436	3 wards	2
Rangitikei	16,010	4,484	11	1,455	3 general wards (9), 2 Māori wards (2)	2

Last time: 2021 to 2022

Council size moved three times before it settled

8

Initial proposal

25 August 2021

6 general, 2 Māori, at large (district-wide); four boards

11

Final proposal

10 November 2021

Two geographic general wards (4 + 4), 3 Māori; three boards

9

Commission determination

4 April 2022

6 general, 3 Māori, at large (district-wide); three boards of 5 + 1

85 submissions | 38 sought nine members | 32 sought more Māori ward members | 37 opposed a single general ward

What the Commission found in 2022

The 2022 determination, test by test



Communities of interest

- Communities of interest were adequately identified
- Three general groupings shaped by geography, with a district-wide community of interest at a higher level
- Agreed with appellants that the 2021 north-south boundary split Kakahi and separated Ōwhango from Taumarunui
- Encouraged Council and the boards to closely monitor whether board boundaries remain appropriate



Effective representation

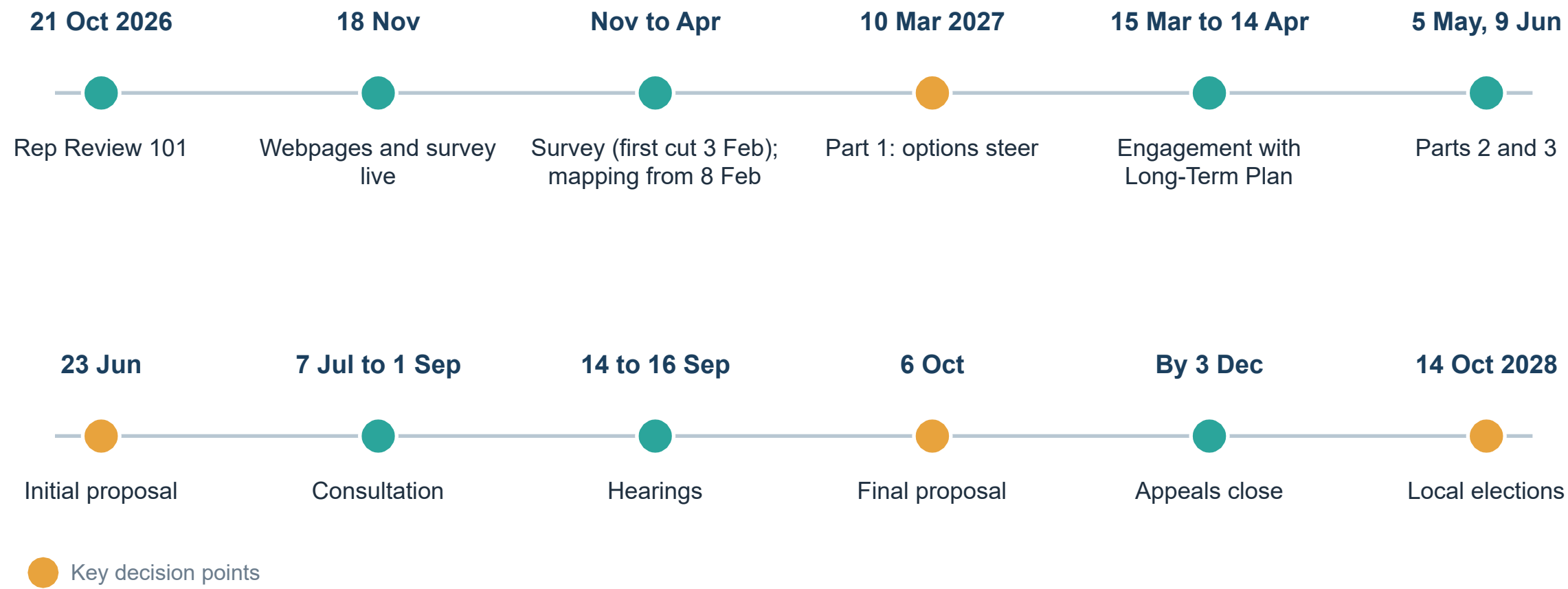
- No reasons given for 11 over 9 or 10; 12 not considered
- Māori ward at about one third of Council
- At large (district-wide) wards supported partly because of the plan for stronger boards
- Strongly encouraged Council to consider more voting system education
- Boards set at an equal size



Fair representation

- The 10% rule does not apply to at large (district-wide) wards
- Keeping the four former wards: +33.27% to -44.56%
- A three-ward model: National Park ward at -37.88%
- Isolation not enough to justify departures of that size

The road to October 2028



Statutory limits

Our programme sits inside every limit set by the Local Electoral Act 2001

Step	Statutory limit	Our date
Resolve the initial proposal	20 December 2026 to 31 July 2027	23 June 2027
Public notice of initial proposal	Within 14 days; no later than 8 August 2027	7 July 2027
Submissions	At least one month	7 July to 1 September 2027
Public notice of final proposal	Within eight weeks of submissions closing	13 October 2027
Appeals and objections close	At least one month; no later than 3 December 2027	By 3 December 2027
Referral to the Commission (if needed)	No later than 20 December 2027	By 20 December 2027
Commission determination (if needed)	Before 11 April 2028	By 11 April 2028

How we will build the evidence

Evidence first, options second. We build on the 2022 communities of interest work.



Survey

18 November to 14 April: how people see current arrangements and where their communities lie. First cut 3 February feeds the draft options.



Community boards

Local knowledge of how communities organise themselves and what they prioritise.



Data we hold

Service use, facility catchments, schools, transport, emergency management response planning.



Preliminary engagement

15 March to 14 April, alongside the Long-Term Plan: draft options and board names. Board kōrero, drop-ins, and community mapping sessions from 8 February. Survey open until 14 April.

Who does what

Who	Role in the review
Council	Direction at workshops; adopts initial (23 June 2027) and final (6 October 2027) proposals; hears submissions
Community boards	Local insight; encourage participation; their own arrangements are in scope
Iwi and hapū	Partners on communities of interest; views on council size and Māori ward configuration
Community	Survey, preliminary engagement, formal submissions
Officers	Run the process, gather evidence, develop options, prepare reports
electionz.com	Independent technical advice; attends workshops and Council meetings
Local Government Commission	Decides if there are appeals or objections, or non-compliance

Between workshops, you can

- Join local engagement events
- Encourage people to take the survey and make submissions
- Bring local knowledge back to workshops

Keep an open mind

Councillors make the decisions, and are asked to keep an open mind, explore all options and take a district-wide view.

Mapping our communities of interest

Group exercise: the first evidence layer for the review. No options, no boundaries for decision.



FUNCTIONAL

1 Where do people go?

Shopping, schooling, health, sport, work, marae. Which towns does each area rely on?



PERCEPTUAL

2 Where do people belong?

Strong local identities, and where one community ends and the next begins.



GEOGRAPHICAL

3 What shapes the area?

Mountains, rivers, ranges, roads and travel distances, and how they connect or separate communities.

Report back: where did groups agree or differ? What feels split or wrongly grouped (test Ōwhango and Kakahi)? What has changed since 2022? Who do we most need to hear from?

Kōrero: how involved do you want to be?

Which model do you prefer, and who would take part?

Full Council workshops only

Simple and shared. Members see near-final options on 10 March.

Reference group

Mayor and a couple of councillors review interim work over summer. Advises, does not decide.

Working party

Councillors, iwi representatives and board chairs, three or four meetings. Broad voice early; more time.

Champions

One or two members as liaison and public face. Low commitment; depends on individuals.

Hybrid

For example, a reference group for options plus champions for engagement.

Decisions stay with full Council. Terms of reference for the chosen model go to Council for adoption.

Next Steps

After today

Officers record the community mapping as the first evidence layer

22 October 2026

Community board session

11 November 2026

Project team: work programme and draft terms of reference

25 November 2026

Council meeting (contingency): terms of reference

18 November 2026

Review webpages and survey go live

Have your say on how Ruapehu is represented

Tell us about your community and how well our current arrangements work for you.

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Council is reviewing how councillors and community board members are elected, ready for the 2028 local elections. We are not asking about options yet. We want to understand your community and how well the current arrangements work.

The survey closes on 14 April 2027. Return it to any Council service centre in Taumarunui, Ohakune or Raetihi, or complete it online at [survey link TBC]. It takes about 10 minutes.

1 About you

Which area do you live in?

How long have you lived there?

- ☐ Less than 2 years ☐ 2 to 5 years
☐ 6 to 10 years ☐ More than 10 years

Your age

- ☐ Under 25 ☐ 25 to 44
☐ 45 to 64 ☐ 65 or over

Which electoral roll are you on? (optional)

- ☐ Māori roll ☐ General roll ☐ Unsure

Are you a ratepayer?

- ☐ Resident ☐ Non-resident
☐ Both ☐ Neither

2 Your community

When you think about your community, what area comes to mind?

Where do you go for most of your shopping, services, school, work and healthcare?

2 Your community (continued)

Do the councillors elected to represent you understand your community's interests?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know who represents me

Any comment?

Are there communities in Ruapehu you feel are not well represented by current arrangements?

What do you call the area you live in?

3 The numbers

BEFORE YOU ANSWER

Ruapehu has nine councillors plus a mayor for about 13,400 residents — roughly one councillor for every 1,500 people. Nearby rural districts range from about 950 to 1,650 people per councillor: Stratford 953, Ōtorohanga 1,200, Rangitikei 1,455, Waitomo 1,658.

For Ruapehu, is nine councillors about right, too many, or too few?

☐ About right ☐ Too many ☐ Too few

If too many or too few — what number, and what would change as a result?

3 The numbers (continued)

BEFORE YOU ANSWER

Until the 2022 elections, Ruapehu's councillors were elected from four wards: Ōhura, Taumarunui, National Park and Waimarino-Waiouru. In 2021 Council proposed two wards, one in the north and one in the south. In 2022 the Local Government Commission decided that councillors should instead be elected across the whole district. It found the proposed ward boundary split some communities, such as Kakahi and Ōwhango, from the places they identify with.

Ruapehu's nine councillors are elected as two at large (district-wide) wards: six from the General Ward and three from the Māori Ward. Would you prefer councillors elected from geographic wards instead — for example a Taumarunui ward, a Waimarino ward?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why?

4 Community boards

BEFORE YOU ANSWER

Ruapehu has three community boards, each with five elected members plus one appointed councillor. Member remuneration totals about \$119,000 a year, set by the Remuneration Authority and funded from the general rate. Because board areas differ greatly in size, the number of residents each member represents varies widely:

Taumarunui-Ōhura: 7,400 residents, one member per 1,480

Waimarino-Waiouru: 4,840 residents, one member per 968

Ōwhango-National Park: 1,200 residents, one member per 240

Do you know what your community board does?

☐ Yes, clearly ☐ Yes, vaguely
☐ No ☐ Not sure which one I am in

Should Ruapehu continue to have community boards?

☐ Keep them as they are (3 boards) ☐ Fewer boards covering larger areas
☐ More boards covering smaller areas ☐ No boards
☐ Not sure

4 Community boards (continued)

What would you change about how community boards work?

Have you ever attended a community board meeting or contacted a board member?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5 Anything else

Is there anything else about how Ruapehu is represented that you would like Council to consider?

Would you like to attend an in-person session in March 2027?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which area?

Email for updates on the review (optional)

Ngā mihi — thank you

Please return your survey by **14 April 2027** to any Council service centre in Taumarunui, Ohakune or Raetihi, or post it to Ruapehu District Council, Private Bag 1001, Taumarunui 3946.

You can also complete it online at [survey link TBC]. Questions? Email elections@ruapehudc.govt.nz

[Privacy statement]