
INQUIRY INTO THE 2013 LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present for the Committee's consideration and approval the proposed submission to the Justice and Electoral Committee's inquiry into the 2013 local authority elections. The proposed submission is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Executive summary

The Parliamentary Justice and Electoral Committee (JEC) conducts an inquiry following every round of triennial local authority elections. There has been a public call for submissions to the Inquiry into the 2013 Elections. Submissions close on 20 December 2013. In addition to submissions by LGNZ and SOLGM there is value to be added by highlighting matters of particular concern to Wellington City Council.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Governance, Finance and Planning Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Agree to the draft submission to the Justice and Electoral Committee's Inquiry into the 2013 Local Authority Elections attached as Appendix 1, subject to any amendments recommended by the Council.*
- 3. Agree to delegate to the Chair of the Governance, Finance and Planning Committee and the Electoral Officer the authority to make any drafting changes necessary before forwarding the submission to the Parliamentary Justice and Electoral Committee.*

4. Background

The Parliamentary Justice and Electoral Committee (JEC) has advised that it will be conducting an inquiry into the 2013 local authority elections held on 12 October 2013. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Inquiry are to examine the law and administrative procedures surrounding the conduct of the 2013 local authority elections, with specific focus upon:

- Identification of factors behind the low voter turnout;
- Voting methods and processes;

- Matters in regulations (including voting documents and informal votes);
- Methods of increasing voter participation in future local authority elections;
- The appropriateness of the three week voting timeframe;
- The potential for voter confusion when voters are presented with two voting systems on the same ballot paper;
- The security of, and potential for increased participation as a result of the introduction of, electronic voting;
- Identification of other initiatives that would lift voter turnout;
- Conduct and performance of the electoral institutions including the Electoral Commission.

Submissions close with the JEC on Friday 20 December 2013. The early closing date, has meant that there has been limited opportunity to discuss the submission with interested parties.

5. Discussion

The attached draft submission provides the Council with a basis for considering the questions raised by the Justice and Electoral Committee's Terms of Reference for its inquiry.

In 2010 Council did not make its own submission, but supported the SOLGM and LGNZ submissions. Most of the recommendations made to the JEC following its inquiry into the 2010 local elections have been implemented. Some the recommendations raised in earlier submissions but not implemented are repeated in this latest draft submission.

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) and the Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM) will be making comprehensive submissions to the Committee. The LGNZ submission will represent the views of its members on policy/political issues while the submission from SOLGM will concentrate on practical/technical matters. Council's submission therefore focuses on matters of particular relevance to Wellington City Council.

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

The draft submission takes into account:

- Feedback provided by electors and candidates to the Electoral Officer and Electoral Officials during and after the 2013 local elections;
- Feedback provided to the Electoral Officer by electoral officials during and after the 2013 local elections;

- Collated feedback by Electoral Officers countrywide to SOLGM;
- Discussions at the SOLGM Electoral Officers Debrief on 10 December 2013.

5.2 Financial considerations

No significant change is expected.

5.3 Climate change impacts and considerations

No climate change impacts or considerations have been identified.

5.4 Long-term plan considerations

No significant change in expected future financial commitments is likely apart from the anticipated cost of online voting, which is already existing policy.

6. Conclusion

The Justice and Electoral Committee have invited public submissions on the Inquiry it is conducting into the 2013 local authority elections. If the Council agrees to lodge a submission, it will need to be submitted to the Committee by Friday 20 December 2013.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1) Strategic fit / Strategic outcome

This submission supports Outcome 7.2.B – More actively engaged: Wellington City Council will operate an open and honest decision making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system.

2) LTP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

Relates to C534: Elections, Governance and Democratic Process.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There are no Treaty of Waitangi considerations.

4) Decision-making

This is not a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General consultation

Council is not required to consult on this matter.

b) Consultation with Maori

Not required.

6) Legal implications

There are no legal implications

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report is consistent with existing Wellington City Council policy.