



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

# Determination

of representation arrangements to apply for  
the election of the Palmerston North City Council  
to be held on 13 October 2007

### Background

1. The Palmerston North City Council (the Council) elected at the 2004 local election comprises 15 councillors and the Mayor. The 15 councillors were elected as follows:

Wards	Population*	No. of councillors per ward	Population per councillor	Deviation from city average population per councillor	% deviation from city average population per councillor
Papaioea	21,200	4	5300	69	+1.30
Takaro	16,600	3	5533	302	+5.77
Awapuni	13,300	3	4433	-798	-15.25
Hokowhitu	16,100	3	5367	135	+2.59
Fitzherbert	7,620	1	7620	2389	+45.66
Ashhurst	3,650	1	3650	-1581	-30.23
TOTALS	78,470	15	5231		

\*These figures are population estimates provided by the Government Statistician as at 30 June 2005.

2. There are no community boards in Palmerston North City.
3. In November 2005, the Council undertook a public feedback/information process regarding representation issues. As part of that exercise it identified four possible options for its representation arrangements –

- Option A – 5 wards and 15 councillors
- Option B – 3 wards and 10 councillors
- Option C – 3 wards and some councillors elected at large
- Option D – All councillors elected at large

4. It subsequently agreed to an initial proposal on 6 March 2006, as follows:
  - the Council to comprise 12 councillors and the Mayor, elected by the electors of the city as a whole; and
  - no community boards to be established in the City.

5. The Council received 79 written submissions on its initial proposal. Submissions sought -
  - variously wards, an at-large system or a mixed system;
  - a range of number of councilors; and
  - an Ashhurst Community Board, but not, generally, community boards in the remainder of the City.
  
6. The Council held a hearing of submitters, at which 15 submitters made oral presentations. Following consideration of these submissions, the Council amended its initial proposal. Its final proposal was publicly notified on 7 June 2006 as follows:
  - the Council to comprise 14 councillors and the Mayor, elected by the electors of the city as a whole; and
  - an Ashhurst Community Board to be constituted, comprising 4 members elected from the Ashhurst Community, and 1 member appointed by the Council.
  
7. The Council received 30 appeals and objections to its final proposal. The main issues raised in the appeals and objections were whether there should be -
  - wards or an at-large system of election; and
  - either 12 or 15 councillors.

## **Hearing**

8. The Commission met with the Council, appellants, objectors, and submitters who had expressed a desire to be heard by it, on 28 September 2006. The Council was represented by the Mayor, Mrs Heather Tanguay, Chief Executive Paul Wylie, and legal counsel John Annabell. The appellants, objectors, and submitters present were John Matthew Whitelock, Dr B Booth, Gordon Cruden, John Hornblow, Bruce and Marilyn Bulloch, David C Parham, David Rex Pinkney, Harvey Jones, Jenny Olson, Noel Olson, Dion Martin, Robert Goddard, Pamela Frith for the Palmerston North Residents' Association, Brian Gawith, Tom Shannon, David Laird, Kevin Reilly, John Bent, Paul O'Brien for the Manawatu Chamber of Commerce, Annette Nixon, Clement King, Bruce Wilson, Peter J Wheeler, Jill White, and Dr Chris Teo-Sherrell.

## **Matters raised in submissions, appeals, and at the hearing**

9. The key arguments presented in support of an at-large system were:
  - the City comprises a relatively compact geographic area;
  - it is difficult to distinguish between communities based on the City's physical or topographic features;
  - there are strong commonalities of interest among identified communities of interest within the City;
  - the City comprises secondary or parallel communities of interest that cover the City as a whole (for example, students, low income earners, ethnic groups, and youth);

- an at-large system would provide greater scope for electors to choose candidates better able to represent the interests they consider important, with some submitters and appellants suggesting that wards restrict elector choice;
- the existing ward system has encouraged cliques to develop among councillors;
- at-large representation would encourage councillors to be accountable to the whole City, rather than to the electors of their ward only;
- an at-large system would revive interest in the Council, and encourage voter turnout; and
- wards are unfair in that residents of some wards are able to vote for only 1 councillor, whereas residents of other wards are able to vote for 4 councillors;
- there are pockets of lower and higher socio-economic housing in all areas of the City; and
- on many occasions (including when councillors were elected at-large), the development of community facilities in the City has been the product of community groups coming together to lobby the Council for specific projects.

10. The key arguments presented in support of retaining wards were:

- some competent candidates will find the financial cost of campaigning over the whole City prohibitive;
- candidates who are able to dedicate more time to campaigning will be advantaged by city-wide elections;
- while there are strong social, cultural and business interests that transcend defined geographic communities of interest in the City, the financial and time requirements for campaigning over the whole City will advantage candidates whose views tend to represent specific business, cultural, or social interests and disadvantage candidates whose views tend to represent other interests;
- wards result in council membership that is more representative of the diversity of communities in Palmerston North City;
- there are socio-economic differences between communities of interest in Palmerston North, which should be reflected in electoral boundaries for example, the concerns and issues facing many residents of Highbury, in the Takaro Ward, are distinct from the issues facing many Hokowhitu Ward residents;
- wards ensure that people from different parts of the City are elected;
- councillors elected from wards ensure a better link between the Council and residents of particular parts of the City, which contributes to the effective delivery of local services and facilities (examples cited being Papaioea recreational facilities, Takaro community facilities, and Milverton Park facilities);
- wards better enable local issues to be debated with ward councillors in a local context;
- councillors elected from wards are likely to be more familiar with the experiences of, and issues facing, residents in their ward by virtue of sharing the same physical space;
- residents would have better opportunities to meet, and share views with, councillors who live nearby;
- in casting their vote, most electors are only able to meaningfully differentiate between a small number of candidates;

- wards enable a more detailed degree of accountability between elected members and electors;
- the historical record prior to the introduction to a ward system in 1989 suggests that at-large representation would result in a disproportionately high number of members who reside in Hokowhitu;
- the Ashhurst, Linton, and Aokautere areas contain sufficiently distinct communities of interest (in particular, their distance from the city centre) to warrant specific councillor representation;
- a ward system would enable more effective management of community/council consultation processes;
- a ward system is a useful basis for ward committees, which contribute to community involvement in council decision-making;
- a ward structure would encourage community cohesion and development;
- wards result in residents having identifiable people to contact regarding local issues; and
- wards ensure that any issues facing the residents of one ward are brought to the attention of the whole Council.

11. The key arguments presented in support of a reduction in the number of councillors were:

- the majority of submitters to the Council's initial proposal supported the Council's decision to reduce the number of councillors to 12;
- a smaller council would result in more consensus in decision-making, and a more disciplined, cohesive, and effective council;
- the lesser cost of servicing 12 councillors instead of 15 would result in administrative efficiencies;
- a smaller number of councillors would enable the Council to operate in a similar way to a board of directors; and
- a smaller council would generate greater interest in local government, and a higher turnout in elections.

12. The key arguments presented in support of retaining or increasing the number of councillors were:

- it is necessary to enable the Council to meet its obligations under the Local Government Act 2002 (the LGA) in an efficient and meaningful way;
- a smaller council would not result in savings to the extent suggested by some submitters, because the total remuneration pool is determined by the Remuneration Authority and would remain the same (though divided amongst fewer members);
- a 15-member council would result in a wider range of community views and interests being represented on the council;
- 15 councillors will enable better opportunities for engagement between the community and the Council, which is fundamental to the role of local authorities under the LGA;
- a 15-member council would spread the workload sufficiently to enable councillors to continue with other employment;
- a smaller council would result in fewer opportunities for non-incumbent councillors to be elected;
- a smaller council would result in less interest in local government, and lower turnout at elections;

- a smaller council would increase the responsibilities and workload of the Council's management; and
  - the population of the City is growing.
13. The key arguments for constituting an Ashhurst Community Board were:
- the Ashhurst area comprises a community of interest that is distinct, in respect to its distance from the city centre, and its social and environmental outlook;
  - Ashhurst has a distinct village character;
  - by necessity, Ashhurst residents are more involved in their community than the residents of other areas of the City;
  - the area warrants specific representation, which cannot be ensured under either an at-large system of councillor representation, or by wards given the requirements for population to member equality under section 19V(2);
  - a community board would provide more robust and democratically accountable representation than a ward committee;
  - the retention of the Ashhurst Ward Committee is uncertain after the 2007 local elections; and
  - approximately half of the employed residents of Ashhurst do not work in the central city.

### **Matters for Determination**

14. The statutory provisions in respect of these appeals and objections are contained in sections 19R, 19H and 19J of the Local Electoral Act 2001 (the Act).

**19R. Commission to determine appeals and objections**

(1) *The Commission must—*

- (a) *Consider the resolutions, submissions, appeals, objections, and information forwarded to it under section 19Q; and*
- (b) *Subject to sections 19T and 19V in the case of a territorial authority, and to sections 19U and 19V in the case of a regional council, determine, -*
  - (i) *In the case of a territorial authority that has made a resolution under section 19H, the matters specified in that section:*
  - (ii) *In the case of a regional council that has made a resolution under section 19I, the matters specified in that section:*
  - (iii) *In the case of a territorial authority that has made a resolution under section 19J, the matters specified in that section.*

(2) *For the purposes of making a determination under subsection (1)(b), the Commission—*

- (a) *May make any enquiries that it considers appropriate; and*
- (b) *May hold, but is not obliged to hold, meetings with the territorial authority or regional council or any persons who have lodged an appeal or objection and have indicated a desire to be heard by the Commission in relation to that appeal or objection.*

- (3) *The Commission must, before 11 April in the year of a triennial general election, complete the duties it is required to carry out under subsection (1).*

**19H. Review of representation arrangements for elections of territorial authorities**

- (1) *A territorial authority must determine by resolution, and in accordance with this Part, -*
- (a) *Whether the members of the territorial authority (other than the mayor) are proposed to be elected -*
    - (i) *By the electors of the district as a whole; or*
    - (ii) *By the electors of 2 or more wards; or*
    - (iii) *In some cases by the electors of the district as a whole and in the other cases by the electors of each ward of the district; and*
  - (b) *In any case to which paragraph (a)(i) applies, the proposed number of members to be elected by the electors of the district as a whole; and*
  - (c) *In any case to which paragraph (a)(iii) applies, -*
    - (i) *The proposed number of members to be elected by the electors of the district as a whole; and*
    - (ii) *The proposed number of members to be elected by the wards of the district; and*
  - (d) *In any case to which paragraph (a)(ii) or paragraph (a)(iii) applies, -*
    - (i) *The proposed name and the proposed boundaries of each ward; and*
    - (ii) *The number of members proposed to be elected by the electors of each ward.*
- (2) *The determination required by subsection (1) must be made by a territorial authority -*
- (a) *On the first occasion, either in 2003 or in 2006; and*
  - (b) *Subsequently, at least once in every period of 6 years after the first determination.*
- (3) *This section must be read in conjunction with section 19ZH and Schedule 1A.*

**19J. Review of community boards**

- (1) *A territorial authority must, on every occasion on which it passes a resolution under section 19H, determine by that resolution, and in accordance with this Part, not only the matters referred to in that section but also whether, in light of the principle set out in section 4(1)(a) (which relates to fair and effective representation for individuals and communities) -*
- (a) *There should be communities and community boards; and*
  - (b) *If so resolved, the nature of any community and the structure of any community board.*
- (2) *The resolution referred to in subsection (1) must, in particular, determine -*
- (a) *Whether 1 or more communities should be constituted;*
  - (b) *Whether any community should be abolished or united with another community;*
  - (c) *Whether the boundaries of a community should be altered:*

- (d) *Whether a community should be subdivided for electoral purposes or whether it should continue to be subdivided for electoral purposes, as the case may require:*
  - (e) *Whether the boundaries of any subdivision should be altered:*
  - (f) *The number of members of any community board:*
  - (g) *The number of members of a community board who should be elected and the number of members of a community board who should be appointed:*
  - (h) *Whether the members of a community board who are proposed to be elected are to be elected -*
    - (i) *By the electors of the community as a whole; or*
    - (ii) *By the electors of 2 or more subdivisions; or*
    - (iii) *If the community comprises 2 or more whole wards, by the electors of each ward:*
  - (i) *in any case to which paragraph (h)(ii) applies, -*
    - (i) *The proposed name and the proposed boundaries of each subdivision; and*
    - (ii) *The number of members proposed to be elected by the electors of each subdivision.*
- (3) *Nothing in this section limits the provisions of section 19F.*

## **Consideration by the Commission**

### **The Council**

15. The steps in the representation review process are not statutorily prescribed. The Commission believes, however, that the following approach to determining representation arrangements will achieve a robust outcome that is in accordance with statutory criteria:
- (a) identify communities of interest;
  - (b) determine the best means of providing effective representation for identified communities of interest; and
  - (c) determine fair representation for the electors of the City.

### *Effective representation of communities of interest*

16. The Act does not define either 'effective representation' or 'communities of interest'. The Commission considers, however, that achieving effective representation for communities of interest includes determining which, if any, communities of interest, or groupings of communities of interest, require separate ward representation.
17. The Commission recognises that the Council's ability to provide effective representation for its communities of interest is influenced by a range of processes and structures beyond the matters set out in Part 1A of the Act. These include the Council's community outcomes, its long-term council community plan and public consultation processes, its relationships with organisations and community groups, and its ward committees. While the LGA clearly promotes councils' flexibility to develop strategies for community engagement, the Commission's consideration of effective representation should be carried out in light of the benefits these structures and processes provide to residents, community groups, and the Council. The City's electoral framework remains the principal safeguard for ensuring effective representation for communities of interest.

18. An important part of the Commission's process of deliberation is based on the identification of similarities and dissimilarities between communities of interest. This consideration requires the Commission to make broad judgements based on the balance of a wide range of factors. Where differences are apparent between communities of interest, it must assess how these differences would impact on the Council's ability to provide effective representation for communities of interest. The size of communities, their location, and proximity to other areas, also need to be taken into account.
19. The Commission considered the nature of communities of interest in Palmerston North City. It believes that Ashhurst has a number of characteristics that make it distinct from the remainder of the City. These relate to its village characteristics, unique history and physical environment, relative proximity to the City, and a strong sense of shared identity amongst residents.
20. Linton Army Camp is located approximately 10 kilometres from the Palmerston North City centre. The New Zealand Army provides many of the Camp's infrastructural services.
21. The City also includes approximately 26,000 hectares of rural land, which is located principally in the existing Fitzherbert and Ashhurst Wards. The Commission heard from some submitters that some residents of this area have rural interests and concerns that are distinct from those of residents living in the urban area of the City.
22. There is no disputing that the central urban area of the City is topographically homogenous. This area comprises the vast majority of the City's population. Most residents use facilities, work, and travel regularly to locations in many parts of the City.
23. However, the Commission also believes that many residents of Ashhurst, Aokautere, Summerhill, Linton, Milson, Kelvin Grove, Terrace End, Cloverlea, Highbury, and potentially other areas, would identify with their local community as well as the City as a whole. These communities are broadly evidenced by suburbs, schools, and commercial and recreational facilities. In some cases minor physical features help to distinguish communities, as in the case of Kelvin Grove, Milson, and Cloverlea.
24. At the time of the 2001 Census, the usually resident population of Palmerston North City was 72,036. By July 2005 the population was estimated at 78,470. Areas of significant population growth include the Kelvin Grove, Summerhill, and Cloverlea areas. The Commission understands that the Council has planned for additional recreational and retail services in some of these areas of growth.
25. Many appellants expressed concern at the impact of socio-economic disparity across the City on effective representation for communities of interest within the central urban area. In relation to this, socio-economic disparity is an important matter to consider for two reasons.
26. Firstly, the Commission generally believes that areas characterised, in part, by greater levels of socio-economic deprivation face different pressures, and have different interests and concerns, than areas of greater general affluence.

Specific councillor representation for such areas enhances the Council's capacity to understand and respond to these differences.

27. Appellants pointed out that, under city-wide voting, the amount able to be spent by candidates for election campaign would increase to \$50,000. Campaign expenditure limits are currently restricted to, for example, \$3,500 in the Ashhurst Ward, \$14,000 in the Awapuni Ward, and \$20,000 in the Papaioea Ward.
28. The Commission's examination of socio-economic difference across the City is based on 2001 census data, and analysis, at a meshblock level, based on 9 indicators of socio-economic well-being, provided in *An Atlas of Socioeconomic Difference*<sup>1</sup>. It notes that a significant majority of the meshblocks comprising the Hokowhitu Ward are identified as being at the least socio-economically deprived end of the scale used in the Atlas. This contrasts with the Takaro Ward, which comprises significant areas identified as being at the most socio-economically deprived end of the scale.
29. The socio-economic disparity factor is important in Palmerston North for a second reason. While the Council holds bi-annual ward forums, the Takaro Ward is the only ward in the City that does not have an active formal ward committee. In the Commission's view, the combination of the distinct socio-economic characteristics of large areas in the Takaro Ward, and the fact there is no formal ward committee operating at present, expose a risk in the Council's ability to provide effective representation for some distinct communities. An at-large system of representation would remove a principal mechanism for ensuring that residents of the Takaro Ward have their community interests represented, and taken into account, by the Council.
30. Some submitters and appellants argued that it is inequitable that electors residing in some wards are able to vote for only 1 councillor, while the electors residing in other wards are able to vote for 4 councillors. Some submitters also argued that ward based elections placed unfair restrictions on the ability of electors to choose candidates who are the most capable of representing the interests of the district-wide community.
31. The number of candidates who stood at the 2004 election is illustrated in the table below:

**Number of candidates that stood at the 2004 election, by wards**

WARD	Number of Candidates standing
Papaioea	8
Takaro	9
Awapuni	6
Hokowhitu	7
Fitzherbert	4
Ashhurst	3
TOTAL	37

32. Some appellants argued that it would be difficult for electors to choose from 37 candidates. On the other hand they argued that the level of restriction of

<sup>1</sup> 'Degrees of Deprivation in New Zealand – An Atlas of Socioeconomic Difference', (Crampton et al, 2004). See page 18 of this publication for discussion of the 9 variables used in analysis.

voter choice imposed by the existing ward structure ensured a greater degree of accountability between voters and candidates, and more reasonable opportunities for candidates to engage with electors during the election campaign.

33. Some appellants and submitters suggested that the present ward system had tended to result in a council that is characterised by negative and destructive comparisons being made between councillors. They suggested that at-large voting would encourage unity and teamwork on the Council.
34. Regardless of whether they are elected by wards, or at-large, all councillors, upon election, are required to make a declaration to represent the interests of the whole City. The Commission believes that good local government requires that a diverse range of views are brought to, and debated at, council level. The Mayor and councillors are primarily responsible for the management of unconstructive conflict at council level. The Commission rejects the argument that a council's ability to manage conflict can be resolved through the electoral structure.
35. Based on the information presented to it, the Commission is not satisfied that city-wide voting would ensure effective representation for communities of interest in Palmerston North City. It therefore examined possible ward structures for the City.
36. The Commission believes that the arguments made by some appellants for the creation of a significantly greater number of wards than currently exist would be better addressed through community-focused governance structures that could complement the city-wide focus of the Council.
37. The Commission came to the view that option 2 of the Council's initial discussion document would provide a better basis for effective representation than an at-large system. This option was based on the existing ward structure, but provides for the amalgamation of the existing Ashhurst and Fitzherbert Wards, and an adjustment to the Awapuni Ward.

#### *Fair representation of electors*

38. The amalgamation of the Ashhurst and Fitzherbert Wards balances the existing population to member inequality between these wards. The communities within this area also share rural characteristics that are distinct from the urban characteristics of the remainder of the City.
39. Section 19V(2) of the Act requires that the population of the Awapuni Ward be increased to ensure that the population to member ratio falls within the +/- 10% range. The Commission believes that the transfer of areas close to the City's Square area would have a negligible affect on the Council's ability to provide effective representation for communities of interest. The Commission has therefore decided to transfer to the Awapuni Ward an area currently in the Takaro Ward, as the latter ward has a greater population to member ratio than other surrounding wards.
40. The area the Commission proposes to transfer includes meshblocks 1825400, 1825500, 1825600, 1826700, 1826800, 1826900, 1827000, 1827100, 1827200, 1827300, 1827400, 1827800, 1827900, 1828000, 1828100, 1828200, 1828300, 1828400, 1828500, and 1831000. It believes

that this will result in a ward structure that satisfies the requirements of section 19T and 19V(2) of the Act.

41. The Commission notes that the need to ensure fair representation between wards is a significant determinant of the total number of councillors. It believes that 2 councillors are necessary to ensure effective representation for the residents of the Ashhurst-Fitzherbert Ward. It is satisfied that 15 councillors will ensure effective representation for the City's communities of interest. The City's projected population growth, and the Commission's considerations below regarding community-focused governance structures, have also been taken into account when reaching this decision.
42. The relationship between the Commission's decision on ward boundaries, the number of councillors, and the requirements of section 19V(2) is illustrated in the following table:

Wards	Population*	No. of councillors per ward	Population per councillor	Deviation from city average population per councillor	% deviation from city average population per councillor
Papaioea	21,200	4	5300	+69	+1.31
Takaro	15,590	3	5197	-35	-0.66
Awapuni	14,310	3	4770	-461	-8.82
Hokowhitu	16100	3	5367	+133	+2.59
Ashhurst-Fitzherbert	11,270	2	5635	+404	+7.72
TOTALS	78,470	15	5231		

\*These figures are population estimates provided by the Government Statistician as at 30 June 2005.

### Communities and community boards

40. The Council initially proposed not to establish communities and constitute community boards. Following the receipt of submissions, and a petition from Ashhurst residents, it subsequently altered its proposal to provide for an Ashhurst Community Board. The Council's review process also generated much general discussion about the need for community-oriented governance structures to:
- facilitate residents' involvement in community-focused governance; and
  - complement the city-wide focus of the Council.
41. Much of this discussion focused on the Council's ward committees. This would seem due, in part, to the fact that the Council consulted on these as part of its preliminary consultation. The Commission has no jurisdiction over the future of the City's ward committees. Despite this, presentations made by the Council provided some assurance of their continuation. Like the Council, the Commission found it was unable to completely remove consideration of ward committees from its wider consideration of the City's representation arrangements.
42. The Commission's responsibilities under the Act are limited to:
- whether to constitute an Ashhurst Community Board; and

- whether to constitute community boards for other areas of the City.
43. The principles of effective representation for communities and fair representation for electors (in the case of electoral subdivisions) continue to apply when considering the constitution of community boards. However, section 19W(a) of the Act also requires the Commission to have regard to any of the criteria for considering local government reorganisation proposals under subpart 2 of Schedule 3 of the LGA that it considers appropriate. The key test is whether the proposal will promote good local government of the City and the community.
44. While “good local government” is not defined in the Act or the LGA, the Commission believes that the purposes of local government contained in section 3 of the LGA, and the principles relating to local authorities contained in section 14, should be taken into consideration. The Commission has also had regard to the provisions of the LGA dealing with community boards, these being Schedule 7, and Subpart 2 of Part 4.
45. The Commission believes that the Council’s terms of reference for ward committees for the 2004 to 2007 term<sup>2</sup> are similar to the role of community boards, as set out in section 52 of the LGA. The key differences between the status, role, and powers of the City’s ward committees and those prescribed for community boards under subpart 2 of Part 4 of the LGA, are:
- community board members may comprise members elected by the community and members appointed by the Council, in accordance with the Act. Ward committees comprise ward councillors, the Mayor, and members nominated by residents of the ward and appointed by the Council;
  - a community board is not a committee of the Council. Its role, status, and powers are prescribed under subpart 2 of Part 4 of the LGA. A ward committee is a committee of the Council, subject to clauses 30 to 32 of Schedule 7 of the LGA; and
  - community board members receive a salary paid by the Council and determined by the Remuneration Authority. Ward committee members are paid a fee by the Council for attendance at meetings.
46. Based on the submissions and information presented to it, the Commission believes that the City’s ward committees provide an effective opportunity for face-to-face contact between residents, community groups, and elected members in a community-focused forum. The regularity of ward committee meetings, the robustness of their structures and management, and the reasonable expectation that Councillors elected from a given ward will regularly attend meetings, enhances the Council’s ability to provide effective representation. The Commission also believes that the City’s ward committees would be strengthened by the new ward structure rather than city-wide voting.
47. Given the similarities between the City’s established ward committees and the core role of community boards provided by the LGA, and having regard to the size and configuration of Palmerston North City, the Commission believes

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<sup>2</sup> The Council’s *March 2005 Ward Committee Guidelines 2004 – 2007* sets out ward committee functions, membership requirements and the roles of its various members (Chair, councillors, and members), as well as procedural and code of conduct information.

that, at this time, community boards across the City would not promote good local government beyond the capacity afforded by the new ward structure, supported by the continuation of ward committees.

48. The Commission considered whether the constitution of an Ashhurst Community Board would promote good local government. The boundaries of the proposed Ashhurst Community include Ashhurst village and a small area of rural land circling the village. This area, the Summerhill cluster of housing, and Linton Army Camp comprise the majority of the population of the proposed Ashhurst-Fitzherbert Ward.
49. The Commission notes that an Ashhurst Community Board was previously constituted in 1989 following the disestablishment of the Oroua County Council and the constitution of Palmerston North City. This community board was disbanded in September 1990 and, effectively, replaced by an Ashhurst Ward Committee.
50. The Commission believes a contributing factor to the call from Ashhurst residents for the reconstitution of an Ashhurst Community Board was a belief (shared by the Commission) that Ashhurst would not be reasonably assured of effective representation under an at-large system for electing councillors. Some Ashhurst submitters suggested that the removal of wards would result in the disbandment of ward committees, and that the constitution of an Ashhurst Community Board was the only available mechanism for ensuring their effective representation.
51. One Ashhurst submitter said that, due to the effective community representation experienced at Ashhurst as a result of the ward committee structure, successive councils established other ward committees in the City. Some Ashhurst submitters expressed a preference for the continuation of the Ashhurst Ward Committee in its present form. One Ashhurst submitter said it was unlikely that an Ashhurst Community Board would seek additional delegations of responsibility and finance from the Council, other than those responsibilities and functions already undertaken by the Ashhurst Ward Committee.
52. Given its decision to retain a ward structure, and its assumption based on presentations made to it that the Council and the Ashhurst Ward Committee will continue to build on their established, positive relationship, the Commission believes that the constitution of an Ashhurst Community Board would not further promote good local government at this time. It therefore determines that an Ashhurst Community Board should not be constituted.

### **Other matters**

53. While not a specific requirement under Part 1A of the Act, the Commission has a general power, under section 31 of the LGA, to promote the purposes of local government and the principles of good governance set out in sections 10 and 14 of the LGA.
54. Residents' engagement with their community, and effective mechanisms for engagement between communities and the Council, are fundamental to the purpose of local government. The information presented to the Commission strongly suggests that both the Ashhurst Ward Committee and the Fitzherbert Ward Committee make positive contributions to the City's good governance.

The Commission therefore recommends that, despite the establishment of the new Ashhurst-Fitzherbert Ward, the Council should continue to build its capacity for community engagement in local governance through the existing, separate structures of the Ashhurst and Fitzherbert Ward Committees.

### **Commission's Determination**

55. Under section 19R of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the Commission determines that for the general election of the Palmerston North City Council to be held on 13 October 2007, the following representation arrangements shall apply –
- (1) Palmerston North City as delineated on SO Plan 36029 deposited with Land Information New Zealand, shall be divided into five wards;
  - (2) Those five wards shall be -
    - (a) the Papaioea Ward, comprising the area delineated on SO Plan 36030 deposited with Land Information New Zealand;
    - (b) the Takaro Ward, comprising the area delineated on SO Plan 36033 deposited with Land Information New Zealand;
    - (c) the Awapuni Ward, comprising the area delineated on SO Plan 36032 deposited with Land Information New Zealand;
    - (d) the Hokowhitu Ward, comprising the area delineated on SO Plan 36031 deposited with Land Information New Zealand; and
    - (e) the Ashhurst-Fitzherbert Ward, comprising the area delineated on SO Plan 380852 deposited with Land Information New Zealand;
  - (3) The Council shall comprise a mayor and 15 members, elected as follows -
    - (a) four members elected by the electors of the Papaioea Ward;
    - (b) three members elected by the electors of the Takaro Ward;
    - (c) three members elected by the electors of the Awapuni Ward;
    - (d) three members elected by the electors of the Hokowhitu Ward; and
    - (e) two members elected by the electors of the Ashhurst-Fitzherbert Ward.
56. As required by sections 19T(b) and 19W(c) of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the boundaries of the above wards coincide with the boundaries of current statistical meshblock areas determined by Statistics New Zealand and used for Parliamentary electoral purposes.

### **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION**

Sue Piper	(Chair)
Gwen Bull	(Commissioner)
Wynne Raymond	(Commissioner)

20 December 2006