



# Local Government Commission

## Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Determination  
of representation arrangements to apply for the election  
of Selwyn District Council to be held on 11 October 2025

### Introduction

1. All territorial authorities are required under sections 19H and 19J of the Local Electoral Act 2001 (the Act) to review their representation arrangements at least every six years. Under Section 19R of the Act, the Commission, as well as considering appeals and objections against a council's final representation proposal, must determine all the matters set out in sections 19H and 19J which relate to the representation arrangements for territorial authorities.
2. Having completed its considerations, the Commission's determination differs from Selwyn District Council's final representation proposal as set out below.

### Commission's determination<sup>1</sup>

3. In accordance with section 19R of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the Local Government Commission determines that for at least the triennial general election of Selwyn District Council to be held on 11 October 2025, the following representation arrangements will apply:
  - a. As delineated on Plan LG-062-2025-W-1, Selwyn District will be divided into wards and will be represented by a Council comprising the mayor and 10 councillors, being:
    - Two councillors elected by the electors of the district as a whole; and
    - Eight councillors elected as follows:

Ward	Councillors	Plan delineating area
Tawera Malvern Ward	1	LG-062-2025-W-2
Kā Puna Springs Ward	3	LG-062-2025-W-3
Te Waihora Ellesmere Ward	1	LG-062-2025-W-4
Kā Mānia Rolleston Ward	3	LG-062-2025-W-5

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<sup>1</sup> All plans referred to in this determination are deposited with the Local Government Commission.

b. There will be one community with a community board as follows:

Community/ Community Board	Area	Subdivision	Members*	Appointed members
Malvern Community Board	Tawera Malvern Ward	Tawera Subdivision, as delineated on Plan LG-062-2025-S-1	2	1, representing Tawera Malvern Ward
		Hawkins Subdivision, as delineated on Plan LG-062-2025-S-2	3	

\*Number of members elected by the electors of each subdivision

4. The ratio of population to elected members for each ward will be as follows:

Wards	Population*	Number of members	Population per member	Deviation from average population per member	% deviation from average population per member
Tawera Malvern Ward	9,510	1	9,510	-645	-6.35
Kā Puna Springs Ward	28,490	3	9,497	-658	-6.48
Te Waihora Ellesmere	10,930	1	10,930	+775	+7.63
Kā Mānia Rolleston	32,310	3	10,770	+615	+6.06
<b>Total wards</b>	<b>81,240</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10,155</b>		
At-large members		2			
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,240</b>	<b>10</b>			

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

5. The Malvern Community will be subdivided for electoral purposes. The ratio of population to elected members for each subdivision will be as follows:

Malvern Community Board subdivisions	Population*	Number of members^	Population per member	Deviation from community board average population per member	% deviation from community board average population per member
Tawera Subdivision	3,640	2	1,820	-74	-3.91
Hawkins Subdivision	5,820	3	1,940	+46	+2.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,470</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1,894</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

^Not including appointed members

6. As required by section 19T(1)(b) and 19W(c) of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the boundaries of the above wards, communities and community subdivisions coincide with the boundaries of current statistical meshblock areas determined by Statistics New Zealand and used for Parliamentary electoral purposes.

## Background

7. Under sections 19H and 19J of the Act representation reviews are to determine the number of councillors to be elected, the basis of their election and, if this includes wards, the boundaries, and names of those wards. Reviews also include whether there are to be community boards and, if so, arrangements for those boards. Representation arrangements must provide fair and effective representation for individuals and communities.
8. Selwyn District Council (the Council) last reviewed its representation arrangements prior to the 2022 local authority election. The Commission determined the Council's representation in 2022, upholding the Council's final proposal. The Commission's determination also:
  - Noted the Council's intention to undertake a further review ahead of the 2025 election and encouraged it to do so;
  - Strongly encouraged the Council in its next review to undertake a robust examination of communities of interest in the district, not only identifying towns/townships that residents feel a sense of connection to but also examining how residents interact with surrounding towns/districts.

## Current representation arrangements

9. The Council's current representation arrangements comprise a mayor and ten members elected from four wards as follows:

Wards	Population*	Number of members	Population per member	Deviation from average population per member	% deviation from average population per member
Malvern	14,900	2	7,450	+482	+6.92
Springs	19,690	3	6,563	-405	-5.81
Ellesmere	12,700	2	6,350	-618	-8.87
Rolleston	22,390	3	7,463	+495	+7.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,680</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6,968</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2020 population estimates (2018 census base)

10. Population growth in the three years since the last review means that the current Rolleston and Ellesmere Wards no longer comply with the +/-10% rule, at +23.08% and -17.23% respectively.
11. There is also a Malvern Community Board, with five members elected from three subdivisions and two appointed members as follows:

Malvern Community Board subdivisions	Population*	Number of members^	Population per member	Deviation from community board average population per member	% deviation from community board average population per member
Tawera Subdivision	3,030	1	3,030	+50	+1.68
Hawkins Subdivision	6,000	2	3,000	+20	+0.67
West Melton Subdivision	5,870	2	2,935	-45	-1.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,900</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2,980</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2020 population estimates (2018 census base)

^Not including appointed members

## Current review

### Preliminary consultation

12. In April 2023, the Council formed a Representation Review Subcommittee to lead the review process. In September 2023, research was undertaken to identify communities of interest. An independent company conducted quantitative and qualitative research, with 401 residents surveyed and in-depth interviews carried out with a further 157 residents.
13. The research identified that residents felt strong perceptual connections to their immediate neighbourhood or town/township, as well as indicating a broader district-wide/regional identity. It also identified functional relationships between communities across the district, and strong functional connections with Christchurch City for residents living in the towns closest to the Christchurch boundary.
14. The research indicated an appetite for change in representation arrangements, with 80% indicating that they did not feel represented and 70% expressing dissatisfaction with the current ward system.
15. The Subcommittee approached other councils to understand how different representation arrangements worked in practice, and workshopped 20 potential ward options, ranging from 0-6 wards and 7-11 members. This led to two options to test with the community in preliminary engagement, being:
  - a. Option One: Eight members, elected from four wards, with:
    - An enlarged Springs Ward, including West Melton;
    - An enlarged Rolleston Ward, including Burnham;
    - The Malvern and Ellesmere Wards continuing to represent rural communities and townships; and
  - b. Option Two: Ten members, elected from three wards, with:

- Enlarged Springs and Rolleston Wards as above, but with slightly different boundaries to ensure compliance with the +/-10% rule;
  - A combined large rural ward for Malvern and Ellesmere.
16. Both options proposed disestablishing the Malvern Community Board, leaving no community boards in the district. Comments were also sought on potential ward names.
17. The preliminary engagement received 229 responses through the Council's online engagement platform, and a further 219 responses collated by the Darfield Residents' Association and the Malvern Community Board.
18. Responses indicated:
- A preference for option one;
  - A desire from the rural community for greater representation, with a strong preference for two rural wards
  - Mixed responses regarding community boards, with strong support from the rural community for maintaining the Malvern Community Board, but other responses indicating concerns regarding costs;
  - Mixed responses on dual te reo Māori/te reo Pākehā ward names.

## The Council's initial proposal

19. On 24 July 2024, the Council resolved option one set out above as its initial representation proposal. The proposal disestablished the Malvern Community and Community Board.
20. The initial proposed ward arrangements were:

Wards	Population*	Number of members	Population per member	Deviation from average population per member	% deviation from average population per member
Tawera Malvern	9,510	1	9,510	-645	-6.35
Kā Puna Springs	28,490	3	9,497	-658	-6.48
Te Waihora Ellesmere	10,930	1	10,930	+775	+7.63
Kā Mānia Rolleston	32,310	3	10,770	+615	+6.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,240</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10,155</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

## Submissions

21. The Council notified its initial representation proposal on 7 August 2024 and received 616 submissions by the deadline date of 12 September 2024.

22. Of these, 100 submissions supported the proposed number of councillors, ward arrangements and the disestablishment of the Malvern Community Board, and 185 supported the proposed ward names. 498 submissions did not support the proposed number of councillors, ward arrangements or the disestablishment of the Malvern Community Board, with 396 opposing the proposed ward names.
23. Three submissions were not considered as they were duplicates.
24. Key themes in the submissions included:
  - a. Concerns about reducing the number of elected members to eight, with most submissions either in support of maintaining the current 10 members or suggesting an increase;
  - b. Concerns about rural representation, emphasising the importance of maintaining or increasing representation in rural areas, especially given urban population growth;
  - c. Concerns about disestablishing the Malvern Community Board, highlighting the large geographic size of the Malvern Ward, and questioning whether a single councillor could effectively represent such a large area with dispersed, rural communities;
  - d. Emphasis on the importance of local voices being heard and represented, especially for residents of the more remote rural communities.
25. The Council heard from submitters on 26 and 27 September 2024 and deliberated on submissions on 10 October 2024. In response to submissions, the Council agreed to increase the number of elected members to 11, retain the current ward structure and maintain the Malvern Community Board with its current membership and subdivisions.
26. The Council rejected the remaining submissions, noting that the final proposal:
  - a. Responded to feedback requesting greater representation to reflect the district's growth;
  - b. Ensured compliance with the +/-10% rule;
  - c. Recognised the large geographic area of the Malvern Ward and ensured rural representation for Malvern communities by maintaining the Malvern Community Board.

### **The Council's final proposal**

27. On 23 October 2024, the Council resolved its final proposal:
  - increasing the number of elected members to 11;
  - maintaining the current four wards and boundaries, but with updated dual te reo Māori/te reo Pākehā names;
  - maintaining the Malvern Community Board with its current arrangements or five members elected from three subdivisions, plus a single appointed member.

28. The final proposal ward arrangements were:

<b>Wards</b>	<b>Population*</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>Population per member</b>	<b>Deviation from average population per member</b>	<b>% deviation from average population per member</b>
Tawera Malvern	15,500	2	7,750	+364	+4.92
Kā Puna Springs	22,300	3	7,433	+47	+0.64
Te Waihora Ellesmere	13,450	2	6,725	-661	-8.95
Kā Mānia Rolleston	30,000	4	7,500	+114	+1.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,250</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7,386</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

29. The final proposal community board arrangements were:

<b>Malvern Community Board subdivisions</b>	<b>Population*</b>	<b>Number of members^</b>	<b>Population per member</b>	<b>Deviation from board average population per member</b>	<b>% deviation from board average population per member</b>
Tawera	3,050	1	3,050	-46	-1.49
Hawkins	6,420	2	3,210	+114	+3.68
West Melton	6,010	2	3,005	-91	-2.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,480</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3,096</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

^Not including appointed members

## Appeals against the Council's final proposal

30. Five appeals/objections were received and referred to the Commission under section 19Q of the Act. However, four were outside the scope of the Commission's powers to consider, leaving one appeal to resolve.
31. The appeal, from the Rolleston Residents' Association, preferred the Council's initial proposal or option two from the preliminary engagement stage. It raised the following matters for the Commission to resolve:
- Whether the Council's final proposal accurately reflected communities of interest in the district, especially around Rolleston;
  - The appropriate number of elected members for effective representation, with a preference for eight or 10, rather than 11;
  - Whether the Malvern Community Board should be disestablished.

## Hearing

32. The Commission met with the Council and the appellant at a hearing held online on 19 March 2025.
33. The Council was represented by Mayor Sam Broughton, and Representation Review Subcommittee Chair Councillor Phil Deans, and supported by Chief Executive, Sharon Mason, Executive Director People, Culture and Capability, Steve Gibling, Head of Marketing and Communications, Sarah Carnoutsos, and Senior Governance Advisor, Therese Davel.
34. The Rolleston Residents' Association was represented at the hearing by President, Mark Alexander.
35. At the Commission's invitation, the Malvern Community Board also addressed the hearing, represented by Deputy Chair John Verry.

### *Matters raised at the hearing*

36. Mayor Broughton and Councillor Deans, assisted by officers, explained the Council's process in conducting its representation review and reaching its final proposal. They emphasised the following points:
  - a. Selwyn is the fastest growing district in the country, with growth heavily concentrated around Rolleston and towns near the Christchurch boundary. Uneven growth makes compliance with the +/-10% rule difficult without significant boundary changes.
  - b. The Subcommittee and the Council's initial proposal focused on reflecting current communities of interest around the district in representation arrangements. Extensive qualitative and quantitative research specifically included under-represented voices, such as the Māori and Pasifika communities.
  - c. Research indicated strong perceptual and functional links with local towns/townships, centred around local primary schools, as well as a broader regional identity. It confirmed Burnham's strong functional reliance on Rolleston.
  - d. Research indicated residents of the current Malvern Ward look to their ward councillors for representation, rather than community board members. West Melton residents did not identify with Malvern and would rather form their own ward, although population numbers did not support doing so.
  - e. Towns on the urban fringe of Christchurch differ significantly from rural communities in the Malvern and Ellesmere Wards. These towns share strong commonalities with Christchurch, are part of the 'Greater Christchurch Partnership' area, and are zoned for lifestyle blocks alongside urban subdivisions.
  - f. Preliminary engagement indicated a desire for more councillors, a strong preference from rural communities for community boards that related to district geography, and greater representation for rural communities.



- g. The proposal for reduced councillor numbers aimed to improve governance, on the basis that full-time councillor positions would increase community engagement and potentially attract a more diverse range of candidates.
  - h. The proposal to disestablish the Malvern Community Board reflected residents' preference for representation via ward councillors, and the costs associated with maintaining the community board.
  - i. The Council is planning closer engagement with the 21 residents' associations across the district, to enable involvement in local issues more efficiently than through a community board.
  - j. The Council's final proposal confirmed a previously discounted ward model to ensure two councillors each for the Malvern and Ellesmere communities and reflect a desire for increasing councillor numbers. The final proposal did not represent the communities of interest research and was not recommended by officers.
  - k. The Subcommittee considered a mixed representation model (ward and at-large councillors) early on, discussing other councils' experiences but discounted it due to perceived disadvantages.
  - l. The Malvern Community Board's only delegation additional to its statutory role was running community awards for the Malvern area.
37. Mark Alexander, on behalf of the Rolleston Residents' Association, raised the following points in opposition to the Council's proposal:
- a. The Council's final proposal was not part of the preliminary engagement options or the initial proposal, and the community had not had an opportunity to provide feedback on it.
  - b. The final proposal splits Rolleston over two wards. The area around West Rolleston School is part of the Rolleston community rather than a separate community of 'West Rolleston.'
  - c. Residents living in the immediate vicinity of Rolleston are part of the Rolleston community rather than Ellesmere. Residents in these areas supported the Council's initial proposal.
  - d. Selwyn has too many councillors compared to other councils, and there is no evidence that reducing the number of councillors would affect access to them. A smaller council would result in improved governance, and the focus should be on quality of governance, rather than quantity.
  - e. There is no evidence that a single councillor for Malvern would be insufficient. With much of Selwyn now urban, a council of 11 members would result in 'over-governance'.
  - f. The Malvern Community Board has been dysfunctional and does not perform any activities that ward councillors could not do. Officer support for the community board diverts them from other work.
  - g. The Council's final proposal should be set aside, and either the initial proposal or option two from preliminary engagement upheld.

- h. The Rolleston Residents' Association has a good relationship with the Council, with at least one ward councillor attending each monthly meeting and good communication with council officers.
38. John Verry, on behalf of the Malvern Community Board, raised the following points:
- a. The Malvern Community Board is functioning effectively. Low voter turnout does not indicate dysfunction.
  - b. The Community Board has developed strong relationships with the 14 residents' associations in the Malvern Ward, with at least one board member attending each association meeting. Similar relationships are being formed with community groups outside Malvern.
  - c. Residents' associations do not have the same statutory roles as community boards.
  - d. There is a significant dissatisfaction with the Council amongst Malvern residents, and a tendency for the Council not to listen to feedback. The community believes the feedback collated by the Board, and the Darfield and Kirwee Residents' Associations during preliminary engagement was not adequately considered.
  - e. The rates intake for the Community Board is largely allocated to remuneration and Council support. The Board does not believe this represents value for money, and a smaller service charge would leave more resource for Board operations.
  - f. The Council's research conclusion that Malvern residents turn to ward councillors for representation may have been due to the wording of the question. The Community Board's community focus and the significant support for the Board were over-shadowed.
  - g. The Community Board supports a council of 11 members due to the size of the Malvern Ward and inconsistent internet and cell-phone connectivity.
  - h. The current boundaries of the Malvern Community Board are appropriate, however additional community boards in other areas may be justified too.

## **Matters for determination by the Commission**

39. Section 19R of the Act requires the Commission, in addition to consideration of appeals, to determine all matters set out in sections 19H and 19J relating to the representation arrangements for territorial authorities. A 2004 High Court decision reinforced that the Commission's role is not merely supervisory but requires it to form its own view on all the matters within scope of the review.
40. The matters in the scope of the review are:
- a. whether the council is to be elected from wards, the district as a whole, or a mixture of the two
  - b. the number of councillors

- c. if there are to be wards, the area and boundaries of wards and the number of members to be elected from each ward
  - d. whether there are to be community boards
  - e. if there are to be community boards, the area and boundaries of their communities, and the membership arrangements for each board
  - f. whether wards and community subdivisions may be defined and membership distributed between them in a way that does not comply with the +/-10% rule.
41. The appeal against the Council's final proposal raised the following overarching issues for the Commission to resolve:
- a. Whether the Council's final proposal accurately reflects communities of interest in the district and provides effective representation for them;
  - b. Whether eight or 10 elected members would provide more effective representation for the district than a council of 11 members;
  - c. Whether the Malvern Community Board should be disestablished.

## Key considerations

42. Based on the legislative requirements, the Commission's *Guidelines for local authorities undertaking representation reviews* (the Guidelines) identify the following three key factors when considering representation proposals:
- communities of interest
  - effective representation of communities of interest
  - fair representation for electors.

## Communities of interest

43. The Guidelines identify three dimensions for recognising communities of interest:
- a. *perceptual*: a sense of identity and belonging to a defined area, due to factors such as distinctive geographical features, local history, demographics, economic and social activities
  - b. *functional*: the area's ability to meet community needs for services such as schools, shopping, community and recreational facilities, employment, transport, and communication links
  - c. *political*: the ability to represent local community interests, including non-council structures such as for local iwi and hapū, residents' associations and special interest groups.

44. All three dimensions are important and often interlinked. We note that there is often a focus on the perceptual dimension, that is, what councils, communities or individuals intuitively feel are communities of interest. It is not enough to simply state that a community of interest exists; councils must provide evidence of how a sense of identity is reinforced, or how a community is distinct from neighbouring communities. Such evidence may include, for example:
- how communities rely on different services and facilities to function as part of the wider district, city, or region
  - demographic characteristics of an area (for example age, ethnicity, or deprivation profiles) and how these differ from other areas
  - how particular communities organise themselves and interact with others as part of the wider district, city, or region
45. In this review, the Council responded to the recommendation in our 2022 determination, utilising an independent research company to thoroughly investigate the perceptual and functional aspects of communities of interest in the district. The research techniques ensured that a variety of voices, including those traditionally under-represented in Council processes, were included.
46. Based on the research the Council identified the following:
- a. A large and rapidly growing urbanised population near the Christchurch City boundary, characterised by:
    - A highly concentrated population based in Rolleston, including Burnham and residents just outside the urban boundary, who share strong functional relationships with Rolleston, particularly for education and service provision;
    - A series of smaller fast-growing towns between Rolleston and the Christchurch City boundary, each maintaining a distinct identity, but sharing commonalities of interest including:
      - Large proportions of residents regularly commuting to Christchurch and demonstrating strong functional relationships with Christchurch City; and
      - A considerable proportion of 'lifestyle blocks' around towns, indicating a 'semi-rural' nature rather than the more traditionally 'rural' parts of the district;
  - b. A large area to the south and west of the district characterised by extensive agriculture activity, with smaller towns where residents feel a strong sense of identity. These areas have historically been divided into two for electoral purposes, with residents feeling a strong perceptual sense of separate rural identity as follows:
    - An extensive area in the west of the district, including large landholdings, high-country stations, and alpine environments, with large areas in Department of Conservation-administered National Park or reserve-land; and

- Rural areas in the south-east of the district, stretching across the plains to the east coast and deriving a sense of shared identity from the close proximity of Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

47. We are satisfied that the Council has undertaken a sufficiently robust investigation of communities of interest in the district to inform the representation review.

### **Fair representation for electors**

48. Section 19V of the Act requires the Commission to ensure that electors receive fair representation. Section 19V(2) establishes fair representation as a population per member ratio per ward and per community board subdivision that does not differ by more than 10% across the district or community. This is also known as 'the +/- 10% rule'.

49. Section 19V(3) provides exceptions to the +/-10% rule if certain conditions apply. In Selwyn District, the Commission may approve non-compliant arrangement if compliance would limit effective representation by

- dividing a community of interest between wards or subdivisions; or
- uniting within a ward or subdivision two or more communities of interest with few commonalities of interest.

50. The Council's initial and final proposal and either outcome sought by the appellant comply with the +/-10% rule. Therefore, we only need to consider matters of fair representation if we wish to consider representation arrangements other than these options.

### **Effective representation of communities of interest**

51. Section 19T of the Act requires the Commission to ensure that:

- the election of councillors in one of the ways specified in section 19H (i.e. at large, wards, or a combination of both) will provide effective representation of communities of interest within the district
- ward boundaries coincide with the boundaries of the current statistical meshblock areas determined by Statistics New Zealand and used for parliamentary electoral purposes
- so far as is practicable, ward boundaries coincide with community boundaries.

52. 'Effective representation' is not defined in the Act. However, the Commission sees this as requiring consideration of factors including an appropriate number of elected members and an appropriate basis of election of members for the district concerned (at large, wards, or a mix of both).

53. The Guidelines note that effective representation will be specific to each local authority but should consider the following factors:

- a. avoiding arrangements that may create barriers to participation, such as not recognising residents' familiarity and identity with an area
- b. not splitting recognised communities of interest between electoral subdivisions
- c. not grouping together two or more communities of interest that share few commonalities of interest
- d. accessibility, size, and configuration of an area including access to elected members and vice versa.

### *Number of elected members*

- 54. A key issue for us to determine is the number of elected members required to provide effective representation of communities of interest in Selwyn.
- 55. The Guidelines suggest that local authorities consider the total number of members necessary to provide effective representation for the entire district. In other words, the total number of members should not be arrived at solely as the product of the number of members per ward.
- 56. Section 19A of the Act provides that a territorial authority shall consist of between 5 and 29 members, excluding the mayor. The number of elected members for Selwyn District Council has varied over time, from 13 members when the Council was first established in 1989, to 11 from 2001, and 10 following the 2022 representation review.
- 57. The Council's initial proposal was for a council of eight members, increasing to 11 in its final proposal. The Council explained that reducing councillor numbers in its initial proposal aimed to create a focused, efficient group of fulltime councillors. The increase to 11 members in its final proposal reflected submissions concerned about single-member rural wards.
- 58. The appellant prefers an eight-member Council, although would also support 10 members. At the hearing, Mr Alexander emphasised the need for higher quality elected members. He suggested that reducing elected members would increase remuneration levels, thereby attracting quality candidates.
- 59. We appreciate that remuneration levels are a concern for many councils. However, there is no evidence to suggest that reducing councillor numbers to increase remuneration levels will ensure more effective representation through a broader range of candidates. In our view, adjustments to representation arrangements are not an appropriate mechanism for addressing councillor remuneration issues.
- 60. Instead, we must consider the number of councillors required for effective representation of communities of interest in Selwyn. Key factors for us to consider include the district's size and configuration, and how this affects accessibility of residents to elected members and vice versa.

61. Selwyn District is reasonably large, with the fastest growing population in the country. Most residents live near Rolleston or within easy access to the main state highways, although travel times to remote settlements like Arthur's Pass Village are close to two hours' drive from Rolleston.
62. The rapid population growth in Selwyn is a particularly relevant consideration. We noted in our 2022 determination that it is unusual for a council in a district experiencing significant population growth to consider reducing the number of elected members. We stand by that observation.
63. At current population levels, an eight-member council would result in one councillor per 10,156 residents. This is significantly higher than the councillor-to-resident ratio of similarly sized councils. We are concerned that, as the population continues to increase, accessibility of residents to councillors and vice versa may become compromised. We consider that a Council of eight members is insufficient for effective representation.
64. We have considered whether 10 members (maintaining the current number) or 11 members (increasing by one) is required for effective representation.
65. We acknowledge the Council's desire for a focused and efficient governance group. Governance performance is primarily a matter of elected member capability, but the workload expected of individual members is a factor in this. Preliminary engagement and submissions on the initial proposal showed some support for maintaining 10 members, and the appellant would support a 10-member council.
66. Conversely, many submissions to the initial proposal requested an increase in councillor numbers. The Malvern Community Board prefers 11 members, given the rural area size and inconsistencies in internet and cell-phone coverage.
67. We consider the current size of the Council is appropriate. With most of the population near main towns and state highways, there is no demonstrated need to increase councillor numbers for effective representation. However, a reduction to eight members may result in unsustainable workloads for individual members in the face of such rapid growth. A council of 10 members can provide the setting for a focused, efficient governance group without compromising accessibility.
68. Accordingly, we determine that Selwyn District Council will comprise 10 councillors plus the mayor.

### *Basis of election*

69. The next aspect for us to consider is how councillors should be elected – at-large, by ward-only, or a combination of the two (a mixed representation model). If there are to be wards, we also need to determine ward boundaries and the number of members per ward.

70. The Council's extensive investigation into communities of interest indicated distinct communities, including small rural communities and larger, rapidly growing urban areas. We consider that some form of ward representation is required to ensure effective representation of these communities.
71. Based on the Council's detailed analysis described at paragraph 46, we consider a ward model must reflect:
- Specific rural representation via two rural wards;
  - Appropriate groupings of communities in the immediate vicinity of Rolleston; and
  - Appropriate groupings of communities located between Rolleston and the Christchurch City boundary.
72. We do not think the current ward boundaries of the Council's final proposal provide effective representation for communities of interest because:
- A tightly drawn boundary around the Rolleston urban area excludes residents just outside the urban area, including residents of Burnham, who share strong perceptual and functional relationships with Rolleston. This results in the Rolleston community of interest being split between wards;
  - The current Malvern Ward groups traditionally rural communities with West Melton, a fast-growing, increasingly urban town with high proportions of residents commuting to Christchurch and numerous lifestyle blocks. We do not consider that there are sufficient commonalities of interest to justify grouping West Melton within Malvern.
73. We do not think option two from the preliminary engagement results in effective representation either. While the proposed Rolleston and Springs Wards appropriately reflect communities of interest in these areas, this comes at the expense of rural areas being grouped into one large ward. Strong community feedback supports two rural wards, and a single large rural ward may compromise effective representation for rural communities.
74. We consider the ward boundaries of the Council's initial proposal are most likely to provide effective representation for communities of interest, as they do not split communities of interest, nor unite communities sharing few commonalities of interest. We note that in the Council's initial proposal:
- the proposed Tawera Malvern and Te Waihora Ellesmere Wards provide two wards focused on the predominantly rural parts of the district;
  - the proposed Kā Mānia Rolleston Ward has been enlarged to include communities living in the immediate vicinity of the urban Rolleston area;
  - the towns and townships located between Rolleston and the Christchurch boundary are grouped together in the proposed Kā Puna Springs Ward, reflecting strong commonalities of interest despite each maintaining clear individual identities.
75. However, the initial proposal only provides for eight councillors, which we have already determined insufficient for effective representation.



76. We have considered providing for 10 members using the initial proposal ward boundaries, either by increasing the Tawera Malvern and Te Waihora Ellesmere Wards to two members each or by increasing the Kā Mānia Rolleston and Kā Puna Springs Wards to four members each. This results in:

<b>Wards</b>	<b>Population*</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>Population per member</b>	<b>Deviation from average population per member</b>	<b>% deviation from average population per member</b>
Tawera Malvern	9,510	2	4,755	-3,369	<b>-41.47</b>
Kā Puna Springs	28,490	3	9,497	+1,373	<b>+16.90</b>
Te Waihora Ellesmere	10,930	2	5,465	-2,659	<b>-32.73</b>
Kā Mānia Rolleston	32,310	3	10,770	+2,646	<b>+32.57</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,240</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8,124</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

<b>Wards</b>	<b>Population*</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>Population per member</b>	<b>Deviation from average population per member</b>	<b>% deviation from average population per member</b>
Tawera Malvern	9,510	1	9,510	+1,386	<b>+17.06</b>
Kā Puna Springs	28,490	4	7,123	-1,002	<b>-12.33</b>
Te Waihora Ellesmere	10,930	1	10,930	+2,806	<b>+34.54</b>
Kā Mānia Rolleston	32,310	4	8,078	-47	-0.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,240</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8,124</b>		

\*Based on Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa 2023 population estimates (2018 census base)

77. The first option results in significant non-compliance with the +/-10% rule for all wards, beyond what we feel could be justified under section 19V of the Act. While the second results in a compliant Kā Mānia Rolleston Ward, the Tawera Malvern and Te Waihora Ellesmere Wards become significantly under-represented. As large rural areas, we could not justify this outcome either.
78. We have therefore considered adding two at-large members to the ward arrangements in the Council's initial proposal, to bring the number of elected members to 10.
79. At the hearing, the Council advised a mixed representation model was briefly considered at an early stage, but ruled out due to:
- A perception that at-large councillors could be perceived as superfluous compared to ward councillors;
  - A perception that at-large campaigns could be more costly and deter potential candidates; and

- The decision to retain the FPP voting system, which was seen as less conducive to a mixed representation model than the STV system.
80. We acknowledge that neither of the preliminary engagement options nor the Council's initial or final proposal contemplated a mixed representation model. This means that the addition of at-large councillors has not been tested with the Selwyn community.
81. However, we consider there are persuasive arguments for considering at-large councillors for Selwyn. A mixed representation model:
- Allows wards to reflect communities of interest without compromising the overall size of the council;
  - Recognises the strong sense of district-wide identity reflected in the Council's community of interest research;
  - Acknowledges strong patterns of movements for residents across ward boundaries and out of the district for employment, education, and recreational activities;
  - Allows representation for district-wide communities of interest without a geographical base, for example, youth, young families, and businesses;
  - Provides a greater range of choice for rural electors of the Tawera Malvern and Te Waihora Ellesmere Wards, allowing them to vote for three councillors rather than a single ward councillor.
82. Concerns regarding at-large councillors being perceived as superfluous could be remedied by the using a 'portfolio' system, allocating representation of specific district-wide communities of interest to at-large councillors. We consider that the benefits of adding two at-large members to ensure effective representation outweigh any perception that at-large campaigning is more costly.
83. We acknowledge the Council's decision to continue using the FPP voting system could skew voting for at-large members towards urban areas. However, the representation review process has demonstrated high levels of engagement from rural residents and at-large members would provide increased candidate choice for rural voters. The Council can reconsider the STV voting system ahead of the 2028 election.
84. On balance, we consider that the benefits to effective representation of communities of interest from a mixed representation system outweigh the risks of doing so. We therefore determine that a mixed representation model be used for Selwyn District, comprising:
- Eight members elected by ward arrangements as set out in the Council's initial proposal; and
  - Two members elected at-large.

## Community Boards

85. Section 19J of the Act requires every territorial authority, as part of its review of representation arrangements, to determine whether there should be community boards in the district and, if so, the structure of the community boards. This determination must consider the principles in section 4 of the Act relating to fair and effective representation for individuals and communities.
86. The matters to be determined are:
- the number of boards to be constituted;
  - their names and boundaries;
  - the number of elected and appointed member; and
  - whether boards are to be subdivided for electoral purposes.
87. Section 19W also requires consideration of the criteria applying to reorganisation proposals in the Local Government Act 2002 as appropriate. Applying these criteria to reviews relating to community boards means considering:
- a. Will the proposal promote good local government of the parent district, and the community area concerned?
  - b. Will the community board have the resources necessary to enable them to carry out their respective responsibilities, duties, and powers?
  - c. Will the community board have an area that is appropriate for the efficient and effective performance of its role?
  - d. Will the community contain a sufficiently distinct community or communities of interest?
88. The Council's initial proposal included disestablishing the Malvern Community Board. The final proposal retains the current arrangements for the Malvern Community Board in response to strong submissions seeking its continuation.
89. At the hearing that, the Council explained that it sought a closer relationship with the 21 residents' associations in the district as an alternative to community board representation. It envisaged bi-monthly meetings directly with the Council to ensure grass-roots voices were heard and local issues efficiently addressed. However, this approach does not yet appear to be fully developed or implemented by the Council. Accordingly, there is little evidence to indicate whether it is an appropriate substitute for the statutory role of a community board.
90. The appellant seeks the disestablishment of the Board, arguing that it is dysfunctional, does not undertake activities that ward councillors could not manage, and diverts officer resources.

91. The Malvern Community Board explained that it has formed close relationships with the 14 residents' associations within the Malvern area, with Board members attending each meeting. This approach appears to align with the alternative model for community engagement proposed by the Council. The Board noted further that residents' associations do not have the same statutory role as community boards.
92. One of the statutory roles of community boards, as set out in section 52 of the Local Government Act 2002, is to "represent and act as an advocate for the interests of its community". While community engagement is an important part of understanding local views, it is not a substitute for representation and advocacy. Representation involves the democratic mandate of elected members, including community board members, to bring community perspectives to the council's decision-making table.
93. The Council's initial proposal to disestablish the Malvern Community Board would have removed a form of localised representation and advocacy before an alternative method of direct community engagement was well-developed. The Council's decision to retain the Malvern Community Board in its final proposal acknowledges the level of community support indicated for the Board. Retention of the Malvern Community Board does not prevent the Council from further exploring how to achieve deeper community engagement.
94. We consider that, in a rapidly growing district experiencing high levels of urbanisation, the Malvern Community Board is likely to promote good local government, by providing a direct voice for the rural Malvern community at the Council table. This is particularly important, given that we have upheld a ward model providing one ward councillor for the Tawera Malvern Ward. The Community Board can support the single ward councillor to ensure voices from around the ward are represented at the Council table.
95. We are satisfied that the Malvern community contains sufficiently distinct communities of interest to sustain a community board, and that the board area is appropriate for the performance of its role. We therefore uphold the continuation of the Malvern Community Board.
96. We have determined above that the Tawera Malvern Ward will follow the ward boundaries as set out in the Council's initial proposal. We consider the same boundaries are appropriate for the Malvern Community Board, meaning that the current West Melton Subdivision will no longer be part of the Board area.
97. The Board has been represented by five members for at least the past 20 years. This level of representation is familiar to residents, and appropriate given the dispersed nature of some of the Malvern communities. There is likewise a long history of having appointed members to the Board, and we consider it appropriate to continue doing so. We determine there to be one appointed member to the Board, being the Tawera Malvern Ward councillor.

98. The final aspect for us to consider is whether the Board should be subdivided. Since at least 2001, the Malvern Community Board was subdivided into the Tawera and Hawkins Subdivisions. In 2022, with the addition of West Melton into the Malvern Ward, a third West Melton Subdivision was added, with the boundaries of the Tawera and Hawkins Subdivisions adjusted to ensure compliance with the +/-10% rule.
99. Given the long history of subdivision, we determine that the Tawera and Hawkins Subdivisions should be retained. However, we consider that effective representation of communities of interest is best reflected by reverting the subdivision boundaries as close to the pre-2022 boundaries as possible.
100. In practice, this means moving the Sheffield area from the Hawkins Subdivision back into the Tawera Subdivision, where it was previously located. To achieve this, we determine that the following meshblocks be moved from the Hawkins Subdivision to the Tawera Subdivision: 2464000, 2463800, 4011480, 2463100, 4011484, 4011050, 4011483, 4011481, 4011049, and 4011482.
101. We encourage the Council early in the next term to consider whether the Board's delegations provide it with sufficient decision-making powers to enhance representation of Tawera Malvern communities.

## Commission recommendations

102. We acknowledge the suggestion that other communities in the district could benefit from community board representation. Given increasing urbanisation, we see potential in considering a community board covering all rural areas in the district. We recommend that the Council consider the potential advantages of this in its next review.

## Conclusion

103. We have made this determination pursuant to section 19R of the Local Electoral Act 2001 having considered the information before the Commission and the requirements of sections 19T, 19W, and 19V of the Act.

### Local Government Commission

Commissioner Brendan Duffy (Chair)

Commissioner Bonita Bigham

Temporary Commissioner Gwen Bull

7 April 2025