

## The potential options for local government reform in the Wairarapa

### *Context*

1. These options were developed in a workshop with Wairarapa and regional council councillors on the 23 November 2015 and a further workshop with a smaller group of councillors and officers on 21 December 2015. A further round of changes were made following additional workshops with councillors in February 2016 and May 2016.
2. Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Kahungunu ki Wairarapa are in Treaty of Waitangi settlement negotiations with the Crown. Local governance arrangements agreed through the settlement process will have to be implemented by the Local Government Commission and councils in any new council arrangements. The mandating of Te Upoko Taiao through the Kahungunu settlement in particular will impact on the governance of regional plans and regional policy statements under the RMA in the Wairarapa. Any new Wairarapa natural resource management committee will have to have 50/50 elected councillor and iwi nominated membership to reflect the current governance structure of Te Upoko Taiao and the settlement agreements.
3. Several options include the creation of new committees to formalise the relationship between territorial and regional government in the Wairarapa. While the Local Government Commission can recommend that particular committees are established as part of a reorganisation, currently the Commission cannot require that a committee exists beyond one council term. Legislative change is needed to make these committees enduring. Under legislative proposals announced by the Government in March, the Commission will be able make these committees enduring. It is expected that the legislation will be passed in late 2016 or early 2017.

### *Option A – the Status Quo*

4. Under this option there would be no structural change. The four councils in the Wairarapa would continue to look for opportunities to work together to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local government services.

### *Option B – Wairarapa District Council*

5. This option would create a new district council, combining South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council, and Masterton District Council into one council called the Wairarapa District Council (WDC).
6. The role, functions and services provided by Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) in the Wairarapa would be unchanged.
7. Wairarapa councillors would be elected from seven wards – five from Masterton, two from Carterton, one each from Greytown, Featherston and Martinborough; plus two rural wards with one councillor each. Current ward boundaries for Masterton urban, Martinborough, Greytown and Featherston would be retained. The existing Carterton urban, Carterton rural and Masterton rural wards would be replaced with one Carterton ward and two rural wards. The three existing community boards in Martinborough, Featherston and Greytown would be retained with five instead of six members. Community boards for Carterton and Masterton would be established

with six and seven members respectively. There would also be a rural advisory committee and a Māori Advisory Committee.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Option C – Wairarapa District Council and a joint Wairarapa Unitary Plan Committee***

8. In addition to the WDC, a new joint Unitary Plan Committee of the WDC and GWRC would be established. The Wairarapa Unitary Plan Committee would comprise WDC, GWRC and iwi members.
9. The committee would be responsible for developing a single resource management plan for the Wairarapa, combining both the regional council and district council resource management plans into a single 'unitary' plan.
10. The committee would also have an on-going role in evaluating the implementation of the plan, ready for the next review of the plan.
11. The unitary plan would go to the Wairarapa District Council and the Greater Wellington Regional Council for final approval and adoption.
12. All resource consent decisions and monitoring would remain with their respective district and regional council.
13. The committee would be made up of three members from GWRC, three from WDC, three nominated by Rangitāne and three nominated by Kahungunu ki Wairarapa (twelve members in total). The proposed iwi membership on this committee reflects the Agreement in Principle with the Crown for Kahungunu ki Wairarapa's Treaty Settlement.
14. The committee would be advised by officers from both councils. Arrangements for servicing of the committee would be as agreed by the councils.

### ***Option D – Wairarapa District Council and two committees with the regional council***

15. Under this option, the WDC would be formed as Option B above. In addition, two new regional council committees would be established – a Wairarapa Services Committee and a Wairarapa Natural Resources Committee.
16. GWRC would continue to rate for these functions and services and be responsible for service delivery.
17. For resource management planning, there would continue to be a separate Wairarapa district plan and regional council natural resources plan. There would not be a unitary plan for the Wairarapa.
18. **Wairarapa Services Committee:** This committee would be responsible for a number of activities and services for the Wairarapa that are currently delivered by Greater Wellington Regional Council, with the purpose of increasing the Wairarapa/rural 'lens' over these activities and services. The committee would be set up as a standing committee of the regional council.
19. The Wairarapa Services Committee would have four RC members and four WDC members. This committee would also have a representative nominated by each of Rangitāne and Kahungunu ki Wairarapa with voting rights. Specialist or expert non-voting members could be co-opted on to the committee for particular issues.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mstn.govt.nz/events/latest/Governance%20structureNov.pdf>

20. The co-chairs would be a regional councillor and a Wairarapa district councillor.
21. This committee's functions would include the following regional council activities in the Wairarapa:
- flood management
  - land management activities (e.g. erosion control work)
  - biosecurity
  - biodiversity
22. The committee would also be able to provide advice on any other Wairarapa issues it considered relevant to the regional council, such as public transport issues.
23. The committee would make recommendations to the regional council for final approval. If the regional council does not approve the committee's recommendation, it must send the issue back to the committee for further consideration. This is similar to the operation of several other regional council committees and, in practice, decisions are rarely returned to the committee for further consideration.
24. **Wairarapa Natural Resources Committee** A committee would be established for RMA planning functions with the same delegations as Te Upoko Taiao.
- 24.1. The terms of reference for Te Upoko Taiao gives the committee an oversight role for resource consenting (largely reporting on the activity) and the ability to appoint hearing commissioners. In practice this is a very limited role.
- 24.2. The terms of reference also provide for delegated authority to an Appointments Group to appoint hearing commissioners. The Appointments Group consists of the co-chairs of the Committee, the chair of the Environment Committee, in consultation with the General Manager Environment.
- 24.3. The regional council delegates the power to decide resource consents to the hearings commissioners appointed by the Appointments Group or the Committee. (Under the RMA only the Council can delegate this power.)
- 24.4. All resource consents not decided by hearings commissioners (i.e. non-notified consents) are delegated to council officers.
- 24.5. No resource consents are determined directly by Te Upoko Taiao.
25. This standing committee would include three members from GWRC, three from WDC and three nominated by Rangitāne and three nominated by Kahungunu ki Wairarapa (twelve members in total).

### ***Option E – Wairarapa District Council takes on most regional council functions***

26. This option involves transferring all regional council functions to WDC except public transport, regional transport planning and sustainable transport promotion, emergency management, regional economic development, and climate change.
27. This would mean the WDC taking on the roles of flood management, land management, and environmental management under the RMA. The WDC's resource management committee would include half its members nominated by Rangitāne and Kahungunu ki Wairarapa.
28. WDC would rate its residents for its new functions.

***Option F – Wairarapa Unitary Council***

29. This would be a new unitary council, combining South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council, Masterton District Council and the regional council in the Wairarapa into one council called the Wairarapa Unitary Council (WUC).
30. The Wairarapa would no longer be part of the Wellington region. GWRC would not have jurisdiction over or carry out any activity in the Wairarapa.
31. WUC would have wards and community boards the same as the WDC in Option B.
32. WUC's natural resource management committee would include half its members nominated by Rangitāne and Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, as per the Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Treaty settlement.
33. WUC would rate Wairarapa residents for all district council and regional council functions. It would employ or contract all council officers working in the Wairarapa. WUC could still participate in shared arrangements with other councils, for regional emergency management for example.