

The Local Government Commission



Commissioner
Bonita Bigham



Chair
Dr Sue Bidrose



Commissioner
Andrew Turner

Supported by a small team of officials based across the country

Commissioner and officials introductions



**Local Government
Commission**
Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Housekeeping



Emergency
procedures



Toilets



Interactive
session



Anonymity
unless you ask



Media
attendance

Before we begin, here are a few housekeeping notes:

Emergency exit locations and evacuation assembly areas.

Toilet locations.

This will be an interactive session, and we will be asking you to provide feedback on different matters.

Any feedback you provide to us will be treated as anonymous. However, if you would prefer your feedback to be recognised as coming from a particular group, please just say so.

If any media representatives are here, you are very welcome. We ask that media questions be provided to us after the session.

Thanks very much for attending, we are looking forward to hearing your thoughts.



What does the Commission do?

Independent decision maker

Considers requests for change

Makes formal decisions on reorganisation

Community-focused process

Other roles: representation, good practice



Independent decision-maker: The Commission is an independent body that has to make decisions about local councils, based on legislation and evidence. We are independent from your local councils, and our decisions are not directed by central government.

Considers requests for change: One of our roles is to assess proposals for changes to how councils are structured. That might be significant changes, like amalgamating councils, through to boundary adjustments, or transferring responsibilities between councils. We are here today because we have been asked to look at how councils are arranged in Southland.

Makes formal decisions on reorganisation: The Commission is the body that decides whether a reorganisation proceeds, and what form it takes. In this case, for Southland, IF the Commission decides a reorganisation is the best way forward, that decision will be subject to a poll of you, the electors. Our decisions can be appealed to the High Court on points of law.

Community-focused process: When considering reorganisation, the Commission must look at what will best serve local communities. The discussions we're having around the region this month are the first stage in our engagement with you, the Southland community. There will be more opportunities to give us your feedback as the process continues.

Other roles: For completeness, the Commission has some other statutory roles. These relate to Council representation – the number of elected members, wards and community board structures, and in promoting good local government practice.

This session

Reorganisation
investigation –
current stage

Your feedback
– interactive

Questions and
answers

Come and chat
afterwards

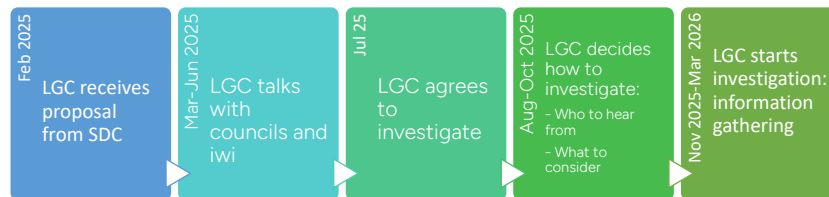
At this session we will outline the steps of the Southland investigation process, including where we are currently up to and what might come next

We will then be asking for your feedback on the issues that matter to you and your community. This will involve a brain-storming session, and then we'll ask you to provide your thoughts on three different questions that you'll see on the walls.

We will have time for a question / answer session.

You are also welcome to come and chat with us afterwards

How we got here



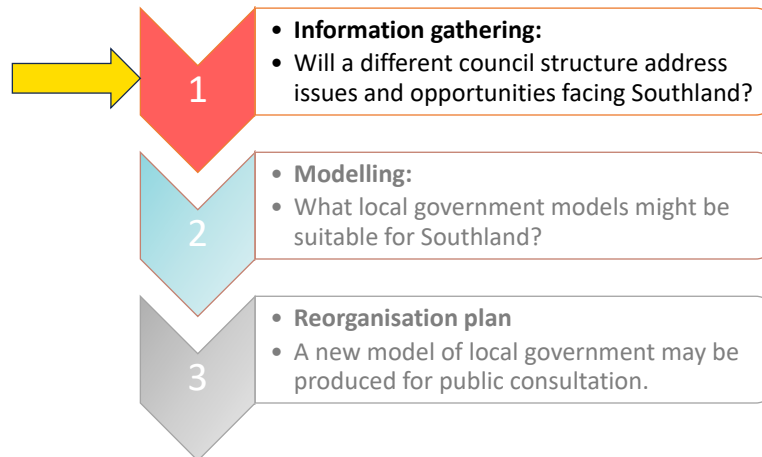
- This process started when Southland District Council lodged a request for the Commission to look at a reorganising local councils in Southland.
- When we receive these requests, we must talk with all affected councils and iwi about things like the potential benefits of having us look at reorganisation, and the potential disruption, for them and the community
- From there, we decided there was enough potential benefits to justify looking at this, and agreed to conduct what's called an 'investigation'
- The Commission then had to decide what's called an 'investigation process'. That is, who it needs to hear from, what it needs to consider – and how it would do this.
- We put community views at the heart of our investigation, and so does the legislation. That's why we're here today.
- Councils and iwi are also central voices, and we're talking to them too.
- We started in December by talking to council and iwi leaders to understand what they think the current challenges and opportunities are for Southland.
- Through March we're talking with communities, councils and iwi again in more depth.

NB

- Southland District Council proposed two unitary authorities for Southland.
- The Commission's job is to understand the issues and opportunities in the region and look at the most appropriate structures based on that information.

- We are not limited to considering the model proposed by Southland District Council.

Stages of the reorganisation investigation



This reorganisation investigation has different stages

We are currently at the first stage, which is focused on gathering information. We want to understand whether a different council structure is likely to address some of the issues and opportunities facing Southland.

We are not discussing specific structural models today—that will come in the next stage, where we may model different options for local government structure change in Southland, after we've understood your issues and aspirations.

Finally, if we think a different structure of local government will help Southland, we will set out of preferred structure in a draft reorganisation plan

Please note there will be further opportunities to provide feedback at later stages of the investigation

How do you interact with your local councils?

In a moment, we'll be asking you for some specific feedback. But first, let's think about the ways you interact with your local councils in everyday life. We all interact with council in lots of small ways, even if we don't always notice it.

Some ways in which you may have interacted with your councils recently:

- Applied for a building or resource consent
- Fenced off a waterway or attended a community tree planting event
- Used a local park, sports ground or playground
- Seen a civil defence response in action during an emergency event
- Visited a local library
- Paid a rates bill
- Put rubbish into a public rubbish bin
- Travelled on a local road or footpath to come to this session

As you can see, we all interact with our local councils in lots of different ways, even if we don't always think about it.

These everyday experiences help to shape what matters to us. We will all have thoughts on what is working well and what could be done better, and what we think our community will need in the future.

Information gathering – we want to hear from you

- 1 What matters most to you about how local government serves your community?
- 2 What is working well at the moment?
What could be improved?
- 3 What will your community need from local government in the future?

We're now going to explore these ideas a bit more. We want to understand:

- What matters to you most about how your local councils support your community?
- What's working well for you at the moment – and what's not
- What your community will need from your local councils going forward

We have three questions around the room and we'd like you to note down your thoughts on each one – we'll stick these up on the wall under each question. For each question please think both about your local district/city council as well as your regional council.

Question 1:

We've just thought a bit about how we interact with our local councils each day. When you think about the way you interact with local government, what do you really value? What really matters to you in your experiences with local government? For example, it could be safety? A sense of local identity? Fairness? Feeling connected? Being listened to?

Question 2:

Think about a time when you've interacted with one of your councils. Maybe you've used a local facility, applied for something or noticed an issue in your local community. What about the experience worked well for you? What didn't work so well – perhaps something was frustrating or could have been better?

Question 3:

Think about how your community might be changing – there could be more, or fewer, people living here, different workplaces, schools or community groups, new opportunities or environmental challenges. These might affect how your interactions with your local councils change over time.

Thinking out 10-20 years or more, what will your community need from your councils to stay a great place to live? You might be thinking about different services, community resilience, a sense of connection or how your community's voice is heard – anything that you think future generations might care about.

Community survey

- Hard copies available to complete here
- Complete on our website www.lgc.govt.nz
- Scan this QR code:



Thank you for sharing your views with us on each question

We are also collecting feedback via a community survey. You can find this on our website or by scanning this QR code. We'd love to collect your views this way as well.

We have some hard copies available here if you'd like to complete these and return them to us tonight. The survey should only take a few minutes to fill in.

Questions?

Following time for questions:

Thank you for sharing your feedback with us. You are welcome to remain after we have closed to chat if you like

A reminder, we're currently in Phase 1, which focuses on understanding issues and opportunities that reorganisation might address. This phase runs until the end of April

After April, we'll publish our findings, including whether reorganisation is the right approach for Southland.

If it looks appropriate, we'll move into Phase 2 (May–November 2026) to identify a possible council model.

There will be more opportunities for you to engage with us in later stages.