

Rangitikei District Council – Representation Review 2021

Discussion Document

19 August 2021 Council Workshop

Summary

Direction required

Direction is required on which 2 – 3 options should be provided in the Council report for decision at the 26 August meeting for:

- Number of Councillors
- Ward Structure (general / Māori)
- Community Boards

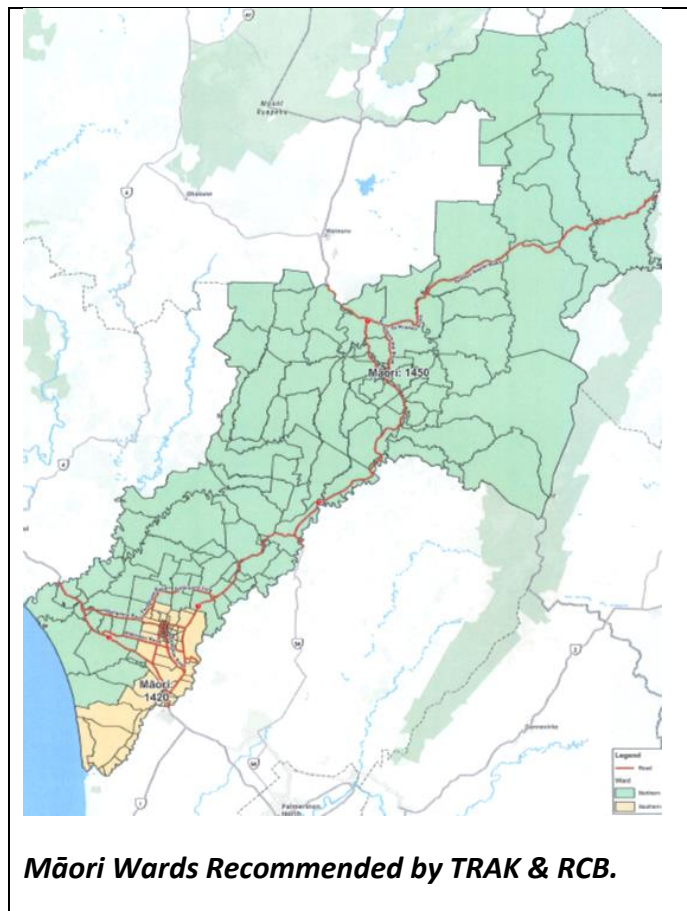
Council is required to adopt the Initial Proposal at the Council meeting on 26 August which will then go through a formal public consultation process.

Māori Wards

Te Roopuu Ahi Kaa and the Ratana Community Board both recommended to Council a two-ward system, with the boundaries aligned with the concept of ‘fair’ representation.

Community Boards

Previous direction provided to Officers has been retaining the existing Community Boards in their current form.

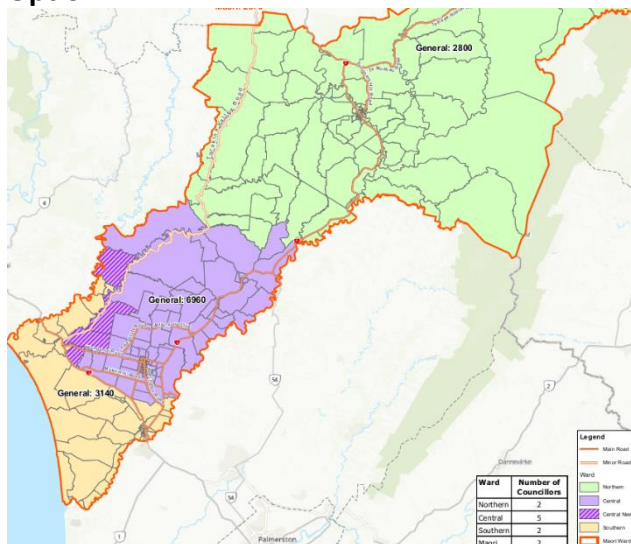


Summary of Options – General Wards / Numbers

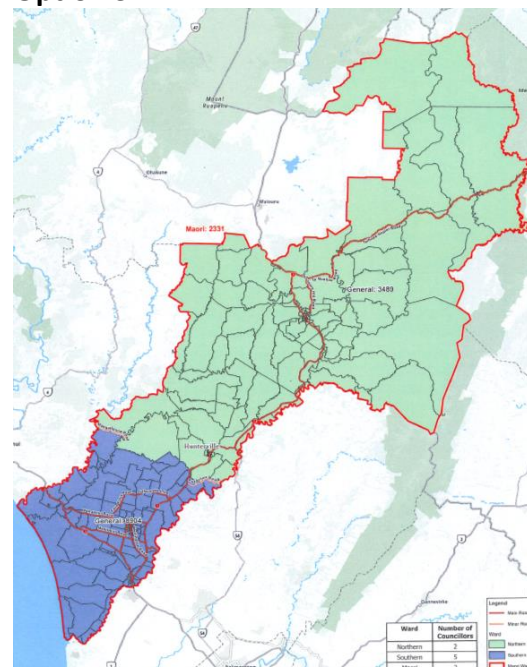
The table below provides an overview of the options requested for further consideration from the July workshop.

Option	Number of Councillors			Number of General Wards	Fair (Yes/No) Minor – 10-15% non-compliance Major – over 15% non-compliance
	Total	General	Māori		
Option 1	11	9	2	3	Yes
Option 1A	8	7	1	3	No – Major
Option 1B	9	7	2	3	No – Major
Option 1C	10	8	2	3	No – Minor
Option 3	9	7	2	2	Yes
Option 3A	8	7	1	2	Yes
Option 3B	10	8	2	2	No – Minor
Option 3C	11	9	2	2	No - Major

Option 1



Option 3



Introduction

The Council's decision to introduce Māori Electoral Ward/s for the 2022 Local Government Elections triggered a requirement to undertake a Representation Review within a compressed timeframe. The Council is required to adopt a set of representation options as an Initial Proposal (on 26 August 2021), consult with the public and consider submissions, and adopt a final proposal for public notification (target date 28 October 2021). Included within the scope of the Representation Review are the number and basis of election of Councillors, whether or not to have a Community Board or Boards and the number and basis of election of Board Members.

In undertaking the Review to date, Council has held two workshops and has considered an extensive discussion document containing a wide range of options and variations thereon. The first workshop, held on 17 May 2021, gave Council the opportunity to be briefed on the issues to be considered in the Representation Review and to give broad direction on the matters that should be considered more closely within the review. The discussion document canvassed the legal framework, process and requirements for the Representation Review, various representation options, including considerations and options arising out of the introduction of Māori Ward/s.

Key requirements in the Representation Review process include determining the number of Councillors required for the good governance of the District, identifying/reviewing communities of interest, ensuring effective representation of those communities of interest and seeking to achieve fair representation between any Wards established to represent those various communities of interest. The +/-10% 'rule' is an important guide in assessing fair representation.

A revised briefing paper was prepared for the second Council workshop that was held on 8 July 2021. After taking into account the key requirements of the Representation Review, the workshop resulted in staff and advisors being asked to prepare this additional discussion document focussing and exploring two representation options in further detail with total councillor numbers between 8 and 11.

Representation Matters – Issues of Consensus

1. There are distinct communities of interest within the Rangitikei District. There is a rural community of interest that is more distant from urban areas and services, and associated with pastoral farming and forestry activity and rural and marae-based villages.
2. The current three ward structure (namely Northern, Central and Southern) is considered to largely reflect and effectively represent the communities of interest that have been identified.
3. There are currently 11 councillors plus the Mayor and the number of Councillors regarded as providing for the good governance and effective representation for the District is between 8 and 11 plus the Mayor. There has been little support for increasing that number even with the addition of Māori Wards

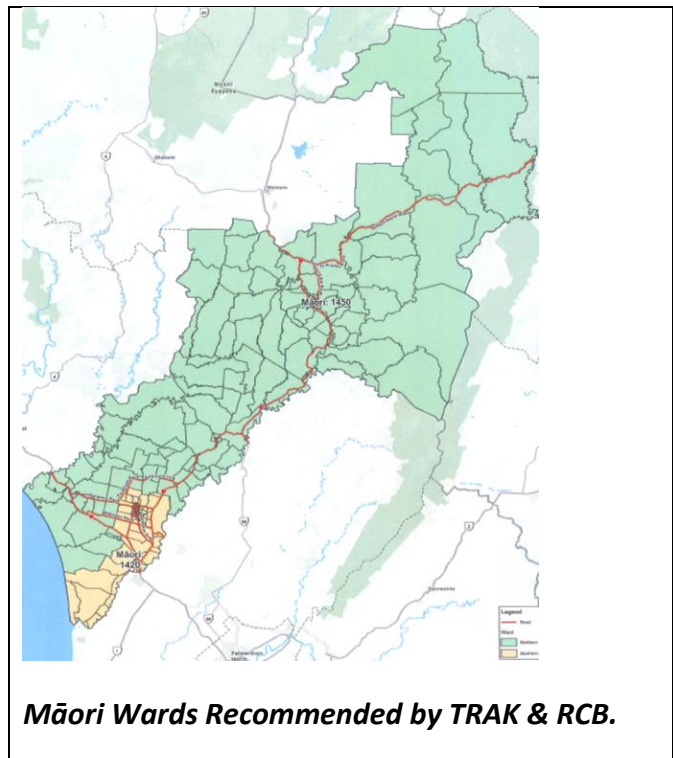
4. Further feedback was sought from Te Roopuu Ahi Kaa to determine preference between a single ward with 2 Councillors or two wards with one Councillor each. Their recommendation was for 2 wards.
5. Electing some Councillors at large is not regarded as adding any benefits in terms of effective representation.
6. The Taihape and Ratana Community Boards are regarded as providing effective representation to these communities of interest.
7. The current number of members, basis of election and subdivision structure for both the Community Boards is regarded as providing effective representation for their particular communities of interest.
8. There is no requirement for additional Community Boards in order to provide effective representation for other communities of interest.

Community Boards

Previous direction provided to Officers has been retaining the existing Community Boards in their current form.

Māori Wards

Te Roopuu Ahi Kaa and the Ratana Community Board both recommend to Council a two-ward system, with the boundaries aligned with the concept of 'fair' representation.



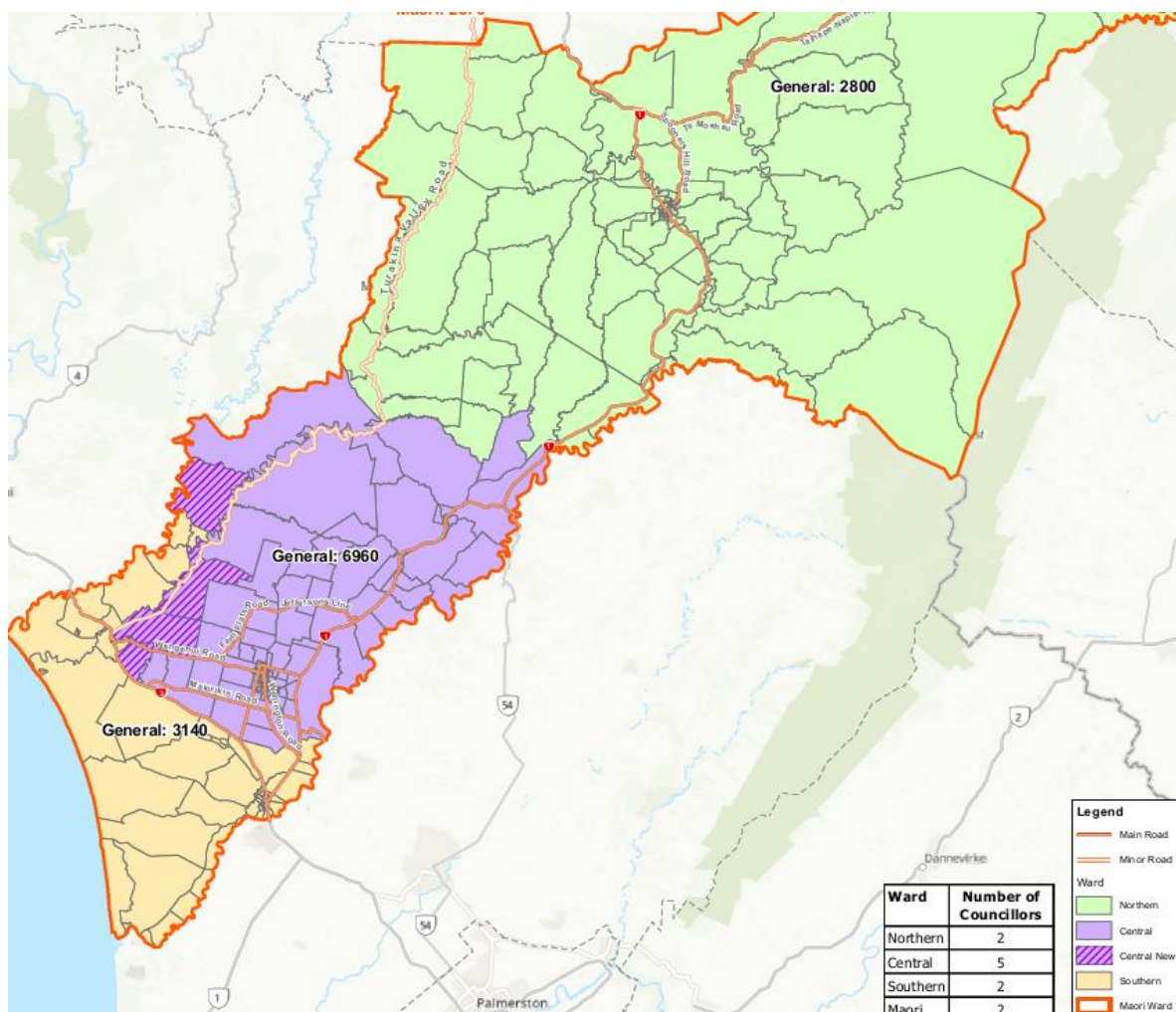
Representation options further considered

Elected Members asked for two representation options to be further examined with variations for the total number of Councillors between 8 and 11, plus the Mayor. These are outlined below.

Option 1 – Amended Three General Ward Structure, Two Māori Wards (Option 1 in the briefing paper considered at the workshop on 8 July)

This option retains an amended three ward structure (North, Central and South with a shift of people in meshblocks in the western part of the Southern Ward into the Central Ward). Options are provided as follows:

- Option 1 - 11 Councillors
- Option 1A – 8 Councillors
- Option 1B – 9 Councillors
- Option 1C - 10 Councillors



Option 1 with 11 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	2,800	2	1,400	-33	-2.33%
Central	6,960	5	1,392	-41	-2.88%
Southern	3,140	2	1,570	137	9.54%
Total General	12,900	9	1,433	-	-
Māori Ward – North	1,450	1	1,450	15	1.05%
Māori Ward - South	1,420	1	1,420	-15	-1.05%
Total Māori	2,870	2	1,435	-	-
District Total	15,770	11	-	-	-

All wards comply with the +/- 10% rule.

Option 1A with 8 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	2,800	1	2,800	957	51.93%
Central	6,960	4	1,740	-103	-5.58%
Southern	3,140	2	1,570	-273	-14.81%
Total General	12,900	7	1,843	-	-
Māori Ward/s	2,870	1	2,870	-	-
District Total	15,770	8	-	-	-

Under this option, two of the wards do not fit within the +/-10% requirement. The Northern Ward is under-represented by a large margin (51.93%). The Southern Ward, at a is over-represented (-14.81%). This option does not allow two Māori Councillors.

In order to make Option 1A closer to the +/- 10% margin almost 800 people will need to be shifted out from the Northern Ward into the Central Ward and almost 200 people moved out of the Central Ward into the Southern Ward. With the relatively low population both are significant numbers and will significantly affect current views on communities of interest in all three wards.

Option 1B with 9 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	2,800	1	2,800	957	51.93%
Central	6,960	4	1,740	-103	-5.58%
Southern	3,140	2	1,570	-273	-14.81
Total General	12,900	7	1,843	-	-
Māori Ward – North	1,450	1	1,450	15	1.05%
Māori Ward - South	1,420	1	1,420	-15	-1.05%
Total Māori	2,870	2	1,435	-	-
District Total	15,770	9	-	-	-

Under this option, two of the wards do not fit within the +/-10% requirement. The Northern Ward, at 51.93% deviation above the average general population per Councillor, is under-represented by a large margin. The Southern Ward, at -14.81% deviation below the average general population per Councillor, is over-represented.

In order to make Option 1B closer to the +/- 10% margin almost 800 people will need to be shifted out from the Northern Ward into the Central Ward and almost 200 people moved out of the Central Ward into the Southern Ward. With the relatively low population both are significant numbers and will significantly affect current views on communities of interest in all three wards.

Option 1C with 10 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	2,800	2	1,400	-213	-13.17%
Central	6,960	4	1,740	128	7.90%
Southern	3,140	2	1,570	-43	-2.63%
Total General	12,900	8	1,613	-	-
Māori Ward – North	1,450	1	1,450	15	1.05%
Māori Ward - South	1,420	1	1,420	-15	-1.05%
Total Māori	2,870	2	1,435	-	-
District Total	15,770	10	-	-	-

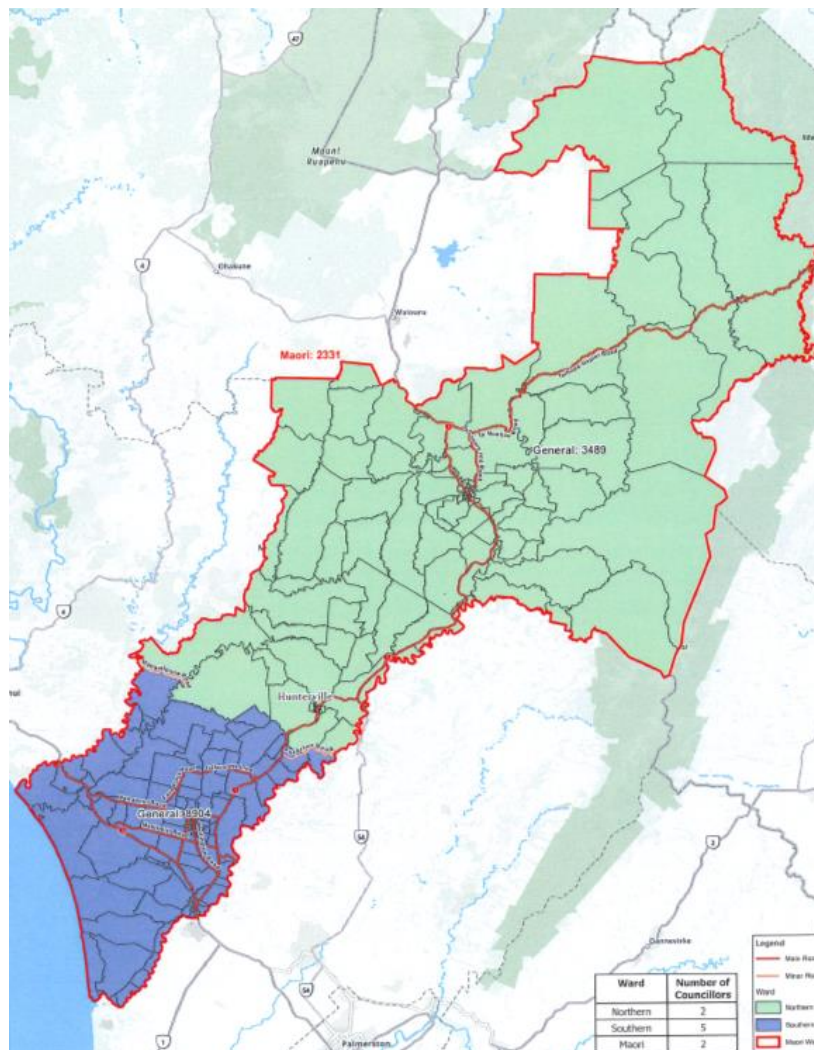
Under this option, only the Northern Ward, at a -13.17% deviation under the average general population per Councillor, is over-represented. Both the Central and Southern Wards are compliant.

In order to make Option 1C closer to the +/- 10% margin over 100 people will need to be shifted out from the Central Ward into the Northern Ward.

Option 3 – North/South General Ward Structure, Two Māori Wards (Option 3 in the briefing paper considered at the workshop on 8 July)

This option has a two ward structure (Northern and Southern). Options are provided as follows:

- Option 3 - 9 Councillors
- Option 3A – 8 Councillors
- Option 3B – 10 Councillors
- Option 3C - 11 Councillors



Option 3 with 9 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	3,600	2	1,800	-43	-2.33
Southern	9,300	5	1,860	17	0.92
Total General	12,900	7	1,843	-	-
Māori Ward – North	1,450	1	1,450	15	1.05%
Māori Ward - South	1,420	1	1,420	-15	-1.05%
Total Māori	2,870	2	1,435	-	-
District Total	15,770	9	-	-	-

All wards comply with the +/-10% rule.

Option 3A with 8 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	3,600	2	1,800	-43	-2.33
Southern	9,300	5	1,860	17	0.92
Total General	12,900	7	1,843	-	-
Māori Ward	2,870	1	2,870	-	-
District Total	15,770	8	-	-	-

All wards comply with the +/-10% rule. There is only one Māori Ward Councillor.

Option 3B with 10 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	3,600	2	1,800	187	11.59%
Southern	9,300	6	1,550	-63	-3.91%
Total General	12,900	8	1,613	-	-
Māori Ward – North	1,450	1	1,450	15	1.05%
Māori Ward - South	1,420	1	1,420	-15	-1.05%
Total Māori	2,870	2	1,435	-	-
District Total	15,770	10	-	-	-

Under the Northern Ward, at a 187 or 11.59% deviation above the average general population per Councillor is under-represented by a small margin. The Southern Ward is compliant.

In order to make Option 1C closer to the +/- 10% margin over 50 people will need to be shifted out from the Northern Ward into the Central Ward.

Option 3C with 11 Councillors in total:

Ward	Population	No. of Councillors per Ward	Population per Councillor	Deviation from average General population per Councillor	% deviation from average General population per Councillor
Northern	3,600	3	1,200	-233	-16.26
Southern	9,300	6	1,550	117	8.16
Total General	12,900	9	1,433	-	-
Māori Ward – North	1,450	1	1,450	15	1.05%
Māori Ward - South	1,420	1	1,420	-15	-1.05%
Total Māori	2,870	2	1,435	-	-
District Total	15,770	11	-	-	-

Under this option, the Northern Ward, at a -233 or -16.26% deviation below the average general population per Councillor, is over-represented. The Southern Ward is compliant.

In order to make Option 1C closer to the +/- 10% margin not less than 270 people will need to be shifted out from the Central Ward into the Northern Ward.

Analysis and Commentary

Options 1 (11 Councillors), 3 (8 Councillors) and 3A (9 Councillors) fully comply with the fair representation rule. Options 1C (10 Councillors), 3B (10 Councillors) and 3C (11 Councillors) have wards that are outside of the +/- 10% margin, however if they more accurately reflect communities of interest and provide for more effective representation, then a case may be able to be made to the community and to the Local Government Commission. Options 1A and 1B are significantly outside the +/- 10% margin and should be discounted.

The two options the Council wanted to further analyse and consider both have a fully compliant representation arrangements:

- In Option 1, which has three wards (Northern, Central and Southern but with some amendments from the current configuration), version 1 with 11 Councillors plus the Mayor for a total of 12 elected members, 1 more than at present, is fully compliant. There is a benefit for the community that, except for those in the area being moved from the Southern Ward into the Central Ward, most will be generally familiar with the arrangements;
- In Option 3, which has two wards (Northern and Southern) version 3 and 3A with 8 and 9 Councillors respectively plus the Mayor for a total of 9 and 10 elected members are also fully compliant. This is a different ward configuration the rationale for which will need to be explained to the community. The option with 8 Councillors does however only have 1 Māori ward Councillor whereas 2 was the preferred number.

Aside from option 1B and 3 which are fully compliant, other options 1A, 3A and maybe 3B are possibly within a range of non-compliance where reasons for representing distinct communities of interest and providing more effective representation might prevail.

Summary

The above analysis provides further 'food for thought' on the options that Councillors indicated they wished to consider more closely at their second workshop. It also addresses an additional option as requested.

Two of the options identified for further assessment at the workshop comply with the +/- 10% fair representation requirement. Two or possibly three other options, that do not strictly comply with the fair representation requirement, may also be considered if there is sufficient weight of argument in favour of representing distinct communities of interest or making for more effective representation.

As outlined above, there are arguments than can be made in support of over-representation for rural wards and those with smaller numbers of Councillors, particularly in the Rangitikei District context a significant area of sparsely populated rural area a distance north of, and relatively isolated from, the main population and urbanised areas exists.

Both the Taihape and Ratana Community Boards would remain as they are at present.

We end this Discussion Document with an important thought. When considering representation, where Councillors are elected from and who by is, in a legal sense, only important from an electoral perspective. Once Councillors get to the Council table, they have a duty to represent and work in the best interests of the whole District regardless of their electoral ward.

Guidance from Elected Members, as staff prepare a draft proposal for consideration, is sought.