



Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Local Government Commission

Determination

on a decision of the Central Otago District Council to
adopt representation arrangements for the local authority
elections 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.
2. The matters for this determination by the Local Government Commission (the Commission) are limited to the Central Otago District Council's decision to retain the Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent wards, despite not complying with section 19V(2) of the Act ('the +/-10% rule').

Commission's determination

3. Under section 19V(6) of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the Local Government Commission upholds the decision of the Central Otago District Council not to comply with section 19V(2) in respect of the Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent wards, as compliance would limit effective representation of communities of interest:
 - By dividing communities of interest between wards; and /or
 - By uniting within wards two or more communities of interest with few commonalities.
4. Accordingly, for the triennial general election of the Central Otago District Council to be held on 11 October 2025, the following representation arrangements will apply:
 - (a) Central Otago District, as delineated on LG-069-2025-W-1 deposited with the Commission, is divided into four wards.
 - (b) Those four wards will be:
 - (i) Cromwell Ward comprising the area delineated on SO 24243 deposited with Land Information New Zealand
 - (ii) Vincent ward comprising the area delineated on LG-069-2025-W-2 deposited with the Commission
 - (iii) Maniototo Ward comprising the area delineated on SO 24247 deposited with Land Information New Zealand

- (iv) Teviot Valley Ward comprising the area delineated on SO 24244 deposited with Land Information New Zealand
 - (c) the council will comprise the Mayor and 10 members elected from four wards, as follows:
 - (i) 4 councillors elected by the electors of the Cromwell Ward
 - (ii) 4 councillors elected by the electors of the Vincent Ward
 - (iii) 1 councillor elected by the electors of the Maniototo Ward
 - (iv) 1 councillor elected by the electors of the Teviot Valley Ward
 - (d) There will be four communities in Central Otago District as follows:
 - (i) The Cromwell Community comprising the area of the Cromwell Ward
 - (ii) The Vincent Community comprising the area of the Vincent Ward
 - (iii) The Maniototo Community comprising the area of the Maniototo Ward
 - (iv) The Teviot Valley Community comprising the area of the Teviot Valley Ward
 - (e) Each community board will comprise four members elected by the electors of the community and one member appointed to the community board by the Council and representing the ward in which that community is situated.
5. As required by section 19T(b) of the Local Electoral Act, the boundaries of the above wards and communities coincide with the boundaries of current statistical meshblock areas determined by Statistics New Zealand and used for Parliamentary electoral purposes.

Background

6. Under sections 19H and 19J of the Act territorial authorities representation reviews are to determine the number of councillors to be elected, the basis of election for councillors 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 are to be determined so as to provide fair and effective representation for individuals and communities.
7. The Central Otago District Council (the Council) last reviewed its representation arrangements prior to the 2019 local authority elections. Accordingly, it was required to undertake a review prior to the next elections in October 2025.

Current representation arrangements

8. The council's current representation arrangements, in place since 2019, are as follows:
- (a) a council comprising the Mayor and 11 members elected from four wards (Cromwell, Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent)

- (b) four community boards, being:
- Cromwell Community Board (four elected members and three appointed members)
 - Vincent Community Board (four elected members and three appointed members)
 - Maniototo Community Board (four elected members and one appointed member)
 - Teviot Community Board (four elected members and one appointed member).

Current review

9. On 20 March 2024 the council resolved its initial representation proposal as follows:

- (a) a council comprising the Mayor and 10 members elected from four wards (Cromwell, Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent),
- (b) four community boards, being:
- Cromwell Community Board (four elected members and one appointed member)
 - Vincent Community Board (four elected members and one appointed member).
 - Maniototo Community Board (four elected members and one appointed member)
 - Teviot Valley Community Board (four elected members and one appointed member)

10. The arrangements proposed for wards were as follows:

Ward	Population*	Number of councillors per ward	Population per councillor	Deviation from district average population per councillor	% deviation from district average population per councillor
Cromwell	10,600	4	2,650	45	+1.73
Vincent	11,550	4	2,888	283	+10.81
Maniototo	1,970	1	1,970	-635	-24.38
Teviot Valley	1,930	1	1,930	-675	-25.91
Total	26,050	10	2,605		

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

11. The changes made by the Council compared to the current arrangements were a reduction by one in the number of councillors to be elected from the Vincent Ward and a reduction from four to one in the number of councillors to be appointed to the Cromwell and Vincent community boards.

12. The council received three submissions on its initial proposal. One submission generally supported the Council's initial proposal, and two submissions sought changes to the proposal.
13. Key themes from the submissions were:
 - A desire for the Maniototo Community Board and Maniototo Ward to use the spelling Māniatoto.
 - A concern about an increase in the workload of community board members as a result of the reduction of the number of councillors appointed to community boards.
 - A concern about risk of decreased diversity through having fewer members on a community board.
14. The Council rejected the submissions seeking change for the following reasons:
 - That the Maniototo Community Board did not agree with a name change at this time, that the timing and representation review process were not thought appropriate to change a name of this type, (meaning that, before any change is made, the matter should be considered by the New Zealand Geographic Board).
 - The Council was satisfied that a reduction in the number of appointed community board members would not be detrimental to members' workload.
 - The Council was satisfied that a reduction of appointed community board members would not be detrimental to diversity.
15. The council adopted its initial proposal as its final representation proposal on 4 June 2024.
16. No appeals or objections were received; however the Council was required by section 19V(4) of the Act to refer its proposal to the Commission as the Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent wards do not comply with the fair representation requirement of section 19V(2) (the '+/-10% rule').

Matters for determination by the Commission

17. The matters for determination by the Commission are limited to the council's proposals for the Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent wards, despite not complying with the '+/-10% rule'.
18. Section 19V(6) provides that on receiving a reference under subsection (4), the Commission must determine whether to:
 - (a) uphold the decision of the council, or
 - (b) alter that decision.

Key considerations

19. Based on the legislative requirements, the Commission's *Guidelines for local authorities undertaking representation reviews* identify the following three key factors when considering representation proposals:

- (a) communities of interest
- (b) effective representation of communities of interest
- (c) fair representation for electors.

Communities of interest

20. The Commission's Guidelines identify three dimensions for recognising communities of interest:
- (a) *perceptual*: a sense of identity and belonging to a defined area or locality as a result of factors such as distinctive geographical features, local history, demographics, economic and social activities
 - (b) *functional*: ability of the area to meet the needs of communities for services such as local schools, shopping areas, community and recreational facilities, employment, transport and communication links
 - (c) *political*: ability to represent the interests of local communities which includes non-council structures such as for local iwi and hapū, residents and ratepayer associations and the range of special interest groups
21. The Council identified each of its four wards as a distinct community of interest, focusing particularly on the geography of the district and the distances and geographic barriers separating communities.
22. In its 2013 determination for Central Otago District, the Commission noted that its general impression of the district is that of a relatively large district with distinct communities of interest separated by distinct geographic features and, in some cases, sparsely populated areas.
23. From its constitution in 1989, Central Otago District has been divided into wards. From 1989 to 2007 there were six wards. In 2007 the Commission reduced the number of wards from six to five by merging the Earnscliffe and Manuherikia Wards. In 2018, Central Otago District Council further reduced the number of wards by merging the Earnscliffe-Manuherikia and Alexandra wards, into the Vincent Ward. Despite the change in number of wards since 1989 they have followed a consistent pattern of reflecting communities of interest based on Cromwell, Vincent (centred on Alexandra), Maniototo and Teviot Valley.

Effective representation for communities of interest

24. 'Effective representation' is not defined in the Act, but 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).
25. The Guidelines note that what constitutes effective representation will be specific to each local authority but that the following factors should be considered to the extent possible:
- (a) avoiding arrangements that may create barriers to participation, such as at elections by 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.

Fair representation for electors

26. Section 19V of the Act sets out the requirement for the Commission to ensure that electors receive fair representation. Section 19V(2) establishes fair representation as a population per member ratio per ward that does not differ by more than 10% across the district.
27. Section 19V(3) of the Act provides that, despite subsection (2), if a territorial authority or the Commission considers one or more of certain prescribed conditions apply, wards may be defined and membership distributed between them in a way that does not comply with subsection (2). The prescribed conditions are:
- (a) non-compliance is required for effective representation of communities of interest within island or isolated communities situated within the district of the territorial authority
 - (b) compliance would limit effective representation of communities of interest by dividing a community of interest between wards
 - (c) compliance would limit effective representation of communities of interest by uniting within a ward two or more communities of interest with few commonalities of interest.
28. There are a variety of ways in which Central Otago District's representation arrangements could be made compliant. We consider these below.
29. Firstly, compliance could be better achieved by (a) allocating 5 members to the Vincent Ward or (b) allocating 5 members to both the Cromwell and Vincent wards. Neither option would achieve total compliance with the '+/-10% rule', and option (a) would result in some wards still being significantly non-compliant. The council's arguments for not doing this are as follows:
- It was decided that the Cromwell and Vincent wards should have the same number of councillors. This reflects the fact that the Cromwell Ward has seen a large amount of growth in the past few years. The data that was used to formulate the ratios does not necessarily take this growth into consideration. Indeed, the Cromwell and Vincet wards probably have reached parity.*
- It was also decided that to take away a councillor away from Vincent would recognise the parity of the two wards as mentioned above. While adding one councillor to the Cromwell Ward would achieve the +/-10% ratio, to do so make the council numbers unwieldy, with 13 (12 plus the mayor) members representing such a small population base.*
30. We conclude from this, and the Council's other supporting documentation, that the Council considers that a 10-member council will provide effective

representation for the communities of interest in the district. There were no submissions or appeals on this matter and we take it that there is acceptance of this in the wider community. A 10-member council is not dissimilar to other similar or even larger councils. We agree that a 10-member council can provide effective representation of communities of interest.

31. In theory the Vincent Ward could be made compliant by transferring an area from it into another ward. In reality this is not practical. The boundaries between the Vincent Ward and the other wards follow significant mountain ranges and traverse sparsely populated areas. The transfer of any area out of the Vincent Ward would result in splitting a community of interest.
32. Compliance could also be achieved by combining the Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent wards into a single ward. This was considered by the council which commented that:

It has been recognised historically and accepted by the Commission that both the Maniototo and Teviot Valley wards are two distinct communities of interest within Central Otago. Statistically their populations do not warrant a councillor of their own. However, if those wards were absorbed into another ward inevitably the wards councillors would be from Alexandra or Cromwell because of the strength of the voting base in those towns. For that reason, these wards need to be protected, as being unable to be represented would be detrimental to their individual identities.

In addition, for the above reason it would be impractical to make those two wards some super-ward. It would be virtually impossible for a councillor to cover the territory they would be charged with. For instance, it is a 170km trip from Raes Junction at the bottom of the Teviot Valley Ward to Kyeburn which is at the other end of the Maniototo Ward.

33. We accept these arguments, additionally noting in respect of travel distances it is further again to travel from Maniototo and Teviot Valley wards into the area of the current Vincent Ward. We conclude that such a merged ward would not provide effective representation for the communities of interest concerned.

Conclusion

34. In summary, we consider the council's proposal to retain the Maniototo, Teviot Valley and Vincent wards, despite not complying with the '+/-10% rule' should be upheld. The reasons for this are that:
 - (a) Each ward reflects a distinct community of interest
 - (b) A total of 10 members and the proposed allocation of members to wards results in effective representation of communities of interest
 - (c) Compliance with the '+/- 10% rule' would limit the effective representation of the Vincent Ward by dividing a community of interest between wards
 - (d) compliance with the '+/- 10% rule' would limit the effective representation of the Maniototo and Teviot Valley wards by uniting communities of interest with few commonalities of interest.

Local Government Commission

Commissioner Brendan Duffy (Chair)

Commissioner Bonita Bigham

Commissioner Sue Bidrose

19 August 2024