

Local Government Commission upholds Council's proposal for less councillors

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councillors will be elected to the Ashburton District Council at the local body elections in October instead of 12, following a decision by the Local Government Commission today.

The Commission upheld the Council's proposal to reduce elected member numbers, as part of the Council's mandatory review of its representation arrangements.

The decision will see voters elect five councillors to the Ashburton ward, and two each for the Eastern and Western wards, plus the mayor. This is three less councillors than the current arrangement.

The ward boundaries have been slightly amended to account for the changes in population/representation ratios. Lake Hood will now be included in the Ashburton ward: it was formerly part of the Eastern ward.

The review also sees the Methven Community Board remain in place, with five representatives to be elected.

Today's announcement concludes a robust representation review process that the Council undertook as part of its obligations under the Local Electoral Act 2001. Under the Act, all councils must review their arrangements at least once every six years.

"The biggest change to come out of this review is the reduction of elected members," said Ashburton District Mayor, Donna Favel. "From the evidence that was gathered in this process, it is the Council's position that less councillors will increase democratic accountability and further enable strong local decision-making. Reducing the number of elected officials is also consistent with representation levels of other district's our size," she added.

The Council consulted on its proposed arrangements from 18 May to 18 June 2018. The proposals were then confirmed by the Council in July, and three appeals to that decision were subsequently lodged.

Two of those appeals were heard by the Local Government Commission, an independent statutory body, on 21 March 2019. The Commissioners today upheld the Council's decision.

"It is the Council's and the majority of submitters' view that nine councillors will effectively represent our urban and rural communities moving forward, and today's decision aligns with that view," Mayor Favel continued.

"On behalf of the Ashburton District, I'd like to thank the community for their feedback and the Local Government Commissioners for their measured

consideration of all the proposals. We are very pleased to have had the chance to go through this process, and the community will have the chance to revisit this again in the next six years."

Details of the new ward boundaries are provided on the Council website .