



## How do I vote and stand for my council?

Every three years you have an opportunity to elect a mayor and councillors as your representatives in making decisions on local issues and services.

### Local government elections cover:

- Regional Councils
- District Councils
- City Councils
- Community Boards.

For example, people who live in Wellington City vote for candidates standing for the Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Wellington City Council.

Some councils also have community boards, which are elected at the same time as the local government elections, to represent particular suburbs. An example of this are people who live in Petone can vote for candidates standing for the Greater Wellington Regional Council, Hutt City Council and Petone Community Board.

District Health Boards and licensing trusts are also included in the local government election process. You can get more information on them from the Ministry of Health at: [www.moh.govt](http://www.moh.govt) and Ministry of Justice at: [www.justice.govt.nz](http://www.justice.govt.nz)

## What is the difference between regional, city and district councils?

A regional council's main responsibility is to manage environmental and public transport issues for the whole region. District and city councils look after local road, water and waste

networks, set local rules and bylaws, and provide services and community facilities for their residents. *(See info sheet 03 for more information.)*

## Who elects which councillors?

Regional council members are elected by voters from geographical areas of the region concerned. The chair of the regional council is elected by members of the regional council, at their first meeting.

District and city councillors can be elected – by voters from the whole city or district, from wards (parts of a city or district) or from a combination of the two.

Mayors of cities and districts are elected by voters from the whole of the city or district.

Community boards are elected to represent parts of districts or cities. Not all communities have community boards. Only voters in areas specifically covered by a community board can vote for the candidates.

## When are elections held?

Local government elections (local elections) take place every three years, usually on the second Saturday in October. Local government elections usually take place the year before the general (central government) election.

By-elections may be held in between scheduled elections if elected members have left their positions.

## Who runs the elections?

Elections are run by district and city council electoral officers, who also run the elections on behalf of regional councils and district health boards. Electoral officers are usually council employees, although some councils also employ

contractors to conduct their elections. Existing councillors, elected members and anyone standing for election cannot be an electoral officer.

## What sort of voting system is used?

Two systems of voting are used for local government elections: first past the post (FPP) or, single transferable vote (STV). Councils choose either the FPP or the STV system for the next election and they may ask their communities which they would prefer.

FPP means that voters tick the names of the candidates they want to vote for, up to the total number of positions to be filled. The candidates with the most votes are elected.

STV means that voters rank candidates from their favourite downwards. Preferences are made during the counting process until candidates cross a vote threshold based on the number of seats to be filled and the number of votes cast.

Currently eight councils and all District Health Boards use STV system. For more information on STV see [www.stv.govt.nz](http://www.stv.govt.nz)

## Who can vote?

**You can vote in local council elections if you are:**

- at least 18 years old, and
- on the parliamentary electoral roll and live in the district or city where you will vote, or
- registered as a property owner in the district or city you do not live in.

You do not need to be a New Zealand citizen to vote.

## So why vote?

Voting gives you an opportunity to influence many of the important decisions made about the place you live. Many people use the opportunity of voting to try and elect people who share their views, or, who they think will do a good job of providing the things the community believes are important.

Whatever your reasons for voting, it is your chance to have a say about the future of your community.



## How can I vote?

All local elections are done by post. Voters receive their voting papers in the mail, fill them out and mail them back to the returning officer by a specified day and time.

**To vote in a local election you must be:**

- enrolled as a parliamentary elector, at the address where you live, or
- enrolled as a ratepayer elector for a property you own in a different district or city from where you live.

Information about how to enrol as a parliamentary elector can be found on the Electoral Enrolment Centre's website [www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz)

If you wish to enrol as a ratepayer elector, contact the electoral officer for the council where you own property. If you hold more than one property in the country, you will be allowed to vote for each district you hold a property in.

## How can I find out about who is standing in the local government elections?

You can find out about the candidates standing in your area from your council's website, local newspapers, your voting pack, and 'meet the candidates' meetings usually advertised in the

local media and on community notice boards. These meetings are usually a good opportunity to meet and ask the candidates for their views on particular issues that are important to you.

## How can I find out about the election results?

Election results are announced by the electoral officer as soon as practical after voting closes. Results are reported widely in the local media

and will be available on your local council's website.

## What does a community board member do?

Some communities are also represented by community boards, which are elected at the same time as the councils. A community board

member represents and advocates for their communities' interests.

## What does a councillor do?

The role of a councillor can be very demanding at times, but it is also very rewarding. They have to balance a number of competing interests and councillors can be required to act simultaneously as community leaders, representatives and decision makers. Most councils have monthly

meetings, but councillors usually sit on one or more council committees. So the amount of time that an elected member spends on council duties depends on the number of responsibilities they hold. Many councillors also hold other jobs.

## How can I stand for my local council or community board?

**You can stand for a mayoralty, or membership of a council or community board if you are:**

- a New Zealand citizen, and
- at least 18 years old, and
- on the electoral roll.

You do not have to live in the area where you want to stand.

You must be a New Zealand citizen to stand in the elections. Beyond that there are no other requirements, except a willingness to serve the community you want to represent.

To stand as a candidate in the local elections, you need to have two people nominate you at the council. This will be several months before the election. Becoming a candidate costs \$200 and this may be refunded, depending on how many votes you receive.

Some candidates stand for a political party or as part of a group, while many others may be 'independents'.

Candidates can promote themselves to their electorate by newspaper advertising, posters, attendance at public electoral meetings, speaking to local groups. Limits on advertising spending may vary depending on population size.



# Do elected members get paid?

Councillors' salaries and allowances vary depending on the size of each council. The Remuneration Authority determines salary levels for each council and approves each councils' approach to reimbursing for expenses like mileage.

People elected to local government receive

some payment. As expected, the more council committees they are involved in, the more they will receive, as they will be required to spend more time doing that job.

Community board members receive a small honorarium and generally do not receive meeting allowances.



## More information:

See the other info sheets in this series.

Visit the following websites:

Local Councils:

[www.localcouncils.govt.nz](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz)

The Department of Internal Affairs:

[www.dia.govt.nz](http://www.dia.govt.nz)

Government Online:

[www.newzealand.govt.nz](http://www.newzealand.govt.nz)

Local Government New Zealand:

[www.lgnz.co.nz](http://www.lgnz.co.nz)

Single Transferable Vote:

[www.stv.govt.nz](http://www.stv.govt.nz)

Electoral Enrolment Centre:

[www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz)

Licensing Trusts:

[www.justice.govt.nz](http://www.justice.govt.nz)

District Health Boards:

[www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)

For information about payment of elected members, write to: The Remuneration Authority, PO Box 10-084, Wellington.