

Council

Meeting of 02 September 2026

Business Unit: Corporate

Date Created: 17 August 2026

System of Voting

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

To seek a decision on what voting system the Council will use for the 2028 and 2031 triennial elections, and any associated elections.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohunga

That the Council:

1. Retains First Past the Post (FPP) as its system of voting for the 2028 and 2031 triennial elections, and any associated elections.

OR

2. Adopts Single Transferable Vote (STV) as its system of voting for the 2028 and 2031 triennial elections, and any associated elections.

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1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 Every six years local authorities must reassess their system of voting. There are two options; First Past the Post (FPP) and Single Transferable Vote (STV).
- 1.2 The Council's current system of voting is FPP. This was resolved in 2023, for the 2025 and 2028 triennial elections. Despite this, Council can now make a new resolution for the 2028 and 2031 triennial elections.
- 1.3 In the 2025 local elections, FPP was used by 62 councils and STV used by 15 councils. Within the Manawatū-Whanganui region, Palmerston North City Council and Ruapehu District Councils used STV.

2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 The decision on which electoral system to use for the 2028 and 2031 local elections aligns with Council's strategic priority of **A future planned together**. The electoral system provides the mechanism through which the community elects its representatives and participates in local democracy.

3 Discussion and Options Considered Ngā Matapakinga me ngā Kōwhiringa i Wānangahia

- 3.1 Council is asked to resolve whether to use FPP or STV for the 2028 and 2031 triennial general elections and any associated elections. Associated elections include any elections to fill extraordinary vacancies held between the 2028 and 2031 triennial elections, or after the 2031 triennial election but before the subsequent triennial election in 2034.
- 3.2 FPP is broadly considered to be the simpler system of voting out of the two options, and has the following characteristics:
 - Voters may cast as many votes as there are positions to be filled.
 - The candidate or candidates with the highest numbers of votes are elected.
- 3.3 STV is considered to be more complex and has the following characteristics:
 - Voters have one vote but can rank-order some or all of the candidates listed on a voting ballot form, from 1 (most preferred candidate) to x (least preferred candidate). Voters must rank at least one candidate.
 - At the vote counting phase, software is used to calculate a quota and distribute votes.
 - The quota is calculated by dividing the number of valid votes cast (less non-transferable votes) by the number of vacancies plus one. Candidates who reach or exceed the quota are elected.

- If an elected candidate has more votes than the quota, the surplus proportion of their vote is transferred to other candidates according to voters' subsequent preferences.
- The quota is recalculated during subsequent iterations of the count to account for any additional non-transferable votes.
- If there are still vacancies to be filled and no further candidate reaches the quota, the lowest-polling candidate may be excluded and their transferable votes redistributed according to voters' subsequent preferences.
- This process of transferring votes, recalculating the quota and, where necessary, excluding candidates continues through successive iterations until all vacancies are filled.
- STV allows voters' preferences to be more fully reflected in the election result, as voters can rank candidates in order of preference rather than simply indicating which candidates they support. However, the voting and counting process is more complex than FPP, and election results can be more difficult for voters to understand and interpret. Despite arguably producing a fairer representation of voter preferences, this complexity may reduce transparency and risk undermining voter confidence in the electoral process.

3.4 Officers do not recommend one voting system over the other. The choice between FPP and STV is ultimately a matter of philosophical preference as to how votes should translate into representation, including the relative importance placed on simplicity and ease of understanding compared with the ability for voters to express preferences between candidates.

4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

- 4.1 There are minimal risks associated with the decision sought in this report. The main risk relates to public understanding and confidence if Council decides to change from the existing FPP electoral system to STV.
- 4.2 FPP is a familiar and relatively simple voting system. A change to STV would require voters to use a different method of voting and would introduce a more complex vote-counting process. Some voters may initially find the change confusing or be concerned about why Council has changed the electoral system.
- 4.3 This risk could be managed through clear and timely communication ahead of the 2028 election, explaining how to vote under STV, how votes are counted, and the reasons for Council's decision. This would help voters understand the change and maintain confidence in the electoral process.

5 Engagement Te Whakapānga

Significance of Decision

- 5.1 The Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by matters discussed in this report.

Māori and Cultural Engagement

- 5.2 There are no known cultural considerations associated with the matters addressed in this report.

Community Engagement

- 5.3 No community engagement is required.

6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 There are no operational implications associated with this report.

7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 If Council changes to STV, some additional expenditure may be required to support communications and voter education ahead of the 2028 election.

8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

- 8.1 FPP and STV are the only two systems of voting that can be used for local elections, as per sections 5A and 5B of the Local Electoral Act 2001 (LEA 2001).

9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

- 9.1 Officers will notify the decision from this meeting to the public in accordance with section 28 of the LEA 2001 and inform them of the right to demand a poll. This public notice must be made by 19 September 2026.
- 9.2 Any poll demand must be in writing, signed by at least 5% of the number of electors enrolled as eligible to vote at the 2025 triennial election, and submitted to Council no later than 11 December 2026.
- 9.3 Any valid poll demand would require the Council to notify its Electoral Officer of the need to conduct a binding poll. A binding poll would present the two options (FPP and STV) to eligible voters, and the option with the highest vote must be adopted by Council.

10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Nil.