

Report 13.48  
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Committee Council  
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## 2013 triennial elections

### 1. Purpose

To provide Councillors with the timetable for the 2013 triennial local authority elections, and to seek a decision on the order in which candidates' names are to be arranged on the voting documents.

### 2. The decision-making process and significance

The matters requiring decision in this report have been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002.

#### 2.1 Significance of the decision

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking into account the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines. Due to the procedural nature of this decision officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

### 3. Background

The 2013 triennial local authority elections will be held on Saturday 12 October. The Single Transferable Vote electoral system applies to the Council's elections and planning for these elections has commenced.

### 4. Timetable

The timetable for the elections is set out in the Local Electoral Act 2001 (the Act) and the Local Electoral Regulations 2001 (the Regulations).

A Government Bill, the Local Electoral Amendment Bill No. 2, amending the Act and Regulations has recently been reported on by the Justice and Electoral Select Committee. It is envisaged that the Bill will be enacted in time for its

provisions to apply to the 2013 triennial local authority elections. As it is currently drafted, the Bill proposes a number of amendments that would affect the current timetable for the 2013 elections.

A copy of the timetable for the 2013 elections is included as **Attachment 1** to this report. The dates of principal interest to the public are shown in bold; the dates that may change in the event that the Bill is passed in its current form are also identified.

## **5. Method of voting**

The territorial authorities in the Wellington Region carry out much of the work for the regional council elections. Decisions on the method of voting (i.e. postal or ballot box) can be made by territorial authorities but not a regional council. The method used for regional council voting within the district of a territorial authority must be the same method used by the territorial authority. Territorial authorities are required to consult with regional councils on the method of voting and it would be appropriate for the Council to provide an indication of its preferred method, while recognising that it is the territorial authorities that make the decisions.

All territorial authorities in the Wellington Region have applied the postal voting method since the 1995 elections. There is no move, that officers are aware of, for any territorial authority to change back to the ballot box method. It is recommended that the Council indicate that postal voting is its preferred method of voting.

## **6. Order of names on voting papers**

Prior to the enactment of the Regulations, candidates' names were required to be listed on the voting documents in alphabetical order, by surname.

Clause 31(1) of the Regulations allows the Council to decide whether the candidates' names are to be arranged on the voting documents in alphabetical order of surname, pseudo-random order or random order. In the absence of any Council resolution approving another arrangement, the candidates' names must be arranged in alphabetical order of surname.

The features of each arrangement are described as follows:

### **Option 1 - Alphabetical order of surname**

This is the order which has been used at previous Council elections, and is self explanatory.

### **Option 2 - Pseudo-random order**

Under this option, the candidates' names for each election are placed in a hat (or similar receptacle), mixed together, and then drawn out of the receptacle, with the candidates' names being placed on all voting documents for that election in the order in which they are drawn.

### **Option 3 - Random order**

Under this option, the names of the candidates for each election are shown in a different order on each and every voting document, utilising software which permits the names of the candidates to be laser printed in a different order on each paper.

### **Public notice**

The Regulations provide that if a local authority has determined that pseudo-random order is to be used, the Electoral Officer must state, in the public notice required to be given, the date, time and place at which the order of the candidates' names will be arranged and any person is entitled to attend.

### **Comparative cost of each option**

The cost of printing the voting documents employing either Option 1 or Option 2 will be identical. Should the Council adopt Option 3 (random order) there will be some increase in cost, because of the need to individually laser print each voting document rather than having them pre-printed. While it is not yet possible to give an estimate of the likely additional costs if this option is chosen, these are not expected to be substantial.

### **Option chosen by territorial authorities and district health boards within the Wellington region**

At the time of writing this report Carterton District Council and Kapiti Coast District Council have resolved to have candidates' names printed on the voting documents in alphabetical order. The remaining territorial authorities and district health boards in the Wellington Region have not yet passed a resolution on the order of candidate names to go on their voting documents.

Below is a table setting out the name order option chosen by territorial authorities and district health boards in the Wellington Region for the 2010 elections.

<b>Territorial authority /district health board</b>	<b>Order of names</b>	<b>Voting method</b>
Wellington City Council	Random	STV
Porirua City Council	Random	STV
Kapiti Coast District Council	Alphabetical	STV
Hutt City Council	Alphabetical	FPP
Upper Hutt City Council	Alphabetical	FPP
South Wairarapa District Council	Alphabetical	FPP
Carterton District Council	Alphabetical	FPP

Masterton District Council	Alphabetical	FPP
Capital and Coast District Health Board	Random	STV
Hutt Valley District Health Board	Random	STV
Wairarapa District Health Board	Random	STV

### **Comments on various options**

Attached as **Attachment 2** to this report is an excerpt from a review undertaken by the Local Government Commission of the Local Government Act 2002 and Local Electoral Act 2001. The excerpt considers the effect of candidate order on voting documents.

#### **Alphabetical order**

This is the simplest method for the elector. It is the method they are familiar with and is the system used at the parliamentary elections.

However, there is research to suggest that candidates with a surname starting at the top end of the alphabet may have an unfair advantage over others with a “lower” alphabetic ranking.

#### **Pseudo-random order**

This system could possibly be more difficult for the elector to locate the candidate they wish to vote for, especially if there are a large number of candidates standing for election.

Although it might resolve the issue (if there is one) of those candidates with a surname starting with the letter “A” or “B” etc having an unfair advantage over those candidates whose surname starts with a middle or later letter of the alphabet, that advantage would then be given to the first few candidates whose names are drawn out of the hat.

#### **Random order**

This option suffers from the same (possible) difficulty for the elector as described under the “pseudo random” method.

Although it may not be particularly user friendly, this method is possibly the fairest to all candidates.

## **7. Communication**

The Council’s decisions relating to the voting method and the order of names on the voting document will be communicated to Electoral Officers in territorial authorities and to the public in the necessary public notices.

## 8. Recommendations

*That the Council:*

1. ***Receives*** the report.
2. ***Notes*** the content of the report.
3. ***Notes*** the timetable for the 2013 triennial local authority elections.
4. ***Agrees*** that the names of the Wellington Regional Council candidates at the 2013 local authority elections are to be arranged on the voting paper in (choose one of the following):
  - *alphabetical order of surname; or*
  - *pseudo-random order; or*
  - *random order.*
5. ***Agrees*** to advise territorial authorities in the Wellington Region that its preferred method of voting is postal voting.

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1: 2013 Triennial Election Timetable

Attachment 2: Pages 178-179 of the Local Government Commission's Review of the Local Government Act 2002 and Local Electoral Act 2001