

4. POLL ON ELECTORAL SYSTEM TO BE USED FOR 2004 AND 2007 CHRISTCHURCH CITY ELECTIONS

Officer responsible Electoral Officer	Author Max Robertson, DDI 941-8533
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The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the outcome of the petition presented to the City Manager at the December 2002 Council meeting, calling for a poll to be held on the electoral system to be used for the 2004 and 2007 Christchurch city elections.

CHECKING OF POLL DEMAND

The checking of the names of the persons who have signed the poll demand was completed on Wednesday 15 January 2003. The poll demand was signed by well in excess of the 11,404 electors required to trigger the poll process, this figure representing 5% of electors enrolled for the 2001 Christchurch city elections.

The poll process has therefore been set in train accordingly.

POLL TIMETABLE

The poll will be held over a three week period concluding at 12 noon on Saturday 5 April 2003. The voting documents will be posted to electors between Friday 14 March 2003 and Wednesday 19 March 2003.

CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL BY-ELECTION

As a second extraordinary vacancy occurred immediately prior to Christmas in the Christchurch West constituency of the Canterbury Regional Council, the by-election previously scheduled to fill the vacancy created by the death of Mr Peter Yeoman has now been put back, and will now instead be held over the same period as the poll, concluding at 12 noon on Saturday 5 April 2003.

ESTIMATED COST OF POLL

In my earlier report to the special Council meeting held on 5 September 2002, I advised that the cost of holding a poll was estimated at approximately \$300,000. This estimate was based on the actual cost of the city wide poll held in March 2000 regarding the proposal to amalgamate Christchurch city and Banks Peninsula district.

The final cost will be largely dependent on the level of voter turnout. However, I have now revised my earlier estimate, to take into account the fact that the poll will now be held in conjunction with the Canterbury Regional Council by-election, which means that the cost of the combined poll/by-election will be shared on a pro-rata basis between this Council and the Canterbury Regional Council. Some other potential savings have also been identified. Because of these factors, the net cost of the poll could reduce to approximately \$200,000, assuming that the voter turnout is similar to the level of 32% experienced in the Wellington city electoral system poll held on 30 November 2002.

As no provision for a poll has been made in this year's annual plan, the net cost will have to be treated as an unbudgeted item of expenditure.

EARLY PROCESSING OF RETURNED VOTING DOCUMENTS

As a decision was needed prior to giving public notice of the poll on the Friday 17 January 2003, I sought and obtained the approval of the Council's Recess Special Committee (comprising the Deputy Mayor and Councillor James) for the returned voting documents used at the poll to be progressively processed on return throughout the entire three week voting period. The Canterbury Regional Council previously gave its consent for early processing to be employed for the by-election, and it was therefore logical for the same process to be employed for the poll. The recommendation below seeks confirmation of this approval granted by the Recess Special Committee.

POLL RESULTS TO DATE

- **Wellington City Council**
Poll held 30 November 2002

Number of voters	128,307	
Votes returned	32.1%	
Electoral System Option	Count	%
For, Single Transferable Vote	21,451	52.0%
For, First Past the Post	19,626	47.6%
Informal	139	0.3%

- **Whangarei District Council**
Poll held 5 December 2002

Number of voters	48,352	
Votes returned	38.2%	
Electoral System Option	Count	%
For, Single Transferable Vote	6,224	34.70%
For, First Past the Post	11,699	65.24%
Informal	10	0.06%

OTHER AREAS IN WHICH ELECTORAL SYSTEM POLLS ARE TO BE HELD

Polls will also be held in the following areas, as a result of successful poll demands:

- Banks Peninsula District Council
- Carterton District Council
- Dunedin City Council
- Horowhenua District Council
- Nelson District Council
- Palmerston North City Council
- South Wairarapa District Council
- Thames-Coromandel District Council
- Waipa District Council

INFORMATION PAMPHLET TO BE INCLUDED WITH VOTING PACKS

The Department of Internal Affairs is currently preparing a pamphlet for electoral officers to send out with the poll voting documents, describing the essential features of FPP and STV. It is understood that the Department will also be undertaking some national advertising, to coincide with the period during which electoral system polls are being held.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the Council confirm the decision made by the Recess Special Committee to approve the early processing of the returned voting documents during the voting period, such early processing to be undertaken in accordance with Section 79 of the Local Electoral Act 2001; the Local Electoral Regulations 2001 and the Society of Local Government Managers' Code of Best Practice.

Chair's

- Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.