



Local Government
Commission
Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Summary of feedback

Community engagement: Local government in Auckland

MARCH 2017

www.lgc.govt.nz

Table of contents

- 1. Executive Summary.....4**
- 2. Background.....5**
 - 2.1 The role of the Local Government Commission 5
 - 2.2 Current local government arrangements in Auckland..... 5
 - 2.3 North Rodney reorganisation application..... 5
 - 2.4 Waiheke reorganisation application 6
 - 2.5 Alternative applications 7
 - 2.6 Community engagement..... 7
 - 2.7 The Commission’s next steps 7
- 3. Community engagement programme8**
 - 3.1 Public promotion..... 8
 - 3.2 Format and scope..... 8
 - 3.3 Feedback verification 10
- 4. Rodney area feedback.....11**
- 5. Waiheke Island feedback.....18**
- Appendix A: Online questionnaire demographics24**

DISCLAIMER

This summary document is a record of the feedback received by the Local Government Commission (the Commission) during its Auckland public engagement programme between September and December 2016. The Commission will consider the feedback in this paper during the Auckland reorganisation process (as outlined in the background section of this record). However, the record does not constitute a Local Government Commission position – the assessment of reorganisation options by the Commission will be based on legislative tests defined in Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002.

The feedback recorded in this document has not been verified for factual accuracy or completeness.

1. Executive Summary

This record summarises the feedback the Local Government Commission received during the community engagement programme the Commission held between September and December 2016. The purpose of the engagement was to hear from the Auckland community, particularly residents and/or ratepayers of Rodney and Waiheke Island, about Auckland local government arrangements.

The engagement revealed that many people think improvements could be made to local government arrangements in Auckland to reflect the local needs of more isolated and/or rural areas in Auckland. However, there is a wide variety of views about what improvements are needed and how they could be attained. For example some suggest a separate council for their local area while others want the benefits of being part of Auckland but support enhancements to current local board arrangements. Among these wide ranging views, a number of common themes emerged. These themes have been used to structure the presentation of feedback in this record as follows:

- Theme 1. Local government that enables local influence and an effective role in decision-making
- Theme 2. Local government that reflects the local context, identity and values
- Theme 3. Local government that communicates well and is responsive
- Theme 4. Local government that delivers fair rates
- Theme 5. Local government that is financially responsible and sustainable
- Theme 6. Local government that supports efficient and effective governance
- Theme 7. Local government that is transparent and accountable to ratepayers
- Theme 8. Local government that delivers quality roading and transport

When the Commission considers the potential options for Auckland local government reorganisation, it must use the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002. They include considering whether any new council arrangements could be adequately resourced, support efficient performance, comprise a distinct community or communities of interest, and in the case of a regional or unitary authority, enable catchment-based flooding and water management issues to be dealt with effectively.

Feedback in this record is presented separately for Rodney and Waiheke Island.

2. Background

2.1 The role of the Local Government Commission

The Commission is an independent statutory body with two main roles:

- It makes decisions in relation to how local authorities should be structured in response to applications for change by any person, body or group.
- It makes determinations where an appeal has been made against council decisions on representation arrangements.

The Commission also has a role in promoting good practice in local government. It places great emphasis on working collaboratively with communities and councils to develop local solutions to local government issues.

2.2 Current local government arrangements in Auckland

Local government in the Auckland region is delivered through the Auckland Council – a single unitary authority that was designed to meet both regional and local needs. The Council comprises two autonomous decision-making bodies – the governing body and local boards:

- The governing body consists of the mayor (elected by all Auckland voters) and 20 governing body members (elected by voters from the ward they represent). The governing body focuses on the big picture and on region-wide strategic decisions.
- There are 21 local boards that consist of between five and nine members, which are elected by voters from the area they represent. Local boards represent the communities in their area and make decisions on local issues, activities and facilities.

Auckland Council decision-making bodies are supported by a number of groups:

- The Auckland Council organisation provides advice to the Auckland Council and implements its decisions.
- An independent Māori Statutory Board ensures the council meets its statutory obligations in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Advisory panels provide advice to Council on specific interest areas.
- Council-controlled organisations deliver significant services and/or own or manage assets on behalf of the Council. These organisations include Auckland Transport; Watercare; and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED).

2.3 North Rodney reorganisation application

In November 2013, the Commission received a reorganisation application from the Northern Action Group (the North Rodney application) proposing the constitution of a North Rodney Unitary Council separate from Auckland Council. The application was made under Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002.

The North Rodney application asked for a North Rodney Unitary Authority that:

- has a mayor and five councillors elected from five wards;
- is smaller and more reactive;
- is cheaper to operate;
- has simplified planning;
- has lower debt; and
- is more transparent and accountable.

This is distinct from current governance arrangements where North Rodney residents and ratepayers are represented by:

- a ward councillor who represents the whole Rodney ward (population 62,000); and
- the Rodney Local Board, which is made up of nine members, four of whom are elected by those from the North Rodney subdivisions of Wellsford and Warkworth.

In August 2015, the Commission agreed to assess the application following the submission of further information to the Commission by the Northern Action Group (following a High Court process). The Commission determined that the whole Auckland Council region would be included as the affected area when assessing the proposal.

2.4 Waiheke reorganisation application

In December 2015, the Commission received a reorganisation application from Our Waiheke (the Waiheke application). The Waiheke application proposed a unitary authority for Waiheke Island, separate from Auckland Council.

The application, asked for a Waiheke Unitary Authority that:

- is simpler, more transparent and cost efficient;
- returns a sense of local empowerment to the community;
- has far easier financial information for residents and ratepayers to understand; and
- focuses more closely on promoting the environmental health of the Island

This is distinct from current governance arrangements where Waiheke residents and ratepayers are represented by:

- a ward councillor who represents the entire Waitemata and Gulf ward (population 111,900); and
- the Waiheke Local Board which is made up of five members.

The Commission determined to treat the Waiheke application as an alternative application within the proposed reorganisation process initiated by the North Rodney application. This means that the whole Auckland Council region needs to be considered as the affected area when assessing both applications.

2.5 Alternative applications

Under the Local Government Act 2002, the Commission must call for alternative applications from the public once it has agreed to assess a proposal for local government reorganisation. The alternative applications process was open from 14 April 2016 to 24 June 2016. The Commission received 38 alternative applications, all of which have equal status to the original application in the assessment process.

2.6 Community engagement

The Commission ran a community engagement programme from 6 September to 23 December 2016 to provide the Auckland community, particularly people from Rodney and Waiheke Island, with an opportunity to discuss the applications and give broader feedback on local government arrangements and performance in Auckland. A summary of the engagement process and feedback received is provided in this record.

2.7 The Commission's next steps

The Commission's next steps are to identify a number of potential options that can be considered for potential reorganisation of Auckland. The Commission will identify which of these options, if any at all, are 'reasonably practical options' as set out in Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002. Under the Act, maintaining the status quo is always included as a reasonably practical option.

Analysis of the options will consider whether any new council arrangements would:

- have the resources necessary to enable it to carry out effectively its responsibilities, duties and powers;
- have a district or region that is appropriate for the efficient performance of its role;
- comprise distinct communities of interest; and
- in the case of a regional council or unitary authority, enable catchment-based flooding and water management issues to be dealt with effectively.

More detailed economic analysis will be completed on any options that are identified as reasonably practicable. The Commission will be employing independent consultants to assist with this analysis, the technical nature of which means it will take around three months to complete.

This process will allow the Commission to decide on the reasonably practicable options for local government in Auckland. If any reasonably practicable options are identified, in addition to maintaining the status quo, then Commissioners will make a decision on the preferred option. This decision is likely to be made in the second half of 2017. If the preferred option is not the status quo, the Commission will develop a draft proposal on the preferred option and a public consultation will be held.

3. Community engagement programme

3.1 Public promotion

The community engagement programme was promoted through the following channels:

- a media release explaining how the Auckland community, particularly those based in Rodney and Waiheke Island, could engage with the Commission was issued to local media outlets;
- pamphlets and posters were widely distributed around Rodney and Waiheke Island locations including council service centres, libraries, community noticeboards, shops, cafes, businesses, and other public spaces;
- advertisements were run in the local newspapers including *Mahurangi Matters*, *Rodney Times*, *Waiheke Marketplace*, and on local radio stations *More FM Rodney* and *Waiheke Radio*; and
- community members promoted the engagement through their networks.

3.2 Format and scope

Engagement opportunities included daytime drop-in sessions, community meetings and an online questionnaire.

Discussion and feedback was focussed around five questions:

1. What do you like about the way council services are delivered in your local area now?
2. Is there anything about the way council services are delivered in your local area that you would like to change?
3. Do you think there would be any advantages in changing local government arrangements in Auckland?
4. Do you think there would be any disadvantages in changing the current local government arrangements in Auckland?
5. How satisfied are you with your ability to influence decision-making about issues that affect your local area?

3.2.1 Drop-in sessions

Five drop-in sessions were held throughout Rodney and Waiheke (details in Table 1) and were attended by around 200 people. A drop-in session was planned in Kumeu on Tuesday 27 September but was cancelled on the day due to unforeseen circumstances.

Drop-in sessions provided the public with the opportunity for one-on-one discussions with Commission representatives. Comments made by attendees were recorded by Commission representatives and are reflected in this record.

Table 1: Drop-in sessions

Drop-in sessions
Tuesday 20 September: Wellsford War Memorial Library
Wednesday 21 September: Warkworth Library
Monday 26 September: Matakana Cinemas
Wednesday 28 September: Oneroa, Waiheke Community Library
Thursday 29 September: Ostend War Memorial Hall

3.2.2 Community meetings

Eight community meetings were held throughout Rodney and Waiheke (details in Table 2) and were attended by more than 300 people. The meetings commenced with short introductions about the process and next steps, followed by group discussion. Discussion focussed on what successful local government would look like in those areas. This was followed by a workshop session where attendees could note their views on posters around the room that covered the five key questions.

Feedback from the meetings was recorded and collected by Commission representatives and is reflected in this record.

Table 2: Community meetings

Public meetings
Tuesday 20 September: Wellsford District Community Centre
Wednesday 21 September: Warkworth Shoemith Hall
Monday 26 September: Matakana Cinemas
Tuesday 27 September: Snells Beach, Mahurangi East Community Centre Kumeu Community Centre
Wednesday 28 September: Oneroa, Morra Hall
Thursday 29 September: Ostend War Memorial Hall
Wednesday 2 November: Kumeu Community Centre

3.2.3 Online questionnaire

Auckland residents and ratepayers were invited to fill in a questionnaire that was available on the Commission's website www.lgc.govt.nz. The deadline for completing the questionnaire was 11 November 2016. A total of 288 questionnaires were returned to the Commission and this record reflects the responses. The questionnaire was set up in Survey Monkey with a restriction that multiple responses could not be sent from the same computer.

The questionnaire included the five questions above as well as four additional questions:

6. Please tell us anything else you would like us to know.
7. Are you a resident or ratepayer in the Auckland Council area?
8. Can you please tell us which local board area you live in?
9. Which age group do you fall into?

While the majority of the questionnaire respondents identified as Rodney or Waiheke Island residents six respondents identified additional local board areas that they also belong to. For the purposes of this summary document their feedback has been included under the area that they primarily identified with or discussed in their comments.

3.2.4 Demographics

Some people provided feedback through more than one or all of the engagement channels. Almost all participants were residents and/or ratepayers of Rodney or Waiheke. The largest group of respondents were aged between 45-64, followed by the 65+ age group, then 25-44 and 0-24. Graphs showing these demographic statistics can be found in the Appendix.

3.2.5 Correspondence

The Commission also received 13 pieces of correspondence from individuals and groups with interests in Auckland local government arrangements during the engagement period and following its conclusion. This feedback has been incorporated into this record.

3.3 Feedback verification

The feedback recorded in this document has not been verified for factual accuracy or completeness. The entities that people have commented on have not been approached to verify or respond to feedback.

4. Rodney area feedback

4.1 Local government that enables local influence and an effective role in decision-making

Many people in the community feel they have little or no ability to influence council decision-making about issues that affect their local area. Some people feel the problem is becoming so bad that members of the community are feeling powerless and becoming increasingly disengaged and disillusioned with local government. Some people said Auckland Council does not listen to them and others stated that they are tired of being “ignored”.

Many feel this is due to insufficient local representation because there is only one ward councillor and local board for Rodney, even though Rodney covers a large area of Auckland. Some people think an increase in the number of ward councillors (to two or three) or an additional local board would help strengthen their local voice. Some suggest the Local Board also needs more support staff.

Others feel the local representation is there but that it is “toothless”. Many people think their elected members lack the power or numbers to influence Auckland Council. Many suggest the Local Board needs more power and responsibilities. Several people want more consideration given to the principle of subsidiarity. A few commentators think that if the role of local board members is improved it will attract more high quality members from different sections of society.

Some commenters indicate that the power has shifted from elected representatives to council officials, as evidenced by the number of officials making decisions rather than by those elected to govern. They consider this a problem because council officials are not compelled to listen to the community’s wishes and act in the same way as an elected representative. An area where some people feel the Council is not listening is in the issuance of building and resource consents. Some people feel they are not being notified of big developments when the community considers the public should have a say.

Many people feel that more consultation with the community is necessary especially regarding core services and infrastructure. Others note that current consultation is ineffectual because it seems to be undertaken when the Council has already pre-determined a solution or action.

Two people suggest that holding community consultation at more convenient times would allow more people (such as those that work during the day or who can’t make it in the evening) to provide feedback. Another suggests using local surveys more often to get community thoughts prior to making decisions.

Some people comment that rural needs are often overlooked by an urban-centric council. A few suggest increased consultation for the rural community and a focus on rural issues is needed. A rural liaison person or group is recommended by two submitters.

Other suggestions put forward to help strengthen local influence are:

- the Rodney ward councillor on the Auckland Council governing body should come from the Rodney Local Board;
- the Rodney Local Board should have a direct line of communication and influence with the Council and its council-controlled organisations; and
- staff at the local service centres should be more empowered.

4.2 Local government that reflects the local context, identity and values

Many people feel that Auckland Council has insufficient understanding of the rural context that exists in parts of Rodney and the subsequent issues and needs of its communities. As a result, they consider Auckland Council takes a one-size-fits-all approach which is not effective.

They consider the lack of rural context in Auckland local government is particularly evident when it comes to service delivery in rural areas. For example, some people think the wheellie bin system is not suitable in rural areas where many people have long gravel driveways. A few people have rung the Council before and the staff who responded did not know where the caller was. In one instance a staff member suggested the caller was actually based in the Kaipara District.

Many people note they want rural solutions for rural problems. Some suggestions raised were that Council should:

- have a plan for the increasing urban sprawl into rural areas;
- a rural sub-committee;
- a council-controlled organisation to look after rural needs and funding;
- a rural body with a rural representative on it making decisions for people in rural areas; and
- design and test new and updated services in rural and/or problem areas before deploying them more broadly.

Questions also arose about what would happen to iwi representation and iwi/Council relationships and agreements if changes to local government arrangements occurred.

Some people did note that services centres are helpful as they are staffed with local people who have local knowledge.

4.3 Local government that communicates well and is responsive

Many people see Auckland Council communication as a major problem. This reflects two key issues: challenges with communication between Council and the different communities in Auckland; and communication within Council and with council-controlled organisations (including the development of cohesive plans for the outer areas of Auckland). Some people feel addressing these issues requires significant culture change at Auckland Council.

One commentator suggests more visibility from Council about what it has done and is doing in Rodney would be beneficial. Public meetings and leaflets that are area specific are suggested. One commentator notes that the magazine *Our Auckland* helps keep them informed.

Some people also feel that communication between the governing body and local boards needs to be stronger so that people feel they are talking to Council when talking to a local board member.

Many people are unhappy with the service they receive from the Auckland Council or its council-controlled organisations when they try to lodge a complaint or notify it of an issue. Some people note that it is difficult trying to find the relevant team or person at the Council or council-controlled organisation to talk to. Examples provided were:

- a caller raised an issue about the lack of a pedestrian crossing and was told someone from Council would get back to them but no one did;
- inadequate notification by Auckland Transport of hazards that could endanger local farm workers (and when enquiries are made by concerned residents, Auckland Transport does not follow up);
- inadequate response to hazards such as landslips on roads (e.g. Auckland Transport sends people to check the landslip but do not put safety measures in place straightaway);
- not getting feedback on changes to “original proposals”, bylaws etc.;
- a person contacted Council about “no spray” and filled in all the necessary forms yet despite multiple follow-ups received no response and felt ignored;
- a person contacted Council about an ongoing issue relating to mowing a strip of grass yet despite many follow-ups calls and assurances from Council that it was being done, nothing happened and the person had to follow up through their local board member;
- while trying to stay informed about a local development one person had put in requests for information from the Council that were “overlooked” and they noted that even an official information request “went walkabout”;
- not responding to breaches of bylaws (examples given were: a person who breached rules around their special ecological area and it took years for Council to prosecute; and revelations in the news of councillors interfering in council process to avoid electors being prosecuted for Resource Management Act breaches); and

- an issue was logged with Auckland Transport and was incorrectly marked as “complete” by the contractor. It was suggested that Auckland Transport create an automated computer system so that a message is sent to the original caller to check the work had been done when a job was marked “complete”.

One participant notes that they use the 09 301 0101 phone number to access information and register complaints and thinks it is useful in getting a meaningful response. Another is very happy with their recent experience with Watercare and thinks it as a possible precedent to help ‘fix’ Auckland Council. The positive experience is put down to a change in Watercare’s culture where staff are going out of their way to interact meaningfully with the community.

4.4 Local government that delivers fair rates

Many people do not see evidence of rates being spent locally, and many others indicate that they do not get much in return for their rates and/or want more of their rates to be spent locally. For example, some people are frustrated that their rates are being used to fund an inner city rail project while in their local area they have little or no public transport. One person says that they are paying a transport levy for city roads they rarely use. Others note that fees for some council services or facilities, like community halls, have also increased.

Some rural residents note they are relatively self-sufficient and there are very few services they receive from Council yet their rates are priced at city levels.

Some people feel development contributions raised in the local area should be spent in the local area.

One person says that while the Council has a rating differential in place it should be adjusted to reflect that Rodney ratepayers are paying equivalent rates but do not receive the same amount of services as other areas of Auckland e.g. footpaths, sewerage etc.

Others comment that they think their rates have gone down since the Auckland amalgamation. Several people think they are getting more for their money being part of Auckland Council including a good library, access to free cultural events, and the renovation of the Warkworth Town Hall. One person thinks it is good to have urban rates to protect rural areas.

Many people think changing the current local government arrangements would ensure locally-raised rates are spent locally while others think a change would lead to higher rates and less services.

4.5 Local government that is financially responsible and sustainable

Some people feel the Auckland amalgamation was supposed to bring major cost savings and economies of scale but they do not think it has delivered. Many people note their concern about the current Auckland Council’s growing debt and high staff salaries. Some people think the Council wastes a lot of money and should focus on delivering core services and infrastructure.

Some suggestions put forward for how the Council could save money are:

- use local contractors on local projects;
- reduce duplication of services;
- ensure the chief executive's wage is no more than seven times the lowest paid council staff member; and
- reduce expenditure on unnecessary things (such as questionable art works and sponsoring private corporations).

The main concern that people have about any potential change to local government arrangements is financial viability. Concern is around any future council's ability to fund:

- major infrastructure works;
- infrastructure to support a growing population;
- protection of the environment and rural areas from development; and
- unplanned events including emergencies and crises.

A few commenters are worried about how the Auckland Council debt would be allocated if there was a change to local government arrangements. Some people are concerned that splitting away from Auckland Council will result in reduced capability and a loss of expertise.

4.6 Local government that supports efficient and effective governance

Several people comment that there is too much bureaucracy in Auckland Council and there should be less red tape. Many people think the Council's large size makes it too complicated and unwieldy to manage efficiently and effectively. One commenter says that this means no decisions are made and nothing gets done.

There is some concern that not enough forward planning is done for the local area in preparation for population growth and tourist numbers. Some people think that developments will be built before the necessary infrastructure and services (such as roads and drainage) are planned and put in place.

Some people commented that there should be less duplication of tasks within Council and/or its council-controlled organisations.

Some suggestions put forward to improve the efficiency of Auckland Council are:

- reduce the number of council staff;
- have council experts or expert consultants doing the work – not both; and
- reduce management levels by flattening Council to five levels maximum, then halt restructures for at least five years, and create cross-functional and cross-disciplinary project teams to respond to changing priorities.

Consenting for things like building and holding community events is one particular area that a few people note is slow and bureaucratic. A few people feel there are too many regulations and rules restricting property and farm owners' rights in their local area. They want these relaxed.

However, some people think the council is efficient and well organised. The library is the council service that most people like and many people are concerned about what would happen to this service if there was a change in local government arrangements. Parks and reserves, and rubbish and recycling services are other areas that garnered praise from some commenters.

Several people think the Auckland Council is still embedding change and evolving. They want Auckland Council to have more time to show benefits and feel that six years is not long enough to see results. Others are concerned that the economies of scale would be lost if Rodney split away from Auckland Council.

4.7 Local government that is transparent and accountable to ratepayers

Many people want more accountability and transparency from Auckland Council and its council-controlled organisations. Several commenters want more control of council-controlled organisations, particularly Auckland Transport and Watercare.

Some people feel that elected representatives should be making more of the decisions rather than unelected council staff or council-controlled organisations.

Many people are calling for more transparency particularly around contracts, finances, developments, and the projects undertaken in their local area. A few people feel there is too much secrecy and things kept confidential from ratepayers.

Several people want an audit of the Araparera forestry scheme entered into by the former Rodney District Council as it is not clear to them where the money has gone.

Many want to feel more connected to the Council and people in charge. They currently feel the Council is too far away and would like local administration that is more accessible and easier to approach (to notify of issues etc.).

One commenter did note they are happy with the Food Control Team who they find approachable and responsive. Several others are happy with the service centres in their area.

4.8 Local government that delivers quality roading and transport

Many people mention roading and transport in their feedback. Some people feel they are paying rates as well as road tolls and petrol taxes but yet have poor roads and little or no public transport in their local area.

The lack of action to fix congestion at the Hill Street intersection in Warkworth is considered unacceptable to many.

Many people feel the roads in their local area are ill-maintained. People want to see roads getting fixed and fixed properly, not just given band aid solutions. One person suggests that being able to see a work programme of what is going to get done and where would be useful.

Several people note that they want more roads in their local area sealed. Others want more public transport. A shuttle between Wellsford and Warkworth was a suggestion.

Some people feel the public transport and road maintenance has slightly improved under the Auckland Council.

4.9 Other topics raised

Many people are unhappy that local contractors are not being used to undertake council work in their local area. They feel that money and jobs that would help the local economy are instead going to the city. There is also concern that the use of contractors who are not locally-based means more money is wasted – an example given was someone coming from the city to change a lightbulb at the community hall costing hundreds of dollars.

Several people are still unhappy with the 2010 Auckland amalgamation process and feel the community was pushed into it. Some call that process undemocratic and had insufficient consultation with the community.

5. Waiheke Island feedback

5.1 Local government that enables local influence and an effective role in decision-making

Many people are dissatisfied with their ability to influence decision-making that affects their local area. One person feels the only influence they have is when voting for one ward councillor and local board members but these elected representatives do not have sufficient powers to influence the rest of the Council or the council-controlled organisations.

A few people feel it is hard to get a fair hearing on issues affecting Waiheke with only one councillor spread across two very different areas of Auckland (islands in the Gulf as well as the urban centre of Auckland city). One suggestion is that there should be a councillor representing Waiheke alone. Another person suggests the ward councillor should come from the local board.

Many people would like more power given to the Waiheke Local Board to address the lack of local influence in Council. However, several people do not want more power for the local board or a separate council as they are concerned about increased cronyism and small factions serving their own interests. Some people feel the Local Board would be more influential if members improved their relationship with the Council. A few people feel that Auckland Council services have declined due to a dysfunctional relationship between the Waiheke Local Board and Council departments. Another commenter suggests that the remuneration for local board members is insufficient to do the job justice and perhaps fewer members but higher salaries may result in more engaged and effective representation.

Areas where people would like more local input into decision-making are:

- planning and development (more development being publicly notified);
- transport;
- water;
- waste management; and
- marinas and marine reserves.

Some people feel there is a lack of consultation by the Council, council-controlled organisations and the Local Board or that when it does occur their feedback is ignored. Some people feel that local families and commuters do not have the opportunity to have their say. Several people mentioned that the removal of the Rural Urban Boundary and the loss of the local recycling station are examples of the Council not undertaking community consultation. A few commenters would like public referendums on important decisions.

One commenter did note that the Auckland Council's Empowered Communities Model (which aims to enable and support communities to improve their areas and shape local activities) seems to be working well in supporting local community initiatives.

5.2 Local government that reflects the local context, identity and values

Many people feel that Auckland Council and its council-controlled organisations do not understand or take into account the unique situation of Waiheke Island, the community's values and aspirations, and the local identity. Many people are of the view that they are part of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and not another suburb of Auckland.

Many people want more done to support increasing visitor numbers to the Island, for example more infrastructure such as more rubbish bins along the beach, increased wharf capacity, parking, public transport, footpaths and public toilets. One suggestion is that tourist numbers should be considered when Council makes resourcing decisions for Waiheke.

Several examples where people feel the Council or Auckland Transport have ignored the unique situation of Waiheke Island are:

- the green spaces on Waiheke are the main tourism draw card for the island and removing the Rural Urban Boundary poses a risk to its sustainability;
- kerb and channelling along roads is against environmental preservation values as it flushes chemicals into the sea;
- resource consents, building consents and motorway signage are not in-keeping with a small community feel;
- roadside chemical spraying goes against a local moratorium; and
- the change of rubbish/recycling service provider (rather than using the local Waste Resources Trust) which means waste is now shipped offshore for processing.

However, several people do feel that Waiheke is a part of the Auckland community and therefore want to retain links with the mainland (e.g. transport links, region-wide library system, access to arts and cultural amenities).

5.3 Local government that communicates well and is responsive

Many people note that Auckland Council and its council-controlled organisations could improve how they communicate and respond to local issues. Several people think that communication could improve not just with the Waiheke Island community but also between the Council, the Local Board, the council-controlled organisations and the departments within these organisations. Many people think Auckland Transport in particular is in need of improvements to its internal communication, cooperation and coordination.

One person suggests that there could be more information distributed to let residents know about the programme of activity in their local area. Another commenter notes that the council publication *Our Auckland* has not been delivered to them in four years at Rocky Bay.

People raise several examples where they were dissatisfied with a response from Council or its council-controlled organisations:

- a resident waited two years for a track wrecked by storm to be repaired – it was eventually restored by a group of locals who took the initiative to fix it over a weekend;
- no email response from the Harbourmaster;

- the Council Chief Executive ignored a letter of complaint about the Council planning department signed by 60 locals;
- it took 24 months to get disabled parking spaces on Waiheke; and
- Auckland Transport changed parking rules at Matiatia but did not advise local businesses of the change.

Several others are happy with Council communications and responsiveness. A few people particularly like the face-to-face interaction with local staff at the local service centre. One person notes that staff manning the 09 301 0101 phone line are pleasant and helpful. Another person thinks that in general there are information systems in place such as direct mail newsletters or media outlets to advise residents of important information.

5.4 Local government that delivers fair rates

Many people feel that rates on Waiheke Island are too high for the council services they get. Several people want a fairer system for calculating rates. One commenter notes that rates are based on property values but do not take into consideration the service level disparity between Waiheke Island and other areas of Auckland. For example, many Waiheke residents do not have water supplied to their houses or have sewage removed and the Island does not require as much road work as the mainland. One person wants a fairer arrangement that balances property valuations with services offered on Waiheke and suggests that Waiheke ratepayers, if they had a separate council, could pay Auckland Council a small percentage of rates to support mainland services they do use such as Auckland Airport.

Many people do not want Auckland Council using rates raised on Waiheke Island for non-Waiheke purposes. Some comment that they want rates expenditure focussed on basic services such as rubbish collection and roads.

Some people are concerned that they or others (such as young families and the elderly) are being rated off the Island due to rates rises. A few people are not happy with “uncontrolled” rates rises.

Several people also mention that Council services are over-priced. An example given was the Council spending \$1200 for a park bench that a local contractor could have built for \$200. A few people note that other Council charges like those for building and resource consents or community hall hire are too high.

Some people want a reduction in rates, the ability to raise local taxes (such as a tourism tax) and a subsidy on Waiheke transport (including the ferry) like there is on other Auckland transport.

Several people are concerned that a separate council for Waiheke Island would result in rate increases and service declines due to the loss of economies of scale. Some people feel that Waiheke gets more than its share of money from being part of Auckland and are worried about paying the full cost of services if Waiheke Island was separate.

5.5 Local government that is financially responsible and sustainable

Many people want a Council that lives within its means and uses ratepayers' money wisely. Several people feel Auckland Council is wasteful with ratepayers' money by employing too many staff, using large contracting companies rather than locals and blowing budgets like the IT system. Some people want the Council to focus more on providing better core services (such as rubbish and roads).

Some people think there may be less money available if there was a split from Auckland Council but that this would be balanced by better decision-making on priority areas for Waiheke. One person wants more independence so the Local Board has the ability to raise and save money for the future needs of the Island. However, some people are concerned about how much Auckland Council debt Waiheke would be responsible for if a separate Waiheke Council was established.

Many people are unsure about the financial sustainability of a separate Waiheke Island council. Several people think Waiheke Island's rating base is too small to support a separate council for the Island. They voice concern about a separate Waiheke Council's ability to financially deal with major disasters like a tsunami or volcanic eruption, or large infrastructure works. Others feel they do not have sufficient information to know if a separate council for Waiheke Island would be financially sustainable or not.

A few people are particularly concerned about a separate council's financial viability given the Island's unique situation as a tourist destination. Several people note that ATEED's support for local tourism on the Island is important and they would not want to lose it. Others are concerned about the ability to fund the infrastructure needed to support visitor numbers to the Island.

5.6 Local government that supports efficient and effective governance

Many people feel the local government structures in Auckland are too big and complex, which results in slow and bureaucratic processes. Several people comment that there are too many layers of management, too many council-controlled organisations, and that officials were ever-changing. One person notes that getting things fixed like a street light can take weeks because of the slow machinery of Auckland Council.

Another person notes that as Waiheke is considered a tourist destination it should be easier and less bureaucratic to put on shows and community events. Several people feel this bureaucracy in the current system is discouraging public engagement and volunteerism.

Some suggest greater efficiency and effectiveness could be gained by having more local staff on the Island managing local services such as biodiversity programmes and events, and community hall access. One commenter notes that a possible advantage to changing local government arrangements could be using local people rather than big contractors.

Some people also want a more streamlined building consent process.

Some people like the access to expertise, specialists and increased capability Waiheke receives through Auckland Council. There is some concern that a smaller council for a smaller community would mean a smaller talent pool to draw from. Others think there are sufficiently talented people on the Island who have the necessary skills (such as business skills) to run a council.

One person notes that the Council is so big that it is hard for elected members to keep abreast of all the issues.

A few people think the Council is efficient. The rubbish collection and local board are two things people note as being efficient. Other council services that many people like are the library, parks and reserves.

5.7 Local government that is transparent and accountable to ratepayers

Many people want increased accountability and transparency from Auckland Council and its council-controlled organisations. Several people also want more accountability from their local board particularly around expenditure and contracts for projects. One commenter suggests there should be an impeachment process for any member who proves they are unfit for office by engaging in behaviours such as bullying and nepotism.

Some people feel the council-controlled organisations are out of control. They call for increased accountability of those organisations by Auckland Council. One suggestion put forward is that they report to the full Council (including governing body and local boards) not just the Mayor. Several people also think there is too much delegation to council officials reducing accountability of elected representatives.

Many people think there is little or no transparency in local government arrangements. They want to see more transparency of Council and local board finances particularly expenditure, procurement, decision-making (including how they came to a decision and who made it) and what Council is doing. For example, several people want to know what the wharf tax is spent on.

Some people are concerned about corruption. Some people feel there is already corruption in the system (examples were given of Auckland Transport former employees' court case and voting papers delivered to empty holiday houses being used by others). Others note that if you have enough money you can usually pay to get around Council rules or apply for district plan changes. Some people are worried that a smaller council on Waiheke would be more susceptible to corruption in the future or would not have the financial and legal clout to fight rampant or unwanted development.

A few people are concerned about the lack of policing of bylaws and breaches of resource consents. A few people want more environmental protection, higher environmental standards and sustainable development.

Some people are happy to have a service centre and phone and email access to Council. However, others feel it is difficult to get the right person regarding an issue and that Council is too far removed providing them with limited access to local politicians and decision makers.

5.8 Local government that delivers quality roading and transport

Many people feel the quality of roading has deteriorated since Auckland Council has managed it. Several people want better quality repairs and road surfacing. One person notes an example where a road was repaired but new potholes formed shortly after.

Some people feel there is a lack of transport planning on the Island with no obvious prioritisation of urgent works. One person thinks there needs to be more coordination between Auckland Council and Auckland Transport and gave an example of a time when road works were scheduled and conflicted with a major community event. Some people feel that the roads and public transport are not coping with tourist peak times. A couple of people want more pedestrian access for tourists and locals. A few people suggest having some sort of roading company/team on the island to do smaller road maintenance jobs.

People feel that they are not having their voices heard on the following transport issues:

- more buses;
- keeping roadsides free of toxic sprays;
- no kerbing and channelling on rural roads;
- allowing competition and/or regulation of ferry services; and
- consultation with stakeholders to agree on a mooring regime.

Matiatia transport hub was a particular issue raised by many people. Concerns include:

- three different council-controlled organisations own the land around the hub but have no coherent plan for the area;
- there are a number of parking issues including lack of parking;
- the hub allows buses to operate that are too large for the key hole; and
- situations have arisen where it is Auckland Council versus Auckland Transport. This is seen as a waste of ratepayers' money.

However, there are some people that think roading is delivered well with only some improvement needed. One person notes they are happy with access to the expertise that Auckland Transport provides.

5.9 Other topics raised

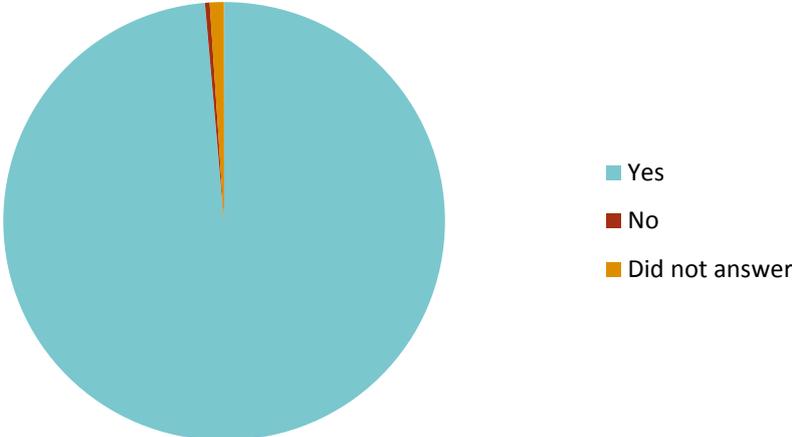
Several people think more needs to be done to provide social and affordable housing for local families, workers and elderly. One person notes that renters are often evicted over the summer period so landlords get higher returns from visitors.

Several people want a community pool for the Island and one notes that money had been raised for this before but it was redirected.

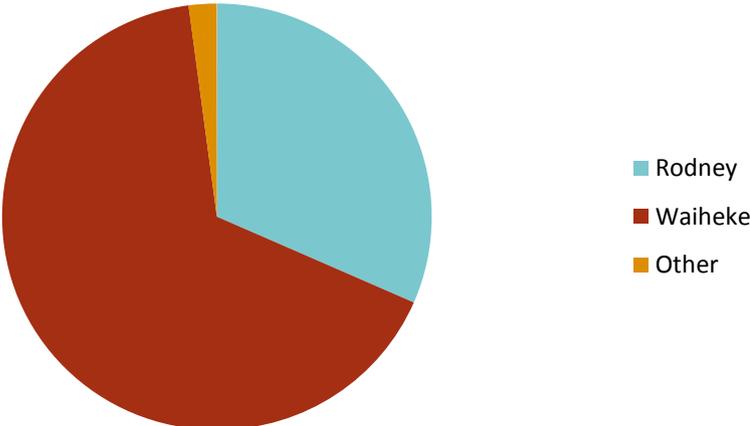
Appendix A: Online questionnaire demographics

Survey respondents = 288

Graph 1: Are you a resident or ratepayer in the Auckland Council area?



Graph 2: Can you please tell us which local board area you live in?



Graph 3: Which age group do you fall into?

