

**Community insight to
inform and inspire Kāpiti
representation arrangements**

1 June 2021

Empathy

We need to understand the community's point of view on:

- Where communities of interest sit
- What's effective in representation
- What's fair in representation

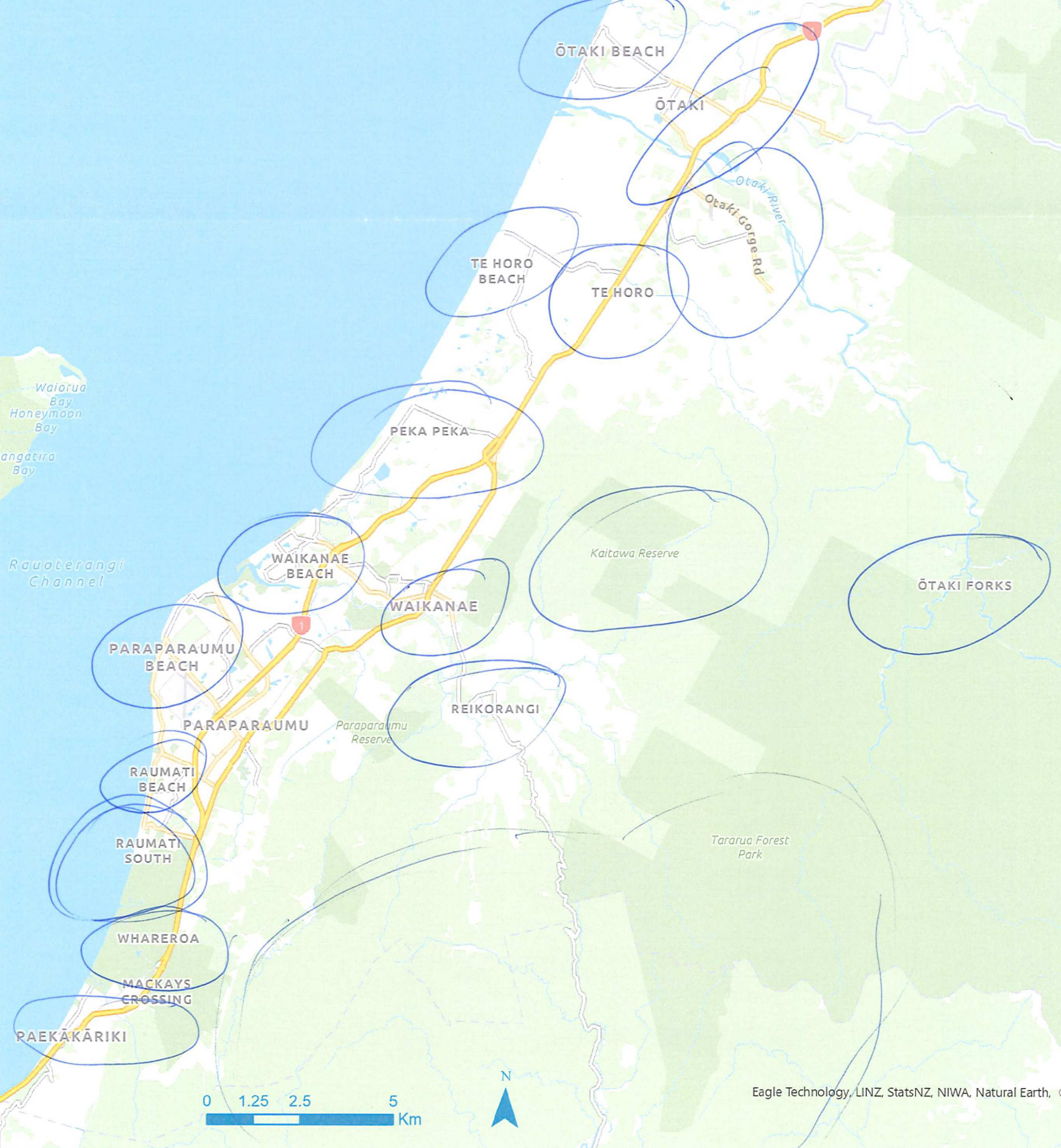
Communities of interest

**People recognise the
diversity of our district.**

**People are part of many
communities of interest.
Most are not geographic.**

*"It doesn't work that way.
My communities of
interest aren't defined by
geography."*

**People believe the suburbs
are different from each other.
Different vibe, demographics,
interests, socioeconomics,
types of businesses, etc.**



"Oh absolutely, all the places have a different personality. I go to different spots depending on what I feel like or need."

Ōtaki • Cultural hub • Māori
strength • Friendly • Some really
low socioeconomic • Look after
each other • More Māori and
Pacific people

Waikanae (town) • An older population • Heaps of retirement homes • Some families, but mainly couples with older children and money

Paraparaumu (town) • Lower household income • Single, flatting, younger families • Not as friendly • Sad looking • Retail and business

Raumati South • Young families,
but with money • Professionals but
community-minded, greenies,
lefties • They're more likely to
have chickens in their back-yard

Three geographic communities seem particularly distinct

- Ōtaki — big town, congestion, go north, multiple generations, whakapapa, Māori strength, cultural hub, feel disenfranchised, look after each other, live in Ōtaki
- Paekākāriki — roading brings isolation, passionate about a few key issues, vocal and active
- Rural — different mindset, different infrastructure needs

Two strong versions of geographic communities of interest

- Horizontal — largely aligned to suburbs or townships
- Vertical — rural, urban, coastal

The developing expressway didn't seem to change communities of interest much, if at all.

Effective represent'n

*Councillors should
represent the diversity
of our people.*

**Diversity of thought and life
experience is good.**

**We are a diverse community,
and that should be reflected.**

*"I think what that's about is fair
representation. That the needs of all
corners of our district are heard and
have a voice."*

**Because suburbs have
different vibes and needs,
we need councillors from
across the district.**

"You often get the same 'type' of people living in the same area. You need people from all walks of life to be represented. Assuming that your councillors understand their areas, it gives you a much fairer representation."

**That's about intimately
knowing the people and
issues, having an emotional
attachment, being like them.**

*"It's more than just an academic
skillset. It's emotional ties to the
community that's important. "*

"How can someone represent the rural block here if they don't know it. If you haven't lived rural, you won't know how rural people live, especially if you don't know anybody who lives rural. Hopefully they would be able to represent – with knowledge, that's the thing – what the people are experiencing."

"I have a strong belief that people need to have an affinity with the people they're serving. There are suburbs that have better resources, demographics, whatever, than others. Without local people understanding and representing them, you can't really represent them and their needs well. By having people from around Kāpiti, you'll have a more diverse council and better understanding of different people and areas and needs. That's my assumption, anyway."

Be as efficient as possible within necessary diversity.

"Walking that fine line between having the diversity to meet everyone's needs, but not having death by committee. Each person needs to significantly add to the expertise, relating to different areas."

"Big enough that there is good representation of different communities and diversity of councillors, but not so big that it is ineffective and inefficient."

*Councillors need to
know the people and
issues.*

It's a councillor's job to reach out and learn about the people and their needs — one of the most important jobs.

"That's a big part of what they're paid to do!"

"How else will the councillor know what the community's needs are?!"

**Need to hear from the diversity
of people — not just the loudest
voices, or those who have time
or access.**

*"They just
represent the same
narrow minority."*

*"Retired people who have time to go to
Council and have their voices heard vs people
working two jobs who never have time."*

**It's currently hard to hear from
the diverse range of voices.**

*"When I come home, I'm tired,
I've got house stuff to do, or I
do stuff with the kids."*

*"I had something to say. But I didn't
go. I don't like crowds. There's no
way I could have coped with that."*

“Generally speaking, it’s usually the marginalised communities who aren’t engaging anyway. They don’t have time or inclination. They’re just putting one foot in front of the other. Instead of writing them off as not having an interest in their community, they are just focused on something else. That’s where other methods of community engagement could be really good. The standard ways might not be at the time or place a lot of people can go to. Like council meetings. Suburbs and people who are struggling, they aren’t working 9-5 jobs. They’re working two jobs, cleaning, whatever. Single parents, who’s going to look after the children? There’s just lots of barriers. The people that need to be represented aren’t the ones who would put their hand up for a group board.”

It takes time to get across the people and issues, so don't stretch councillors too thin.

"I worry about their workload. How can they stay across it all?"

"If I were doing this after a full day of work, I'd be phoning it in."

*Councillors should do
what's best for Kāpiti
as a whole.*

For most, that means doing what's best for those in need...

- Some people need more of a boost
- Helping people to thrive lifts everyone up

"We need to focus on those most in need in the suburbs and get them back on an even footing."

"My life isn't just based in my suburb. It all effects me so it's important that it all works well."

"They're interconnected because what's best for in-need suburbs is best for Kāpiti as a whole. If they're winning, everyone's winning. If they have access to services, they can thrive, and then local shops can thrive, and so on."

... and seeing the bigger picture rather than silos.

- Against parochialism, NIMBYism, squeaky wheels getting the attention — that goes against doing what's best for Kāpiti as a whole

"Issues like the airport are important to the whole district, not just the ward it is in."

"If you do what's best for the greater, it will have a benefit for my suburb, for every suburb."

"For example, if they wanted to turn the reserve into a camping ground. It's a localised issue, but you need to think about the big benefits to the district too. NIMBYs say 'not in my back yard'. That would be the loudest voice but not necessarily the best thing."

**See the local issues, think
about the big picture.**

*Councillor capability
is very important*

**To consider and debate
rigorously, make good
decisions, take swift action.**

*"Bottom line, it depends
on the calibre of the
people standing."*

*"The bottom line is we need good
people. It's about capability."*

*"You need good people. Smart,
highly capable people."*

**As I dug into people's beliefs
and needs, they started to see
it's a tricky puzzle.**

"It's important that all demographics get represented. But then capability is important too. The people elected might have the lived experience of their constituents, but might not have the skills to represent them well. So there's a balance. I want to have my cake and eat it too."

"Now that I think about it, it's tricky! Good luck!"

Perceptions on effect of arrangements

**At-large helps ensure capability
and helps councillors consider and
do what's best for Kāpiti as a whole,
but makes it harder to see local
issues and stay close to the people.**

Wards help councillors stay close to the needs of people and areas, but increases risk of parochialism and lack of big vision for Kāpiti.

A mix of at-large and wards is best.

- Helps stay close to people *and* see the big picture.
- Helps focus on most in-need and do what's best for Kāpiti as a whole.
- Balances desire to ensure capability and geographic spread.

Bigger councils help ensure diversity and rigorous debate, and that councillors are not spread too thin. Also helps to protect against a less capable or hobby-horse councillor.

Smaller councils can work more efficiently, make decisions more quickly, keep admin costs down, and jump on opportunities before they disappear. And there's less room for factions and in-fighting.

Community boards

- Don't have the teeth they need. Excluded, ignored. Dial them up.
- Only represent special interests. Drive limited issues.
- Same election processes, attract the same type of people, only hear from the same type of people.

*The upshot for
represent'n
arrangements*

Reflect distinct geographic communities of interest.

Perception that this is achieved through smaller wards, careful placement of boundaries.

Help ensure high-calibre representatives.

Perception that this is achieved through bigger wards,
at-large.

**Don't spread councillors too thin.
Ensure they can get across the
people and issues.**

Perception this is achieved through small wards, more councillors.

Support councillors' responsibility to reach out and hear from the community.

Perception this is achieved through small wards. Some perception this could be achieved through community panels, community boards, Council officers. Some perception shared responsibility hinders.

Ensure minority voices are heard, not overshadowed.

Perception this is achieved through careful boundary placement, and/or at-large and not spreading councillors too thin.

**Support the likelihood of
councillors coming from across
the district.**

Perception this is achieved through small wards.

Give more focus to in-need suburbs.

Tackle inequity, foster equity.

Perception this is achieved through ward councillors who see local issues, and at-large councillors who look across the district.

**Build barriers to parochialism.
Support ability to look across the
district. Make it easier to do what's
best for Kāpiti as a whole.**

Perception this is achieved through councillors coming from across the district yet not having to answer to their wards.

Ensure councillors hear from a diverse range of community voices, not just one type.

Majority perception this is not achieved through another layer of elected representatives. Minority perception this could be achieved by strengthening the role of community boards.

It's not straightforward

- People align with multiple communities of interest — some are not geographically-based
- There are two key versions of geographic communities of interest — vertical, horizontal
- Very distinct communities of interest make the numbers tricky (+/-10% rule)
- Our experience and knowledge might contradict some community perceptions — but both are important
- The LGC guidance might mean we can't fully align with our community's objectives

from Emma

Thank you

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