

Better Local Government Fact Sheet



A simpler council reorganisation process

Introduction

In March 2012 the Minister for Local Government announced a reform programme for local government. The programme is part of the Government's broader economic growth programme, and is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local government. Called "Better Local Government", the programme consists of two phases. The first of these phases has resulted in changes to the Local Government Act 2002.

This fact sheet explains the changes relating to how council reorganisations (combining or splitting councils) are managed.

What's new?

Now, anyone will be able to apply for a reorganisation, so long as they can show there is community support; identify the rationale for change; and explain how the proposed option promotes good local government.

The Local Government Commission's role and responsibilities will change. For example, the Commission will invite alternative applications and identify the practical options available. An important part of the Commission's role will be to decide which of the options best promotes good local government in a particular area. This will involve considering whether the available options achieve the purpose of local government and aid improved economic performance. The Commission's preferred option will then be turned into a draft proposal and issued for consultation with communities.

A petition signed by 10 per cent of affected electors in any affected district can demand a poll on a final reorganisation proposal. There will be 60 working days to prepare a petition. If a poll happens, the result will be determined across the whole area affected by the proposal.

What are the benefits?

The changes bring in more flexible, coherent and effective procedures for reorganisations. They give the Commission the scope to develop the best reorganisation proposal for local government in an area, and then consult the affected communities on that proposal.

The changes also provide more clarity about the transition arrangements that will apply if a proposal goes ahead. For example, transition bodies will be set up to work with the Commission while it prepares reorganisation schemes. These bodies will include people from the affected councils, ensuring there is local input into the detailed schemes.



What does it mean for me?

The new procedures mean it will be easier for communities to seek changes to their local governance arrangements.

Further information about the new procedures, including how to make a reorganisation application, is provided on the Local Government Commission's website: www.lgc.govt.nz