

Report No:	RCN12-01-12
File No:	C855
Date:	26 January 2012
Decision Required	

REPORT SUMMARY

Report to: Full Council
Meeting Date: 26 January 2012
Report Author: Lloyd Kennedy – Electoral Officer
Subject: Appointment of Independent Electoral Officer and Retention of ElectionNZ.com as Electoral Service Provider

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission will be announcing its decision on whether or not to issue a final reorganisation scheme for Nelson and Tasman on 31 January 2012. Should a final scheme be issued, two polls will be held – one for the electors of Nelson City Council and the other for electors of Tasman District Council.

Council electoral staff believe that this poll should be carried out by an independent Electoral Officer, to ensure public confidence in the transparency and neutrality of process.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That this report be received and the proposed resolutions adopted.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

THAT the Tasman District Council:

- 1 Receive Report this report RCN12-01-12; and**
- 2 Appoint Warwick Lampp as an independent Electoral Officer for a possible amalgamation poll;**
- 3 Contract electionz.com as the electoral service provider to carry out the possible amalgamation poll.**

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To enable Council to consider whether or not an independent Electoral Officer should be appointed for the possible amalgamation poll, and retention of electionz.com as the electoral service provider.
- 1.2 A decision in favour of appointing an independent Electoral Officer would need to be made prior to the announcement of the Local Government Commission's decision on amalgamation at the end of this month. This would ensure that an appointment would be in place should a poll proceed.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government Commission (LGC) has considered an amalgamation proposal of Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council.
- 2.2 The LGC issued a draft reorganisation scheme and received 395 submissions. Hearings were held, and now the LGC must decide whether or not to issue a final reorganisation scheme. This decision is to be announced on 31 January 2012.
- 2.3 If the LGC decides to proceed with a final reorganisation scheme two polls must be held – one for the electors of Nelson City and one for the electors of Tasman District. For the final reorganisation scheme to be successful, more than 50% of votes in each poll must be in favour of the final scheme.

3. Present Situation/Matters to be Considered

- 3.1 Electoral staff consider that the appointment of an independent Electoral Officer would be appropriate for any possible amalgamation poll. This would ensure public confidence in the transparency and neutrality of the poll process.
- 3.2 Council has contracted out its election services to electionz.com for the 2010 local body elections, and more recently the Golden Bay Ward By-election 2011. electionz.com has carried out these elections with integrity and competence, and the results have been timely. Electoral staff from electionz.com and Council have a good rapport, and work well together.

4. Financial/Budgetary Considerations

- 4.1 The quote for the cost of appointing an independent electoral officer is \$5,000 of the total amalgamation poll cost. This has not been budgeted for.

5. Options

- 5.1 Council retains Lloyd Kennedy as its Electoral Officer and contracts electionz.com to carry out the poll.
- 5.2 Council appoints Warwick Lampp as an independent Electoral Officer and contracts electionz.com to carry out the poll.

6. Pros and Cons of Options

- 6.1 The “pros” of option 5.1 are that many electors of Tasman District are familiar with who the electoral staff are,
The “cons” would include possible criticism from pro-amalgamation electors, and staff time would be diverted from regular job functions.
- 6.2 The “pros” of option 5.2 is that Council would be seen to be totally independent of the poll, and thus ensure public confidence in the complete neutrality of process. Also Warwick Lamp is currently the Electoral Officer for Nelson City Council, and this would enable a consistent approach between both councils.
There does not appear to be any significant “cons”.

7. Evaluation of Options

- 7.1 Option 5.2 is recommended as it provides a completely independent Electoral Officer who is also the Electoral Officer for the Nelson City Council.

8. Significance

- 8.1 The decisions required to be made in this report are not considered to be significant in terms of Council's Significance Policy.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That this report be received and the proposed resolutions be adopted.

10. Timeline/Next Steps

- 10.1 A decision on whether or not to have an independent Electoral Officer needs to be made before the LGC's decision on 31 January 2012, so that if a poll is to be held, an independent Electoral Officer can be appointed immediately.

11. Draft Resolution

THAT the Tasman District Council:

- 4 Receive Report this report RCN12-01-12; and**
- 5 Appoint Warwick Lampp as an independent Electoral Officer for a possible amalgamation poll;**
- 6 Contract electionz.com as the electoral service provider to carry out the possible amalgamation poll.**