

**Hearing of Submissions:
Representation Review 2021
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Minutes of a hearing of submissions on the QLDC Representation Review 2021 held via Zoom on Thursday, 26 August 2021 beginning at 1.00pm

Present:

Mayor Boulton; Councillors Clark, Copland, Gladding, Ferguson, Lewers, MacLeod, Shaw, Smith and Whitehead

In attendance:

Mr Mike Theelen (Chief Executive Officer), Mr Naell Crosby-Roe (Governance and Stakeholder Engagement Manager) and Ms Jane Robertson (Senior Governance Advisor)

Apologies

There were no apologies.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

No declarations were made.

Confirmation of Agenda

The agenda was confirmed without addition or alteration.

Hearing of Submissions to the QLDC Representation Review 2021

1. Kirsty Sharpe

Mrs Sharpe expressed support for the advisory group's recommendations and thanked them for trying to develop 'blue sky recommendations'.

She considered that the Arrowtown Ward and the Wānaka Community Board were both anomalies and should not be retained. Arrowtown was not an island and most of the population worked and shopped in the wider area. If it was part of a larger ward one Councillor could be appointed to Arrowtown community groups meaning that local representation would still be achieved. Arrowtown's heritage features would still have protection regardless of the existence of the Arrowtown Ward. Accordingly, she supported Arrowtown being discontinued as a single ward and instead contained within a larger Kawarau Ward.

It was noted that David Clarke was scheduled to speak next in the meeting but was experiencing technical difficulties. The Mayor advised that he would take the next speaker on the schedule in the hope that Mr Clarke would be able to speak later in the meeting.

2. Jimmy Sygrove (on behalf of the APBA)

Mr Sygrove (for APBA) expressed support for Arrowtown retain its own ward and single councillor. APBA supported the 12 councillor approach as proposed in the consultation option, which included an Arrowtown councillor. APBA had concerns that Arrowtown's unique qualities would be lost if Arrowtown was amalgamated into a much larger Queenstown-Wakatipu Ward. Deviation from the +/-10% measure was permissible if enlarging an area would combine two or more communities with little common interest and the recommendation of the advisory group was not supported. If necessary, APBA would support an extension of the ward boundaries to match that of the Arrowtown School Catchment because it considered Arrowtown shared communities of interest with Speargrass Flat, Arrow Junction, Crown Terrace and Gibbston areas.

3. Scott Stevens

Mr Stevens advised that his submission was taken as read but he had reviewed the other submissions and wished to comment further on his impressions. He noted that although many submissions from the Upper Clutha had been critical of retaining the Arrowtown Ward they had provided no sound argument to support this stance and he was surprised at the ill feeling against Arrowtown. As an Arrowtown Councillor he had always worked closely with other Councillors, his role had not taken away from other communities and he had not been a 'puppet' of the Wakatipu.

He observed that many Wānaka submissions had questioned the either/or choice presented between keeping the Wānaka Community Board or getting a fourth Councillor. Many submitters had argued that it should be possible to have both. He personally saw no reason to abolish the Wānaka Community Board because of an additional Councillor in the Wānaka Ward.

He noted that only two submissions had commented about not wanting to be in the proposed Kawarau Ward but apart from this, there had been little overall comment about splitting the Queenstown-Wakatipu Ward. He considered that this lack of comment suggested the idea had not resonated with the community.

4. Susan Rowley (on behalf of AVA)

Ms Rowley noted that AVA had been guided by a Shaping our Future recommendation that Arrowtown should retain a dedicated Councillor. Many submitters from the Upper Clutha had been critical of Arrowtown, questioning whether it was a community of interest and pointing out that it had the least diverse population of the district and the highest property values. She rejected these criticisms, highlighting the Community Housing Areas in Arrowtown and its large number of voluntary community groups which served sports, family, social and environmental interests, all which pointed to a community of interest.

5. Peter Robinson

Mr Robinson thanked the Council for adopting a consultation proposal that included the Arrowtown Ward. He spoke of Arrowtown's origins, the number of historic sites and its importance to the New Zealand brand. He also referred to the Shaping Our Future recommendation that Arrowtown should retain a dedicated representative, without which there was no guarantee that Arrowtown issues would be consistently presented at the Council table. He acknowledged that depending on future population trends, there may be a need in the future to look at the Arrowtown Ward boundary.

6. David Clarke

Mr Clarke expressed strong support for retaining the Arrowtown Ward and the Ward Councillor. The current system worked well and population was a blunt tool. Arrowtown was a good example of an interested and active community which had successfully managed growth and amenity protection since amalgamation. Whilst Councillors swore to represent the whole district, this was not true in reality and the ward system as promoted created the situation where elected members represented their constituents. He accepted that Arrowtown could be expanded in the next review and he was agreeable to adopting the School Zone as new ward boundaries.

7. Graham McArthur

Mr McArthur supported the advisory group three ward recommendation. He did not support retaining a single member Arrowtown Ward which he considered was an inadequate representation model. He supported retaining the Wānaka Community Board because it served to provide another layer of democracy. The argument that it was an anomaly being the only community board in the district was not a sufficient reason to remove it. Indeed, he supported introducing community boards for the other wards as this approach would provide better representation for small communities of interest. He did not agree that one Councillor for 3,000 people was sufficient and levels of representation should be improved overall.

8. Trevor Tattersfield

Mr Tattersfield supported the Council's proposal that there be no Wānaka Community Board. During his professional life he had formed the view that community boards created division, mistrust and difficulties with communication. They often failed to see the bigger picture and struggled to attract good quality candidates. In his view, Wānaka would be better served by four Councillors than through the Wānaka Community Board.

9. Rachel Brown

Ms Brown advised that she was a resident of Hāwea Flat and she commended the advisory group for developing a new model of representation and for trying to have a 'blue sky' view. She supported the model of three equal wards and opposed retaining the separate Arrowtown Ward. However, until Council management was spread evenly across the district with Wānaka Ward managers/engineers in place and more services decentralised from Queenstown, it was important to keep the Wānaka Community Board. The reasons

given for needing a Wānaka Community Board at the time of amalgamation had not changed but intensified. An effective community board enhanced decision-making and reporting of local preferences and it was the Council's responsibility to make Wānaka Community Board more effective.

10. Nick Fifield (Deputy Chair, AVA and APBA)

Mr Fifield supported retention of the Arrowtown Ward. He had set out reasons in his written submission but referred to the high levels of tourism, Arrowtown's vibrant annual events schedule and its disproportionate contribution to the local economy.

He expressed concern that no Arrowtown representatives had been included on the advisory group. Membership of the group may have resulted in a more nuanced compromise for consultation than that developed in haste at the Council meeting. He considered Arrowtown had status as a community of special interest and other communities could look to Arrowtown as an exemplar. It was a unique asset to the district and to New Zealand.

The meeting adjourned at 2.00pm and recommenced via Zoom on Friday, 27 August at 10.00am with the same persons present and in attendance.

The following submitters joined the meeting to present their verbal submissions in support of their original written submissions.

11. Simon Telfer

Mr Telfer considered that the high number of submissions from the Upper Clutha demonstrated the engagement of the Wānaka community and most submissions had favoured keeping the Wānaka Community Board. Questions about its current effectiveness showed the levels of local disillusionment. As an organisation, the Board was not genuinely connected with the Council and did not receive a fair share of resources. A demonstration of this disconnect was the paucity of staff based in Wānaka and lack of investment in the Wānaka ward. Retiring the Board would create further disconnect with the Wānaka community but retaining the Wānaka Community Board in the absence of meaningfully reinstating its authority, influence and dignity was the worst of both worlds. If the Board was to be retained it needed its influence to be reinstated and this power came from Council.

12. Philip Vink

Mr Vink stated that the decisions about an additional Wānaka Ward Councillor and the future of the Wānaka Community Board should have been separated in the consultation materials. The Board had originally been established because of Wānaka's isolation and to ensure local representation and these reasons had not changed. Wānaka had a different focus from Queenstown and the existence of the Wānaka Community Board was a way of redressing the imbalance. The existing Wānaka Councillors seemed to be out of touch and the future of Wānaka Airport had been left to be addressed by an independent

group of local citizens. Other Council decisions such as lowering the speed limits had been unpopular and these showed that the Board was still needed.

13. Wayne Hudson

Mr Hudson stated he wished to address two matters: the dissolution of the Wānaka Community Board and democracy.

In his view the presentation of the advisory group wrongly asserted that the existence of the Wānaka Community Board was inequitable because there were no other community boards in the district. In 1989, Wānaka had been given a community board because it was deemed a distinct community of interest. Its existence did not create over-representation and did not stop other communities from having community boards. Furthermore, Wānaka was entitled both to retaining the Wānaka Community Board and having a fourth Councillor. It had been misleading for the Council to advertise this as being an either/or as the issues were completely separate. More than 90% of submitters had supported retention of Wānaka Community Board and this number would have been higher if the proposal had not been confusing.

Mr Hudson questioned whether democracy was dying, referring specifically to the erosion of democracy through the removal of local bodies and community level governance. A modern government system needed effective sub-Council governance structures which helped to ensure representation at the community level. The Council's proposal to dissolve the Wānaka Community Board was very concerning. The reason for this recommendation might have been based on its ineffectiveness but this was not a reason to get rid of it, rather a reason to increase delegations and funding.

14. Gilbert van Reenen

Mr van Reenen spoke in support of the retention, proper resourcing and oversight of the Wānaka Community Board. He had observed a steady and lamentable decline in participation in local government processes and believed that democracy was under threat at a local level. This resulted in a loss of social cohesion, sense of community and disillusionment with and disrespect for authority. People in Wānaka were feeling disenfranchised and removing the Wānaka Community Board would exacerbate this. He was critical of the 'binary' decision about the Board/additional Councillor contained in the consultation, which he considered was misleading and dishonest. Wānaka had a statutory right to a community board and it had functioned effectively until a few years ago. Its existence was even more important because most of the facilities, staff and resources were in Queenstown. It was important to increase the role of the Board to meet the challenges of the future. Poor Board performance reflected badly on current Councillors as it was within their powers to sort out any problems that interfered with the board's functions and operation.

Mr van Reenen was unable to complete presentation of his verbal submission due to connection issues. The rest of his submission was read aloud by the Chief Executive later in the meeting.

15. Dennis Pezaro

Dr Pezaro was concerned about the domination of Queenstown, adding that under the consulted proposal eight of the 12 Councillors would live in the Wakatipu, leaving only four to represent the large group of people in the Upper Clutha. This was an imbalance as decisions would be made for the Upper Clutha population by a majority who did not live or work in the ward. The Wānaka Community Board had previously worked well and its presence provided a voice for local people.

16. Shirley Walthew

Ms Walthew stated that the voice of Hāwea was not heard as well as it could be. The Wānaka ward was very large and an additional Council member (giving five in total in the Upper Clutha) would ensure Hāwea's voice was heard much more. Wānaka had inadequate facilities in place compared to Queenstown and people did not believe that they had the same levels of support for equal facilities.

17. Neville Harris

Wānaka Community Board in its present form was a group of individuals elected by default and this had been the trend for some time. Wānaka Community Board had become less effective and less important as Queenstown had grown. It had initially worked well with appropriate delegations but unless the Council leadership was prepared to change, the Board would have no future. Community Associations worked well in some communities and provided localised representation. If retained, the Board should be renamed as the Upper Clutha Community Board.

18. Loris King

Mrs King expressed concern about the poor levels of care of some reserves in Wānaka. She highlighted particular concerns about the care of Lismore Park.

19. Bruce Hebbard

Mr Hebbard spoke in support of the Wānaka Community Board. Retention of the Board and an additional Wānaka Councillor were two separate issues. Local Government Commission guidelines stated that local democracy needed to provide for fair and effective representation of communities of interest. Wānaka still qualified as a community of interest as it had originally done in 1989 and there was still the same need for the Wānaka Community Board. He did not favour Hāwea as a separate ward or any further separation (e.g. Albert Town with Hāwea) as he preferred to vote for all Councillors and not just one.

20. Viv Milsom (member of Representation Review Advisory Group)

Ms Milsom noted that the Advisory Group's resolution about the future of the Wānaka Community Board had not been unanimous, with two abstaining, two in opposition and only three in favour. Her own research showed that most Wānaka people wanted to retain the Wānaka Community Board, but if retained its powers needed to be strengthened so that it could more fairly and effectively support Wānaka. She highlighted three things that needed to happen to make the Board successful. QLDC needed to honour the governance protocol statement which gave a commitment to consult with the Board. There were two recent issues of high significance where QLDC had failed to consult (speed limit changes and future of Wānaka Airport). The minor improvements budget needed to be increased and she recommended that only one Wānaka Ward Councillor be on the Board at a time.

21. Frances Copland

Wānaka Community Board in the past had represented the community well and still did so at a local level, although Mrs Copland believed that it had performed better in the past than at the present. QLDC needed to be more supportive of the Wānaka Community Board than it was currently. Removing the Board would take democracy away from the people and she supported saving and strengthening the Wānaka Community Board. Under population calculations, Wānaka was legally entitled to a fourth Councillor

22. Barry Bruce and Jude Battson (on behalf of Wānaka Community Board)

Mr Bruce spoke in support of Wānaka Community Board being retained. He highlighted the following points in support:

- Members had connections with their neighbourhoods and all were very closely involved with their communities.
- Wānaka was growing at a faster rate than Queenstown and was a distinct community of interest which was clearly geographically defined and separate from Queenstown.
- There was an imbalance of Council staff who lived and worked in QT and their knowledge and actions were closely aligned to where they lived.
- The Board's structures and delegations should be revised to ensure maximum Board effectiveness.
- He supported one Ward Councillor appointment at a time on a rotational basis.
- The minor improvements budget needed to be substantially increased.

Ms Battson spoke about the effectiveness of the Board in the past, noting that there had been regular Board community services and infrastructure meetings. These had played a vital role in informing the Board and allowing members to play an active role.

23. Chris Hadfield (Wānaka Community Board member)

Wānaka had a unique sense of its special geography and sense of community and residents. A decision to disband the Board would affect 9,000 people and the feeling of disconnect would increase without the Wānaka Community Board. He acknowledged that the Board's effectiveness had waned over last two triennia but as a member he spent a lot of time with community groups and he did not know how these groups would be

serviced if there was no Wānaka Community Board. The addition of another Councillor should not be a binary decision with the retention of the Wānaka Community Board. He supported Mr Bruce's recommendation that the Board delegations be reviewed and the minor improvements budget increased.

24. Nancy Latham

Ms Latham was opposed to Wānaka Community Board disestablishment. It was Wānaka's democratic right to retain Wānaka Community Board. The Advisory Group report was flawed and it did not acknowledge the unique qualities of Upper Clutha areas. The Board had been established during 1989 to ensure an area of special interest was not disadvantaged. This reasoning had not changed and was probably accentuated. She had reviewed outcomes over a limited timeframe and based on more recent outcomes she had concluded that the current Board had not received the same level of support or assistance as boards in the past. She also questioned how fifty community groups would be able to deal with Queenstown if they were not able to communicate with members of the Wānaka Community Board.

25. Nick Page

Mr Page advised that he had accessed Local Government Commission population figures and had run the calculation to check the figures provided in the QLDC consultation materials. He had focused on the +/-10% which was the legislative measure for fair representation and his calculations had shown that the Arrowtown Ward was well outside the +/-10% which was at odds with the figures shown in the QLDC consultation. His calculations had also confirmed that Wānaka was eligible for four Councillors.

Mr Page addressed the rights of minorities in a democracy. He noted that one mechanism was the Wānaka Community Board and it was critical to retain the Board. Retaining Wānaka Community Board would redress the power imbalance, recognise the rights of the minority and provide fair representation as set out in Local Electoral Act. In his view the Board had not been permitted to operate as effectively as it could and it should be supported properly to improve its effectiveness. He suggested that QLDC could consider adding an Arrowtown Community Board.

26. Aaron Heath

Mr Heath was opposed to disbanding the Wānaka Community Board and going from seven elected representatives to four did not provide for good representation of a community of interest. Two major items (speed limit review and Wānaka Airport) had concluded with no communication or consultation with the Wānaka Community Board when this should have occurred.

Ward Councillors gave an oath to serve the whole district and because of this should not be appointed members of the Wānaka Community Board, but only be a meetings 'in attendance'. He also encouraged a review of the Board delegations.

27. John Wellington

Mr Wellington expressed support for the original three wards and four Councillors per ward but he did not support removing the Wānaka Community Board. He stated that presenting the Wānaka options as being a choice was misleading and had confused submitters. QLDC needed to re-empower the Wānaka Community Board because Wanaka was a clear community of interest that had been identified in 1989 and the situation still existed. Submissions showed strong support for retention of the Board and it was up to QLDC to empower it to better serve the Upper Clutha communities.

28. Barbara East

Ms East was critical of the two reasons for disestablishing the Wānaka Community Board, the first being the perceived inequity because there were no boards elsewhere in the district. She noted that it was normal only to have partial coverage of a district with community board/s. The second reason had been to remove a layer of bureaucracy. She agreed that the Board added a layer but asserted that it needed to be supported properly. She considered that the Board was mostly side-lined but if the governance protocol was upheld the Wānaka Community Board would operate as it was set up to do. She had reviewed recent QLDC agendas and had counted 59 times where items that should have been were not presented to the Wānaka Community Board. The Board's delegations were mostly all still there but they were just being ignored. Her recommendations were that there be four Wānaka Ward Councillors but that they all not be appointed to the Board. She suggested that it would be best not to appoint the Deputy Mayor who normally came from Wānaka. She opposed the proposed name change to the Wānaka Ward as she considered that the ward should be named after its largest settlement. She submitted that the ward name stayed the same.

29. Andrew Howard (Chair, Ignite Wānaka Chamber of Commerce)

Mr Howard noted that there had been confusion about the consultation questions which gave the impression that the future of the Wānaka Community Board was contingent on the addition of a fourth Councillor. He advised that a survey of members had strongly opposed removal of the Wānaka Community Board and adding a fourth Councillor in the Wānaka Ward. In the consultation, other concerns had been expressed about representation and how local voices were heard.

30. Meg Taylor

Ms Taylor observed that people in Wānaka had an ongoing dissatisfaction with the QLDC's performance. As only one third of the district's population Wānaka had limited ability to influence its future. She considered that the ward system needs to be looked at, with more Councillors to be elected at large as they would be less parochial. Her recommendation was to elect four Councillors in Wānaka, four in Queenstown and four at large. She supported (a) retaining the Wānaka Community Board; (b) the addition of a fourth Councillor in Wanaka; and (c) that Hāwea needed representation.

31. Michael Sheehy

Mr Sheehy support retention of the Wānaka Community Board and he was concerned at the proposal to abolish it. Councillors had to serve the whole district and were at risk of losing a local perspective and a fourth Councillor would not fix this. By contrast Wānaka Community Board members were well known, lived locally and residents were less hesitant to make contact. More democracy was surely better for the community and Council should increase community boards across the district. Ineffectiveness of the Wānaka Community Board was because it was not supported by budget or senior staff and he considered that it had been set up to fail.