

Report 15.501
Date 27 October 2015
File CAB-8-217

Committee Council
Author Margaret Meek, Senior Democratic Services Advisor

Online voting trial in the 2016 local government elections

1. Purpose

To update Councillors on the online voting trial for the 2016 local government elections.

2. Background

In May 2015 the Associate Minister of Local Government announced that the Government had set requirements for a possible trial of online voting for the 2016 triennial local government elections.

A Cabinet decision on which councils will be permitted to be part of the trial is expected to be made shortly, and a final decision on whether or not a trial will proceed is expected early in 2016. The attached media release issued by LGNZ (**Attachment 1**) provides details of those councils that have resolved to participate in the trial.

Three territorial local authorities within the Wellington Region have confirmed that they wish to be included in the list of participating councils to be presented to Cabinet: Wellington City Council, Porirua City Council, and Masterton District Council.

2.1 Potential impact on Wellington Regional Council's elections

Wellington Regional Council's triennial elections are required to be conducted in conjunction with the elections of city and district councils within the Wellington Region.

2.1.1 Constituencies

In the event that the online trial is agreed to by Cabinet and the three councils in the Wellington Region that have requested to be part of the trial are confirmed as participating councils, the following GWRC constituencies (in whole or part) will be included in the online voting trial:

- Wellington Constituency (all electors)
- Porirua-Tawa Constituency (all electors)
- Wairarapa Constituency (only those electors within the boundary of the Masterton District).

2.1.2 Voting documents

All electors will be sent a voting paper in the post. All electors are able to vote using postal voting. Those electors within areas where online voting is being trialled will have the option of casting an online vote.

Whether a vote is cast online or by postal vote, the voting documents will look the same.

2.1.3 Security

The Government has set detailed requirements for councils participating in the online voting trial relating to security, usability, accessibility and audit. The requirements are set out in **Attachment 2**.

Subject to the Government confirming that the online voting trial will proceed, these requirements will form the basis for local electoral regulations pertaining to the online voting trial.

It should be noted that each participating council's preparation for the trial will be subject to audit by the Government's Chief Information Officer.

2.1.4 Cost

There will be some additional cost involved in conducting the elections if the online trial proceeds and includes the three councils in the Wellington Region that have requested to be part of the trial.

At this stage we have been advised that, as a regional council, Wellington Regional Council's costs will be approximately 20 percent of the total trial cost for those councils in the Wellington Region participating in the trial. We have been advised that the total additional cost for this Council would amount to approximately \$70,000 (excl GST).

These costs will be met from the election reserve.

In the event that an election has to be re-run for any reason national election insurance cover has been arranged to meet the additional costs incurred.

2.1.5 Provider

Electionz.com provides electoral services, including the issuing and processing of votes for all areas in the Wellington Region that may be part of the online voting trial.

3. Communication

No communication is required.

4. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

4.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is unnecessary.

5. Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

Margaret Meek
Senior Democratic Services
Advisor

Report approved by:

Francis Ryan
Manager, Democratic
Services

Attachment 1: LGNZ media release, 14 October 2015

Attachment 2: Requirements for a trial of online voting in local elections: A framework to guide Local Government