

29 November 2022

CITY OF GREATER GERALDTON REVIEW OF REPRESENTATION

DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER



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1 City of Greater Geraldton Review of Representation Discussion Paper

1.1 Background

The City of Greater Geraldton (the City) has resolved to undertake a review of its councillor representation to comply with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*. The purpose of the review is to assess the number of positions of councillor appropriate for the current situation at the City, within the limits of representation as set by the Local Government Reform Proposals.

The Minister for Local Government has announced a package of reforms to the *Local Government Act 1995*. As part of the reforms to strengthen democracy and increase community engagement, new requirements will be introduced to provide for:

- The introduction of optional preferential voting
- Elector Mayors and Presidents for band 1 and 2 local governments
- Councillor numbers based on population
- The removal of wards for band 3 and 4 local governments.

Legislation to give effect to the changes is expected to be introduced into Parliament in early 2023.

The City of Greater Geraldton has been identified as needing to make changes to councillor representation to align with the new reforms.

Further information on the reforms is available on the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries website at <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/local-government-act-reform>

1.2 Current Situation

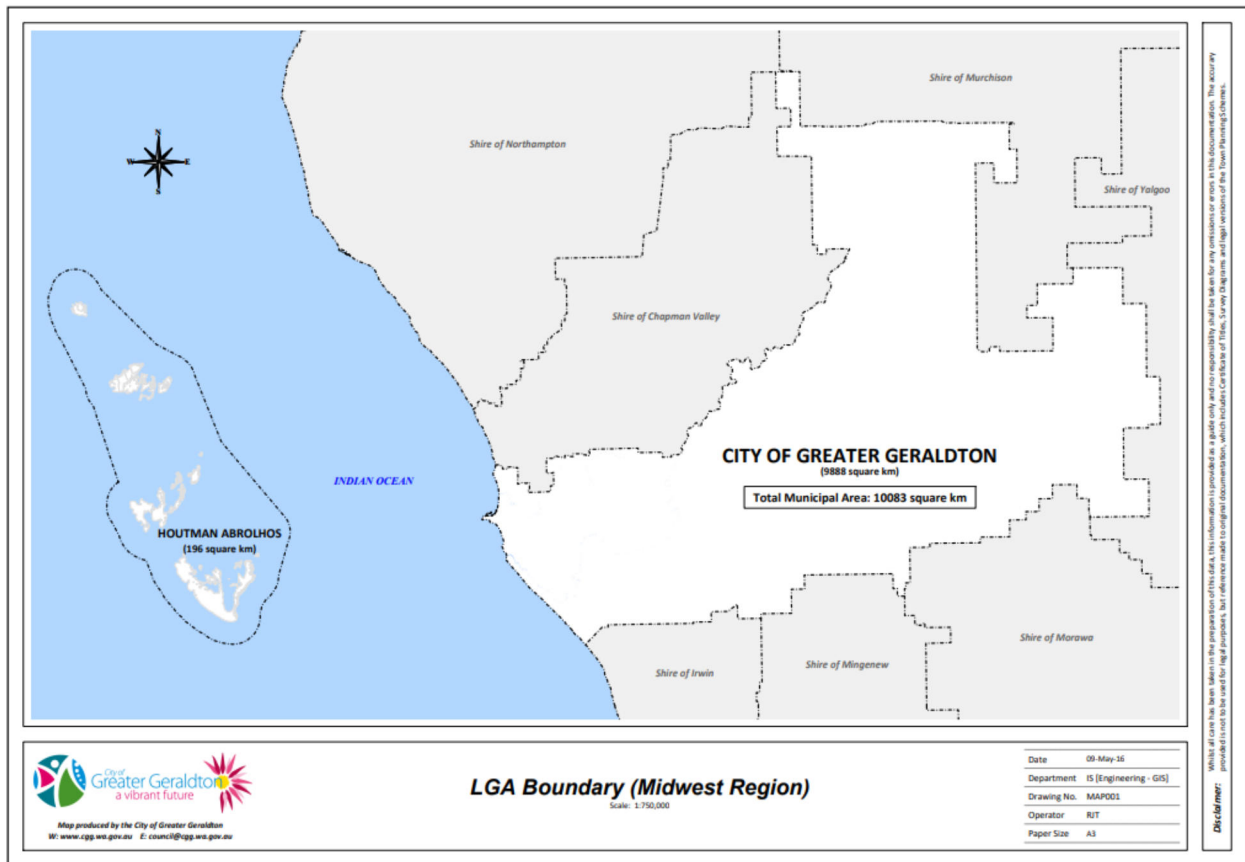
The City is a Band 1 local government with a population of approximately 40,000.

The City's wards and representation system was last reviewed in 2018 – 2019. The City's ward system was abolished with effect from 19 October 2019. Councillor numbers were reduced to 12 councillors and the City retained a directly elected mayor.

The City therefore currently has a no ward system with councillor representation of 12 offices of councillor, and a directly elected mayor (13 member council).

The City of Greater Geraldton district has 27,578 electors, and the councillor/elector ratio is 1 councillor to 2298 electors.

The City of Greater Geraldton District is shown below.

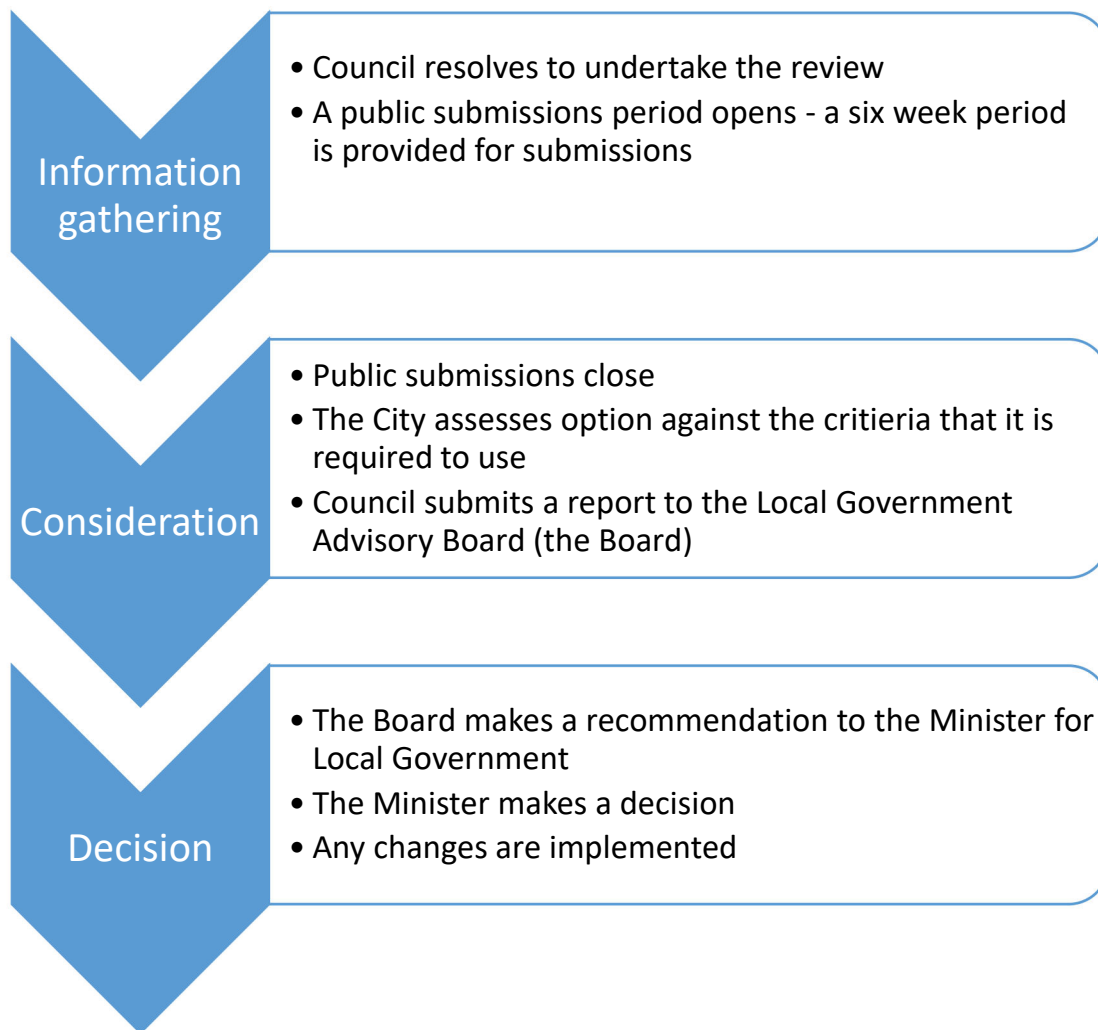


2 Review Process

The review process involves a number of steps:

- The Council resolves to undertake the review
- Public submission period opens
- Information provided to the community for discussion
- Public submission period closes
- The Council considers all submissions and relevant factors and makes a decision
- The Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for its consideration
- (If a change is proposed) The Board submits a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government (the Minister).

Any changes approved by the Minister will be in place for the next ordinary election where possible.



2.1 Factors to be considered

The purpose of the review is to assess the arrangements for representation that are most appropriate and best suit the characteristic of the City and its residents. Under the Local Government Reform proposals the City must reduce the number of offices of councillor based on population (see below).

- up to 5,000 – may decide to have five six or seven councillors (including the president)
- between 5,000 and 75,000 – five to nine councillors (including the mayor/ president)
- above 75,000 – nine to fifteen councillors (including mayor)

The City has a population of approximately 40,000 therefore the maximum number of councillors is set at nine councillors (including the mayor).

When considering changes to representation the Local Government Act 1995 Schedule 2.2, does not specify any criteria to be considered when a local government with no wards undertakes a review of its system of representation. It is for the local government to decide which criteria it applies as part of its assessment.

The factors to be considered are therefore the:

- advantages and disadvantages of reducing the number of councillors, within the tiered limits
- The implications of any change to the councillor/elector ratio
- The effectiveness and efficiency of Council meetings
- Local government reforms

2.1.1 Potential advantages and disadvantages of reducing the number of offices of councillor

The **advantages** of a reduction in the number of elected members may include the following:

- The decision making process may be more effective and efficient if the number of elected members is reduced.
- The cost of maintaining elected members is likely to be reduced.
- Consultation with the community can be achieved through a variety of means in addition to individuals and groups contacting their local elected member.

The **disadvantages** of a reduction in the number of elected members may include the following:

- A smaller number of elected members may result in an increased workload for incumbent members and may reduce efficiency and effectiveness.
- There is the potential for dominance in the Council by a particular interest group.
- Opportunities for community participation in Council's affairs may be reduced if there are fewer elected members for the community to contact.

2.1.2 The Implications of any change to the councillor /elector ratio

The existing councillor to elector ratio is 1 councillor per 2298 electors. As there are no wards in the district a reduction in the number of offices of councillor, as required by the tiered limits, will decrease councillor representation of electors, however representation will remain proportional across the district.

If the minimum number of 4 offices of councillor is selected (and a directly elected mayor), representation will be 1 councillor for 6895 electors. This is a significant decrease in councillor representation across the district. If the maximum number of 8 councillors (and a directly elected mayor) is selected the ratio will be 1 councillor for 3,447 electors, which is a nominal decrease in representation, in comparison to the current councillor to elector ratio.

2.1.3 The effectiveness and efficiency of Council meetings

The decision making process at Council meetings may be more effective and efficient if the number of council members is reduced. It is more timely to ascertain the views of a fewer number of people and decision making may be easier. There is also more scope for team spirit and cooperation amongst a smaller number of people. However a reduction in the number of councillors may limit diversity of interests and the level of expertise at the Council table.

2.1.4 Local government reforms

In addition to the legislative factors to be considered, the review needs to consider the Minister for Local Government’s changes to ward structures and representation. To comply with the Ministers proposals, as the City of Greater Geraldton has a population of less than 75,000, the City’s number of councillors must be reduced to a maximum of nine (including the directly elected mayor).

3 Options

The City does not have an established position on this topic, and the following points are provided to aid discussion only.

The maximum number of Council offices that can be held as a result of the reforms will be 8 councillors and a directly elected mayor. It is preferable to have an even number of councillors (not including the position of mayor) so that as near as practicable to half of the total number of councillors retire every two years, thereby maintain the ordinary election cycle.

The current ratio of councillor to electors is-

Number of councillors	Ratio of councillor to electors
12	1: 2298

3.1 Options for consideration

In accordance with the reforms, which require between 5-9 offices of councillor (including a directly elected mayor) the options are;

- Option 1: Reduce the number of councillors to 8 and a directly elected mayor (9 member Council)
- Option 2: Reduce the number of councillors to 6 and a directly elected mayor (7 member Council)
- Option 3: Reduce the number of councillors to 4 and a directly elected mayor (5 member Council)

3.2 Option 1 - Eight councillors and a directly elected mayor

Eight councillors and a directly elected mayor is the maximum representation for a Local Government

The ratio of councillors to electors is:

Number of councillors	Ratio of councillor to electors
8	1: 3447

3.3 Option 2 - Six councillors and a directly elected mayor

The ratio of councillors to electors is:

Number of councillors	Ratio of councillor to electors
6	1: 4596

3.4 Option 3- Four councillors and a directly elected mayor

The ratio of councillors to electors is:

Number of councillors	Ratio of councillor to electors
4	1: 6895

4 Transitional Arrangements

After undertaking community consultation, the City must make a proposal to the Local Government Advisory Board. The effect of proposed changes on existing councillors will depend on the precise proposal put forward.

When there is a reduction in the number of offices of councillor, the implementation method must give consideration to clauses 1 of Schedule 4.2 of the Act.

In summary, this provides that as near as practical to half of the total number of Councillors are to retire every two years.

Council at its 25 October 2022 meeting endorsed the implementation of the proposed changes to the number of offices of councillor in a staged approach over the two Ordinary Elections of Council to be held in 2023 and 2025.

5 How to Make a Submission

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of representation review and can lodge it at:

City of Greater Geraldton Administration Centre

63 Cathedral Avenue

GERALDTON WA 6530

City of Greater Geraldton Mullewa Office

Cnr Thomas and Padbury Street

MULLEWA WA 6630

Email: council@cgg.wa.gov.au

Submissions will also be accepted by email: Council@cgg.wa.gov.au

All submissions must be received by 4pm on 18 January 2023

Thank you for your interest and involvement in this review. Council welcomes your comments on any matters that may assist it to make informed and responsible decisions for the benefit of the people of the City of Greater Geraldton

Submission Form – Appendix A

Shane Van Styn

MAYOR

City of Greater Geraldton

Ross McKim

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

City of Greater Geraldton

Appendix A

Corporate and Commercial Services

GO04

TRIM Reference:

REPRESENTATION REVIEW

What is your preferred option for councillor representation as outlined in this discussion paper?

- Option 1** 8 Councillors and a directly elected Mayor (9 member Council)
- Option 2** 6 Councillors and a directly elected Mayor (7 member Council)
- Option 3** 4 Councillors and a directly elected Mayor (5 member Council)

Comments in support of your preferred option:

Submitted by:

Name

Address

Phone/Email

Please submit this form via **email** to council@cgg.wa.gov.au
Post to City of Greater Geraldton, PO Box 101 Geraldton WA 6531
Hand deliver to Geraldton Civic Centre, 63 Cathedral Ave.

Submissions must be received by 4pm of Wednesday, 18 January 2023.