

Kaipara District Representation Review: The Numbers

Submission to Kaipara District Council

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Summary

Purpose: This paper has been prepared by Mangawhai Matters to assist in the 2021 review of wards and ward representation by Kaipara District Council. It has been prepared with an eye to deriving an electoral structure that provides representational equity and recognises communities of interest within Kaipara.

The Issues: The 2018 boundary review did not account for different population trends among Kaipara's communities. This is a long-standing problem. Previous reviews were also inadequate in responding to population change. The east is one of the fastest growing areas of New Zealand, while growth in the west is slow and relies on increasing Māori numbers. The result is a substantial imbalance in representation: one councillor for 2,540 residents in Dargaville Ward compared with one for 4,340 in Kaiwaka-Mangawhai Ward in 2020.

Further, establishing a one-councillor Māori ward risks significant Māori under-representation and compounding over-representation in Dargaville.

Solutions:

Our proposal is based on a wide-ranging review which established that:

- Four general wards can no longer be justified.
- Merging of Dargaville and West Coast Central wards appears inevitable.
- A four-ward structure is possible within the review guidelines (three general wards - west, central, east), but results in a substantial representational disparity between the general wards and the Maori ward.

Accordingly, a two-general ward structure has been explored with different boundary and councillor options. The option that achieves the best representational balance among general wards would merge Dargaville with West Coast Central (2 councillors) and Otamatea with Kaiwaka-Mangawhai (3 councillors). It would lead to modest over-representation of the Maori Ward.

The option achieving the best representational balance between the general wards and the Maori ward while maintaining a reasonable balance between the general wards would add one general ward councillor. It would be based on extending extend the Otamatea northern boundary to the Wairoa River before merging it with Kaiwaka-Mangawhai.

Either of these options sits comfortably within the electoral parameters of comparable New Zealand councils. A two-ward option also creates the opportunity for community boards to represent the interests of the distinctive local communities that make up Kaipara District. For example, community boards representing West Coast (around 5,770 people), Dargaville (4,960), Otamatea/Kaiwaka (8,230) and Mangawhai (6,210), would align with communities of interest and are of a scale which corresponds with boards elsewhere.

Our Recommendation

1. What's Wrong with Current Wards?

The 2018 Review of Kaipara District Council (KDC) wards used 2017 population estimates to allocate electors among them. It ignored differences in growth between the wards west of State Highway 1 and the Kaiwaka-Mangawhai Ward to the east. The result is increasingly inequitable representation ratios penalising the growth areas of the east (Table 1).¹

Table 1. The Current Situation

Ward	Population 2020	Councillors	2018 Review		2020	
			Representation	Deviation	Representation	Deviation
West Coast Central	5,770	2	2,915	3.4%	2,885	-8.3%
Dargaville	4,960	2	2,540	-9.9%	2,480	-21.2%
Otamatea	5,760	2	2,740	-2.8%	2,880	-8.5%
Kaiwaka-Mangawhai	8,680	2	3,085	9.4%	4,340	37.9%
	25,170	8	2,820	0.0%	3,146	0.0%

Note: Representation is residents per councillor. Positive deviation indicates under-representation

These differences in growth mean that 9.4% under-representation for Kaiwaka-Mangawhai based on the 2017 figures blew out to 38% by 2020. At the same time, over-representation of Dargaville residents touching on the 10% limit in 2017 increased to 21% by 2020. The result: a 59% spread in effective representation between the two wards! The 2021 review offers the opportunity to correct this.

Put another way, the spread in percentage points between the highest population per councillor (a positive representation ratio) and the fewest (a negative representation ratio) in 2018 was 19.8 out of a maximum in the electorate guidelines of 20 (+10%/-10%). By 2020 the spread was 59.1 points (37.9-(-21.2)). The current review is obliged to reduce this spread substantially.

The KDC is also establishing a Māori Ward for the 2022 local body elections. This adds to the need to adjust ward boundaries to achieve equitable representation. The number of voters assigned to the general roll in the western wards will fall disproportionately as Māori opt to vote on the Māori roll. This means that if the boundaries remain unchanged it will take even fewer people to elect a councillor in those wards than in the east.

This paper has been prepared for Mangawhai Matters to identify options that will restore balance to ward representation. It also addresses the question of electoral equity for those on the Māori roll.

2. The Kaipara Population

Two trends are illustrated by growth between the 2013 and 2018 Censuses. :

- Growth in Kaiwaka-Mangawhai Ward outstripped growth in the western wards, accounting for 63% of the KDC total.
- Māori population growth accounted for 38% of all growth in KDC; 90% across the two western wards (Dargaville and West Coast Central), 49% in Otamatea, and 17% in Kaiwaka-Mangawhai.

¹ The representation ratio is the population divided by the number of councillors. A high ratio means that it takes more people to elect a councillor than a low ratio: a high ratio therefore indicates under-representation while a low ratio indicates over-representation. The deviation is the difference between a ward and the district ratios. Hence, a negative ratio denotes over-representation (fewer people/councillor) and a positive ratio denotes under-representation (more people/councillor).

- According to Stats NZ figures the differences in population growth persisted: from June 2018 to June 2020 the three western wards added an estimated 120 people to their joint population, Otamatea 130, and Kaiwaka-Mangawhai added 1,160 people, or just over 15% in two years.

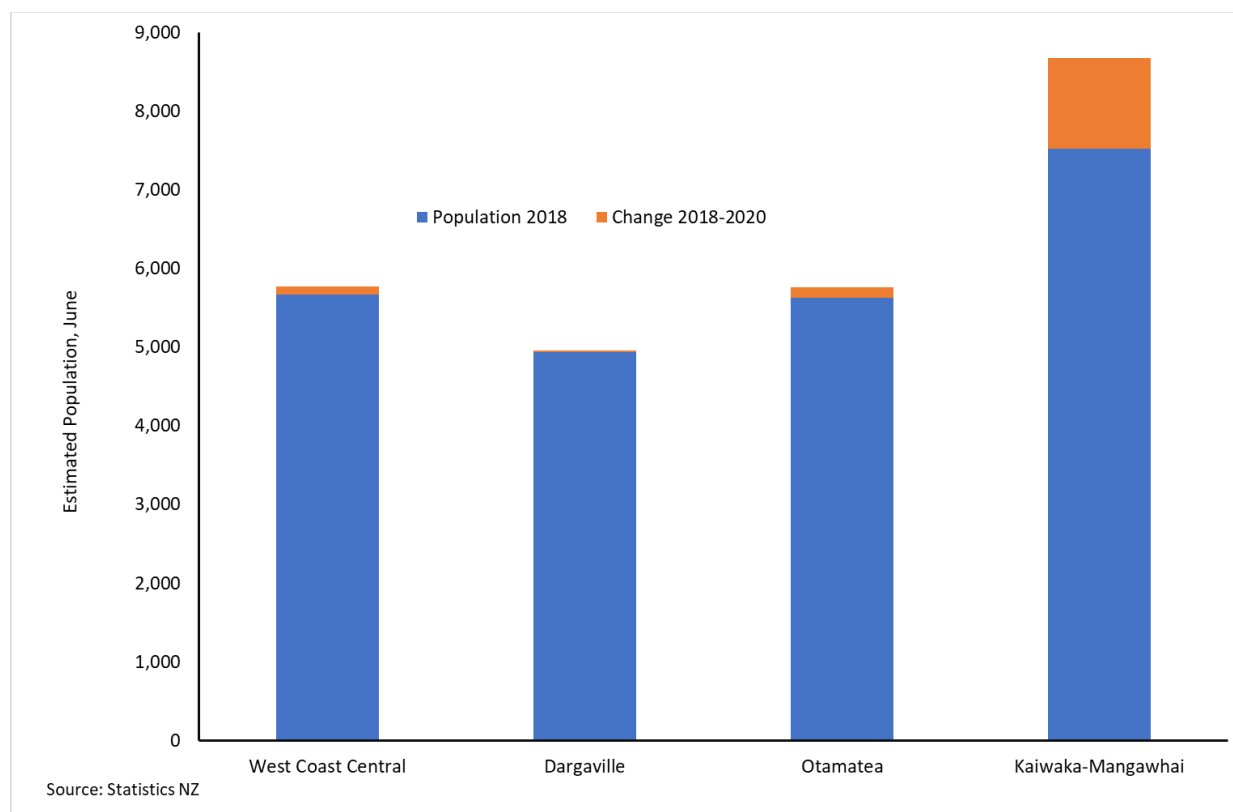
Table 2. The Demographic Context

Ward:	Total Population 2013-2018			2018 Total Population	Māori Population 2013-2018			2018 Māori Number	Population % Total
	Total Growth	% 5-Year Growth	% District Growth		Māori Growth	% 5-Year Growth	% of Total Growth		
West Coast-Ce	360	7%	10%	5,490	340	30%	94%	1,470	27%
Dargaville	480	11%	13%	4,780	410	33%	85%	1,670	35%
Otamatea	510	11%	14%	5,370	250	27%	49%	1,170	22%
Kaiwaka-Manga	2,250	46%	63%	7,100	380	51%	17%	1,130	16%
Total	3,600	19%	100%	22,740	1,380	141%	38%	5,440	24%

Source: Census of Population

The growth differential has been sustained since 2018 (Figure 1). West Coast-Central, Otamatea, and Dargaville figures increased slightly, while Kaiwaka-Mangawhai increased by over 15% over the two years.

Figure 1: Population Growth by Ward, 2018-2020



There are several reasons to expect this difference to continue:

- In 2018 Kaiwaka and Mangawhai accounted for 31% of the population but accounted for 60% of building consents for dwellings over the five years to March 2020.²
- Demand in Mangawhai is seeing more permanent dwellings among consents and conversion of baches to permanent homes as more people move from Auckland;

² Based on aggregating Census Area Unit data from Stats NZ

- Two further international golf courses and associated facilities and dwellings in development at Te Arai will become major local employers;
- Planning to increase the dwelling capacity in Mangawhai’s Estuary Estate from under 500 to 1,000 or more (subject to the PC78 decision);
- A Spatial Plan adopted by KDC that signals the possibility of accommodating an increase of 10,700 people in and around Mangawhai settlement.

The grounds for growth are less obvious in the west, although the relocation of households out of Auckland into rural areas and small towns should sustain modest gains. Even so, there is likely to be an increasing imbalance in east-west representation ratios without a significant change in ward structure.

3. The Challenge of a Māori Ward

The 2018 Census recorded 5,890 people of Māori ethnicity in Kaipara. Based on 2013-2018 growth rates, there could close to 7,000 Māori residents today³, 28% of district population and as high as 43% in Dargaville (Table 3). We have considered the question of Māori representation based on these 2020 population estimates.

The number of residents represented on the Māori roll in 2020 has been provided to us. A total of 3,680 suggests that no more than 53% of people of Māori ethnicity are represented on the roll based on our estimate of the total Māori population in 2020.

Table 3. Māori Population and the Māori Electoral Roll

	2020 Population	Ward			Representation Nine Councillors		
		No.	Representation	Deviation	No.	Representation	Deviation
West Coast Ce	4,790	2	2,400	-11%	2	2,400	-11%
Dargaville	3,790	2	1,900	-29%	2	1,900	-29%
Otamatea	4,960	2	2,480	-8%	2	2,480	-8%
Kaiwaka-Manga	7,960	2	3,980	48%	2	3,980	48%
General Wards	21,500	8	2,690	0%	8	2,690	0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	37%		3,680	37%

Note: Representation is residents per councillor. Positive deviation indicates under-representation

This raises two issues. First, given only one Māori Ward councillor, Māori electors will be under-represented under the current ward structure. Based on the current roll, the Māori electoral population would be represented by one councillor for 3,680 Māori compared with 1:2,690 for general voters, and as few as 1:1,900 for Dargaville voters (Table 4). This is a 37% difference: i.e., the one Māori councillor represents 37% more people on average than a general ward councillor.

At the same time, the introduction of the Māori ward means that the disparity between general wards will increase. On these figures, the spread between Dargaville’s over-representation and Kaiwaka-Mangawhai’s under-representation would increase to 77 points.

Second, the voluntary nature of the Māori roll renders any “numerical solution” unstable. Our figures suggest that around 47% of Māori are not represented on the general roll. If more

³ Average annual Maori growth rate in each ward between 2013 and 2018 has been used to extrapolate the Statistics NZ June 2018 figures to estimate 2020 figures.

Māori move were to move to the Māori roll, Māori representation will fall further, and the difference between the west coast wards and Kaiwaka-Mangawhai is likely to increase.

Table 4. Adding a Māori Ward to the Current Configuration

	2020 Population	Current Representation Plus Māori Ward			Representation Nine Councillors		
		No.	Representation	Deviation	No.	Representation	Deviation
West Coast Ce	4,790	2	2,400	-11%	2	2,400	-11%
Dargaville	3,790	2	1,900	-29%	2	1,900	-29%
Otamatea	4,960	2	2,480	-8%	2	2,480	-8%
Kaiwaka-Manga	7,960	2	3,980	48%	2	3,980	48%
General Wards	21,500	8	2,690	0%	8	2,690	0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	37%		3,680	37%

Notes: Representation is residents per councillor. Positive deviation indicates under-representation
Māori ward populations subtracted from general wards

Clearly, maintaining the current ward configuration is no longer democratically viable with the introduction of a Māori ward.

4. The Options

We have examined a number of options to identify a configuration of wards to ensure equitable representation. A number of variations have been assessed:

- (1) Alternative **boundary** configurations, including: the current boundaries; the Otamatea-West Coast Central boundary adjusted northwards to take in (1) adjoining mesh blocks (which transfers around 220 people according to the 2018 Census to Otamatea); and (2) all mesh blocks between the current Otamatea-West Coast Central boundary and the Wairoa River (which transfers around 950 people).
- (2) Different numbers of general **wards**, including a reduction to three by merging Dargaville and West Coast Central creating a western ward, and a reduction to two by creating just a western and an eastern ward. Several options for the latter were considered: one combining Otamatea with the western wards and three combining Otamatea with Kaiwaka-Mangawhai, with the variations reflecting the boundary options set out in (1), above.
- (3) Different numbers of **councillors**.

Various combinations were analysed and are summarised in Table 5⁴. Representation is assessed as the ward population divided by ward councillors.⁵ The deviation is the difference in representation in each ward expressed as a percentage of the representation across all general wards.

The “spread” refers to the difference between the most over-represented and under-represented general wards (summing the extreme deviations – in absolute terms - around the district average). A general ward is required to have a representation ratio (people per councillor) within 10% (plus or minus) of the district-wide average. A preferred outcome will ideally have a limited spread within that range.

⁴ Various eight councillor options were considered - seven for general wards one for the Maori Ward and none fell anywhere near the +/- 10% guideline. It may have been achieved with radical and arbitrary adjustment of boundaries but this possibility was not considered on ground of credibility.

⁵ The general ward population is first adjusted by subtracting the Māori electoral roll population.

Deviation is also presented for the Maori ward under each option in Table 5, referring to the difference with general ward representation. While it is not legally required that the Māori ward has equivalence to general ward representation, the difference between the two is provided here as a matter of equity.

A comparison of outcomes indicates that the four-ward option with eight councillors including the Māori Ward councillor is unlikely to be acceptable on representation grounds (Options 1A to 1C). If the number of councillors is increased (by holding general ward councillor numbers at eight) the +/-10% guideline can be satisfied. The best of these options (with the least spread) would see an extension northward of the current boundary between Otamatea and West Coast-Central (Option 1E).

However, two factors count against these options. First, the 37-point difference in population per councillor between the general wards (2,690) and Māori ward (3,680) means Māori under-representation can be considered unacceptably high under this option. Second, maintaining eight general ward councillors would also incur additional costs without necessarily improving governance.

This raises the prospect of a simple, two ward consolidation. This offers the opportunity to reduce total councillor numbers and introduce community boards to ensure that the interests of local communities can be advanced effectively and reflected in council decisions. The prospects for two-wards have been evaluated for eight options (2A to 2H, Table 5).

Reducing wards and councillors improves representation ratios. Maintaining only six general ward councillors works particularly well with the simple merger of Otamatea with Kaiwaka-Mangawhai wards (Option 2B). This delivers almost identical representation in each of two general wards (west and east) and under-representation in the Maori Ward.

However, in this option any extension of the current Otamatea boundary to the north diminishes the balance achieved by 2A. Consequently, 2D falls outside the +/-10% guidelines.

Option 2A (merging Otamatea with the western wards) also has a wider spread of representation than 2B, although it does correct for the current imbalance in representation between west and east.

Increasing the number of general ward councillors to seven (Options 2E to 2H) closely aligns Maori representation with general representation. However, it also increases the imbalance in representation between the general wards. As a result, only one option meets the +/-10% guideline, and that is creating an east-central ward that extends to the Wairoa River (2H).

Table 5. Comparing Ward Options

Option	Boundary Adjustment	Merge Wards	Wards	Councillors	Representation	West	Central	East	Spread	Meet Guidelines	Māori Ward
1A	No Change	West Coast & Dargaville	4	8	3,070	-7%	18%	-7%	24%	No	20%
1B	Slight extension Otamatea	West Coast & Dargaville	4	8	3,070	-9.4%	-16%	30%	45%	No	20%
1C	Otamatea to Wairoa River	West Coast & Dargaville	4	8	3,070	-16.6%	-5%	30%	46%	No	20%
1D	No Change	West Coast & Dargaville	4	9	2,690	6%	-8%	-1%	14%	Yes	37%
1E	Slight extension Otamatea	West Coast & Dargaville	4	9	2,690	3%	-4%	-1%	7%	Yes	37%
1F	Otamatea to Wairoa River	West Coast & Dargaville	4	9	2,690	-5%	9%	-1%	14%	Yes	37%
2A	No Change	West & Otamatea	3	6	4,300	5%	-	-7%	12%	Yes	-14%
2B	No Change	East & Otamatea	3	6	4,300	0%	-	0%	0%	Yes	-14%
2C	Slight extension Otamatea	East & Otamatea	3	6	4,300	-3%	-	2%	5%	Yes	-14%
2D	Otamatea to Wairoa River	East & Otamatea	3	6	4,300	-11%	-	7%	18%	No	-14%
2E	No Change	West & Otamatea	3	7	3,580	-5%	-	11%	16%	No	3%
2F	No Change	East & Otamatea	3	7	3,580	20%	-	-10%	30%	No	3%
2G	Slight extension Otamatea	East & Otamatea	3	7	3,580	17%	-	-8%	25%	No	3%
2H	Otamatea to Wairoa River	East & Otamatea	3	7	3,580	7%	-	-4%	11%	Yes	3%

Notes: Wards: General wards plus Māori Ward

Councillors: General ward and Māori Ward total (excludes the Mayor)

Representation: electoral population per councillor. Estimated Māori electoral population (3,680) is deducted from general wards

Deviation: Difference from representation across all general wards. Positive sign (+) shows under-representation. Negative sign (-) shows over-representation

Guidelines: Maximum deviation in representation must be +/-10% of district average

Spread: Difference in wards' highest positive and lowest negative deviation

West Coast Central & Dargaville merged for all options

5. Balancing Equitable Representation with Communities of Interest

Approach

Four options are considered here as potential candidates for enhancing and maintaining local governance in Kaipara. They are those with the lowest spread between high and low representation ratios. The +/-10% guidelines to limit representational deviation reflect the principle that democratic decision-making requires all votes are given equal weight (even if some people choose to exercise their vote).

At the same time, Kaipara District, though relatively small, has diverse and distinctive geographic communities with contrasting circumstances and needs. The current review allows for this diversity in part by introducing a Maori ward. This is important in an area in which close to a quarter of residents are Maori. At the same time, this initiative, together with continuing differences in growth, will exacerbate the existing democratic imbalance between the east and west of the district. The analysis presented here suggest that the best solution is to reduce the number of general wards, a solution, however, that could obscure differences in local interests and needs.

For this reason, it is important to consider for establishing community boards in conjunction with the rationalisation of wards.

Assessment

The only way to justify three general wards on representational grounds is to introduce an additional councillor which requires movement of the current Otamatea boundary further north (1E). However, this option raises significant equity questions for Maori representation (Table 6) while increasing the costs of governance.

On these grounds a two-ward option appears more equitable. The three six-councillor options all appear possibilities, although they over-correct for the potential imbalance in Maori representation. Options 2A and 2B simply require the merging of Otamatea Ward into either a consolidated western ward (2A) or Kaiwaka-Mangawhai (2B), the latter achieving the most balanced representation. Option 2C offers no obvious gains for an adjustment in boundaries, leaving Option 2B as the superior choice.

Option 2H is attractive insofar as it best balances the general wards and the Māori ward, while leaving capacity for growth in the representation ratio for the eastern ward. It does, however, require an additional councillor (seven in total).

A two-ward council offers other advantages. It is conducive to a cross-district perspective on key issues as the local interests of individual councillors are inevitably diluted and their perspective widened. A reduced number of councils can also streamline process and potentially enhance governance, although it also raises issues of workload. This latter may favour Option 2B over 2H.

Perhaps more importantly, it also provides an opening for the establishment of local community boards.

Table 6. Qualifying Options for Consideration

	Electoral Population	Councillors	Representation 2020	Deviation
Option 1E: Three General Wards, Nine Councillors				
West	8,350	3	2,780	3.3%
Central	5,180	2	2,590	-3.7%
East	7,960	3	2,650	-1.5%
General Wards	21,490	8	2,690	0.0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	36.8%
Option 2A: Two General Wards, Six Councillors				
West-Central	13,530	3	4,510	4.9%
East	7,960	2	3,980	-7.4%
General Wards	21,490	5	4,300	0.0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	-14.4%
Option 2B: Two General Wards, Six Councillors				
West	8,580	2	4,290	-0.2%
East-Central	12,920	3	4,307	0.2%
General Wards	21,500	5	4,300	0.0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	-14.4%
Option 2C: Two General Wards, Six Councillors				
West	8,350	2	4,175	-2.9%
East-Central	13,140	3	4,380	1.9%
General Wards	21,490	5	4,300	0.0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	-14.4%
Option 2H: Two General Wards, Seven Councillors, Eastern				
West	7,670	2	3,835	7.1%
East-Central	13,820	4	3,455	-3.5%
General Wards	21,490	6	3,582	0.0%
Māori Ward	3,680	1	3,680	2.7%

Note: Representation is residents per councillor.

Positive deviation indicates under-representation

Governance Issues

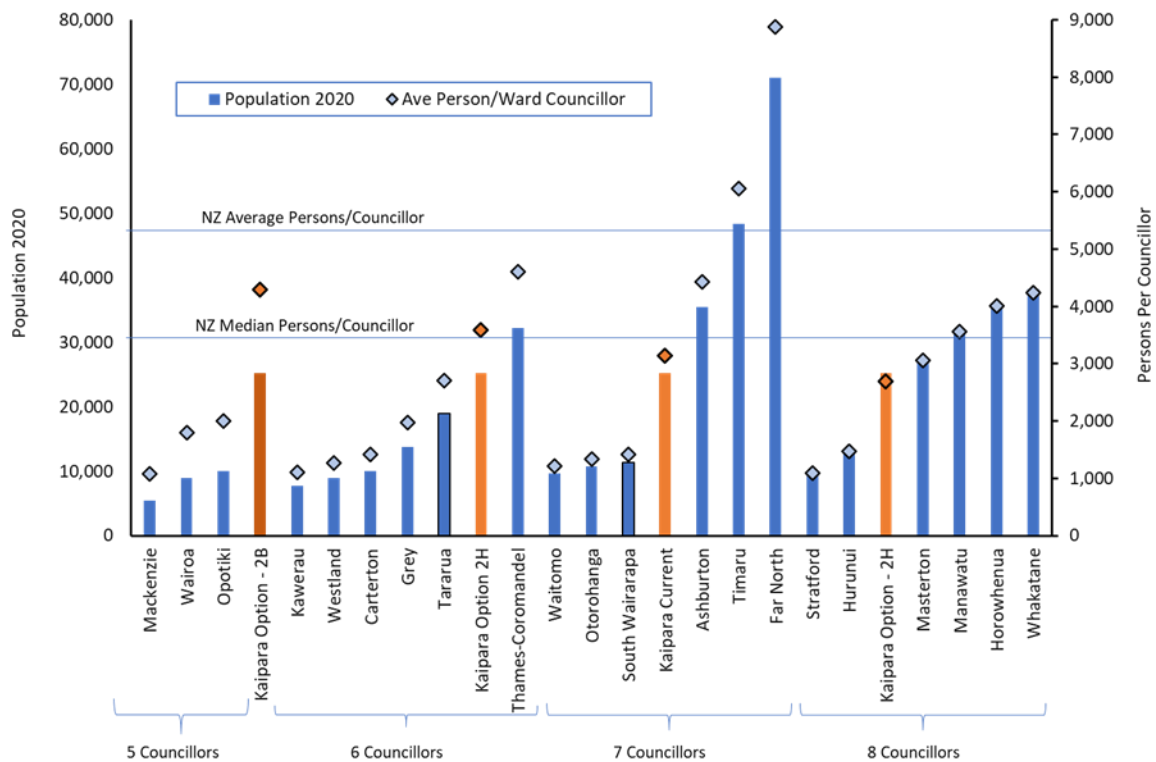
A council of two general wards and a Māori ward would have representation parameters that compare well with the rest of New Zealand. The country's median ward population is 10,000 (the national average is over 20,000) and median residents per ward councillor 3,400 (average 5,360).⁶

The configuration proposed for Kaipara is close to the median and well within the range for other councils with eight or fewer councillors (Figure 2).

The only outstanding issue with the favoured options, then, is to ensure that local communities of interest are represented. This can be achieved by establishing community boards.

⁶ The significant difference between the median and average reflects the predominance of relatively small councils in New Zealand.

Figure 2: Representation in Councils with under Nine Councillors



Currently, some 40 NZ councils operate 110 local community boards. Their purposes are to:

- Represent and act as advocates for the interests of communities;
- Consider and report on matters referred to them by the council, and on issues of interest to themselves;
- Make an annual submission to their council on expenditure;
- Maintain an overview of services provided by the council;
- Communicate with community organisations and interest groups, and
- Undertake any other responsibilities delegated by their council.

(Source: www.lgnz.co.nz/local-government-in-nz/community-boards/)

As an example, and based on Stats NZ SA2 2020 population estimates, boards along the following lines should be able to effectively identify and represent the needs of the distinctive communities within Kapiti:

West Coast	5,770
Dargaville	4,960
Otamatea/Kaiwaka	8,230
Mangawhai	6,210
Total	25,170

Further investigation might lead to alternative configurations. However, four boards along these lines would fall comfortably within the range for their counterparts across New Zealand, for which the median (excluding Auckland) was around 5,120 in 2020 (and the average 10,500).

6. Conclusion

The changing demographic profile of Kaipara and the commitment to a Māori ward mean that maintaining four general wards is no longer viable. The current review of representation is faced with a choice between fundamental boundary re-alignment to maintain three general wards and an increase in the overall number of councillors to nine, on the one hand, and a two-ward, four-community board structure, on the other. The latter balances guidelines for representation most effectively at the general ward level with six councillors and at both the general ward level and with respect to the Māori ward with seven councillors.

In either case, a three-ward outcome (two general, one Māori) offers the prospect of more effective cross-district governance and creates an important role for local community boards to reflect and represent the diverse communities of interest within Kaipara.