



SHIRE OF

Chapman Valley

love the rural life!

DISCUSSION PAPER

REVIEW OF SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATION

BACKGROUND

On 20 September 2022 the Minister for Local Government (the Minister) released an instruction to all Western Australian Local Governments relating to proposed amendments to the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) expected to be considered by Parliament in early 2023.

The proposed amendments provide for:

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

The Shire of Chapman Valley is a band 4 local government (without a ward system) and point 3) applies, and must be determined by Council, with the outcome advised to the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) by 28 October 2022. It is proposed that Local Governments with a population of up to 5000 people must decide to have either 5, 6 or 7 Councillors. Chapman Valley currently has 8 Councillors so a reduction in number is required. Point 1) can be considered in the future as part of the next election process in 2023.

Point 2) and 4) do not apply to the Shire of Chapman Valley. The instruction also makes it abundantly clear that there will be no time extensions to any of the processes due to the need to enact all changes in the Government Gazette by 30 June 2023 in preparation for the 2023 Local Government elections to be held on 21 October 2023.

The Shire of Chapman Valley resolved at its October OCM to:

- 1) Adopt the “voluntary pathway” for the election transition arrangements as part of the Local Government reform process;
- 2) Comply with the Minister for Local Government’s instruction for the “voluntary pathway” as outlined in Attachment: 10.3.1;
- 3) Subject to adoption of point 1), agree to initiate a Ward and Representation Review for the Shire of Chapman Valley.

This Ward and Representation Review is now required to comply with the requirements of the Act reform process.

Schedule 2.2 of the Act requires local governments with wards to carry out reviews of the ward boundaries and the number of councillors for each ward from time to time so that no more than eight years elapse between successive reviews.

The last review of wards in the Shire of Chapman Valley was undertaken in 2016 and as a result of that review, Council resolved to abolish the existing ward system to a No ward system comprising of 8 Councillors with a Councillor/ Elector ratio of 1:108.

From this point, Council would not normally be required to review its ward boundaries, however, the Ministers instruction to all Western Australian local governments relating to proposed amendments to the Act require a Ward and Representation Review to be performed as part of the “Voluntary Pathway” process.

Existing ratio (as per 2016 review)

Table1

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor: Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
No Wards	8	868	1:108	0.00%
Total	8	868	1:108	0.00%

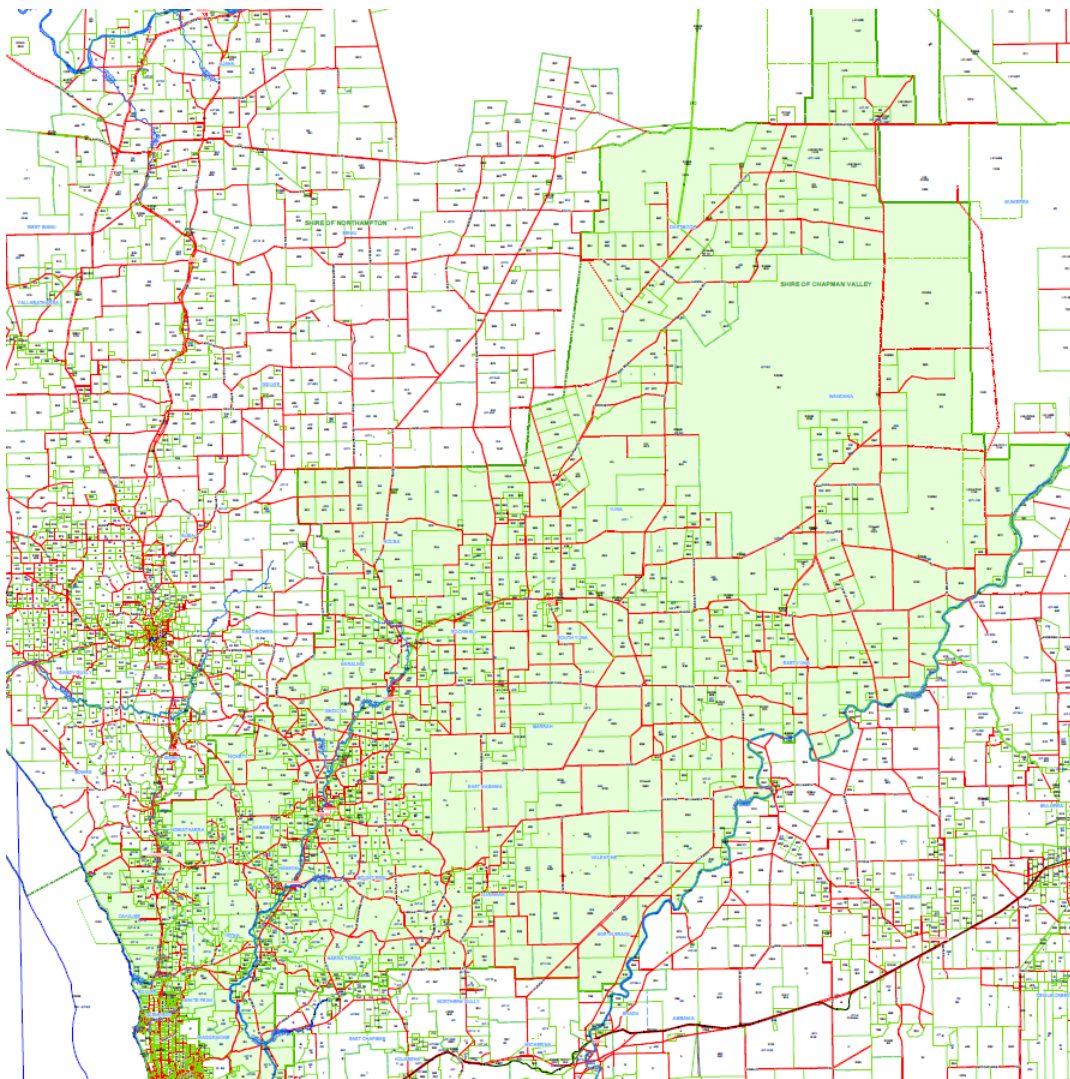
Current situation as at the October 2021 Local Government Electoral Rolls

Currently the Shire of Chapman Valley has 8 councillors elected from the entire Shire (No Wards) as follows: (Includes State Residents Roll and Owner Occupiers Roll).

Table2

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor: Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
No Wards	8	1014	1:127	0.00%
Total	8	1014	1:127	0.00%

Maps showing the current ward boundaries (NIL) is shown below.



As the Council has previously resolved to continue with No Wards, the purpose of this review is to consider what options of representation that best reflects the characteristics of the district and its people. The Minister has proposed that Local Governments with a population of up to 5000 people to decide to have 5, 6 or 7 councillors. Chapman Valley currently has 8 Councillors so a change in the number of Councillors on the Council is required.

REVIEW PROCESS

The review process involves a number of steps:

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

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

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

When considering changes to wards and representation, Schedule 2.2 of the Act specifies factors that must be taken into account by a local government as part of the review process:

- ~ The advantages and disadvantages of no wards;
- ~ The advantages and disadvantages of reducing the number of councillors;
- ~ The implications of any change to the councillor/elector ratio;
- ~ The cost of elected members;
- ~ The effectiveness and efficiency of Council meetings;
- ~ The advantages and disadvantages of a ward structure.

Options to consider

The Council is to consider the following options and members of the community may suggest other options. There are various scenarios listed under each option:

Option 1(a) Maintain abolished wards – Reduce Councillors from 8 to 7

Option 1(b) Maintain abolished wards – Reduce Councillors from 8 to 6

Option 1(c) Maintain abolished wards – Reduce Councillors from 8 to 5

OPTION 1(a, b, c) MAINTAIN ABOLISHED WARDS – REDUCE COUNCILLORS

The following is an assessment of the proposed Option 1(a, b, c) situation against the factors.

The Local Government Advisory Board offers the following interpretation of these factors.

1. The advantages and disadvantages of no wards;

The **advantages** of a no ward system may include:

- Elected members are elected by the whole community not just a section of it. Knowledge and interest in all areas of the Council's affairs would result broadening the views beyond the immediate concerns of those in a ward.
- The smaller town sites and rural areas have the whole Council working for them.
- Members of the community who want to approach an elected member can speak to any elected member.
- Social networks and communities of interest are often spread across a local government and elected members can have an overview of these.
- Elected members can use their specialty skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole local government.
- There is balanced representation with each elected member representing the whole community.
- The election process is much simpler for the community to understand and for the Council to administer.

The **disadvantages** of a no ward system may include:

- Electors may feel that they are not adequately represented if they don't have an affinity with any of the elected members.
- Elected members living in a certain area may have a greater affinity and understanding of the issues specific to that area.
- There is potential for an interest group to dominate the Council.
- Elected members may feel overwhelmed by having to represent all electors and may not have the time or opportunity to understand and represent all the issues.
- It may be more difficult and costly for candidates to be elected if they need to canvass the whole local government area.

2. The advantages and disadvantages of reducing the number of Councillors;

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. 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.
- The cost of maintaining elected members is likely to be reduced (an estimate of the cost of reduction would be helpful).
- Consultation with the community can be achieved through a variety of means in addition to individuals and groups contacting their local elected member.
- A reduction in the number of elected members may result in an increased commitment and interest and participation in Council's affairs by elected members generally.
- Fewer elected members are more readily identifiable to the community.
- Fewer positions on Council may lead to greater interest in elections with contested elections and those elected obtaining a greater level of support from the community.
- There is a State wide trend in reductions in the number of elected members and many local governments have found that fewer elected members has improved their decision making process.

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.
- A reduction in the number of elected members may limit the diversity of interests around the Council table.
- Opportunities for community participation in Council's affairs may be reduced if there are fewer elected members for the community to contact.

3. The implications of any change to the Councillor/Elector ratio;

The preferred number of elected members for a local government is a matter for the local government. There is a diverse range of councillor/elector ratios across Western Australia reflecting sparsely populated remote areas and the highly populated urban areas.

4. The cost of elected members;

Pursuant to section 5.98(1)(b) of the Act, a council member who attends a council meeting is entitled to be paid the fee set by the local government or the regional local government within the range determined in section 6.2 of the Determination of The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal for council meeting attendance fees. Any reduction or increase will cause a nett effect on the Council's Annual Budget.

5. The effectiveness and efficiency of Council meetings;

The size and structure of a local government will impact on the deliberations involved in determining the number of elected members needed to service the local government.

6. The advantages and disadvantages of a ward structure.

The **advantages** of a ward system may include:

- Different sectors of the community can be represented ensuring a good spread of representation and interests amongst elected members.
- There is more opportunity for elected members to have a greater knowledge and interest in the issues in the ward.
- It may be easier for a candidate to be elected if they only need to canvass one ward.

The **disadvantages** of a ward system may include:

- Elected members can become too focused on their wards and less focused on the affairs of other wards and the whole local government.
- An unhealthy competition for resources can develop where electors in each ward come to expect the services and facilities provided in other wards, whether they are appropriate or not.
- The community and elected members may regard the local government in terms of wards rather than as a whole community.
- Ward boundaries may appear to be placed arbitrarily and may not reflect the social interaction and communities of interest of the community.
- Balanced representation across the local government may be difficult to achieve, particularly if a local government has highly populated urban areas and sparsely populated rural areas.

Option 1(a)

Table 3 - Ratio of councillors to electors

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor: Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
No Wards	7	1014	1:145	0.00%
Total	7	1014	1:145	0.00%

Option 3(b)

Table 4 - Ratio of councillors to electors

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor: Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
No Wards	6	1014	1:169	0.00%
Total	6	1014	1:169	0.00%

Option 3(c)

Table 5 - Ratio of councillors to electors

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor: Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
No Wards	5	1014	1:203	0.00%
Total	5	1014	1:203	0.00%

PUBLIC SUBMISSION PERIOD

The Shire of Chapman Valley is seeking community input into its Review of Wards and Representations and Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of representation. These submissions can be lodged at the following:

In Person: Shire Office
3270 Chapman Valley Road
NABAWA WA 6532

By Mail: Shire of Chapman Valley
PO Box 1
NABAWA WA 6532

By Email: cs@chapmanvalley.wa.gov.au

By Fax: (08) 9920 5155

All submissions must be received by 4.00pm on 12th December 2022.

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 Shire of Chapman Valley.

Kirrilee Warr
SHIRE PRESIDENT

Jamie Criddle
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER