

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MINUTES – 14 December 2018 (Elector Poll)

14.3

Elector Poll Proposal

Author – Acting General Manager

Responsible Officer – Acting General Manager

Background

At its November 28 meeting, Council resolved to conduct an Elector Poll. Council decided the Poll should be conducted by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

Council's Mayor and Acting General Manager met with the Electoral Commissioner on November 30 to discuss how such a poll should be conducted, including: appropriate wording of the question; supporting information; timing; how to maximise participation and legitimacy; and costs.

The Electoral Commissioner recommends a simple YES/NO question: "Do you support the amalgamation of Tasman and Sorell councils into one new council?"

The Commissioner also noted that there has been significant discussion of the issue for some time and that there are differing views on existing reports and documents. As such, it is considered acceptable for a 'background summary' to be prepared to accompany the Poll (rather than official supporting documents), which should summarise the issues in a clear and unbiased manner. This 'background summary' would be prepared by the Electoral Commissioner as part of his independent involvement in the election.

A proposed timetable is attached. The timing was chosen to ensure the highest level of legitimacy by avoiding the holiday period and by affording suitable time for the Poll to be prepared, advertised widely and for eligible electors to enrol.

Other matters discussed included: the importance of good conduct of councillors during the poll and pre-poll period; costs; the importance of ensuring all those entitled to vote know about the Poll and how to register either with the TEC or on Council's GM Roll.

It is recommended that Council invite the Director of Local Government Alex Tay to brief councillors on suitable conduct during the Poll period and any associated risks, such as Code of Conduct breaches.

Consultation

Consultation has occurred between all Councillors, the Acting General Manager, the Director of Local Government, the Minister for Local Government, and representatives of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

Financial Impacts

The costs of the proposed Elector Poll are roughly as follows:

- Electoral Commission costs: up to \$10,000 (\$3.50-\$4 per elector)
- Mail out to all residents, rate payers, GM roll: up to \$3,000 (likely less depending on timing)
- Newspaper advertising: approx. \$2,000

As such, the maximum total cost will be \$15,000.

Council can accommodate the cost and should review its impact at the mid-year budget review.

Discussions with the Minister for Local Government/Treasurer have indicated an openness to considering a financial contribution to the costs of the Poll. It is recommended that the Acting General Manager write to the Minister detailing the costs and requesting a contribution.

Risk Implications

If Council conducts an Elector Poll but then chooses not to be guided by its outcome there will be a risk of a public perception of wasting money and of ignoring community sentiment.

Resolution 07/12.2018/C

Moved: Cr D Beard

Seconded: Cr A Griffiths

That the Council resolve to:

1. Undertake the Elector Poll in accordance with the advice and timing provided by the Electoral Commissioner, but the process starting 14 days later than proposed date (Notice of Poll 2 March 2019)
2. Write to the Minister for Local Government requesting a financial contribution towards the Poll; and
3. Invite the Director of Local Government to brief Council in January on model conduct during the Poll and Pre-Poll period and the associated Code of Conduct risks

Carried Unanimously