

City of Ipswich **Ipswich, Help Shape Your Future Council**

Divisional Boundary Review
Community Discussion Paper
March 2019



ipswich.qld.gov.au/shapeyourcouncil

HELP SHAPE YOUR FUTURE COUNCIL

Ipswich is experiencing significant change.

There is no better time than this period of interim administration for you, a resident of Ipswich, to openly consider and debate how you would like to be represented by your future Ipswich council in 2020 and beyond.

The City of Ipswich local government area is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, with population and economic growth at around 5 per cent each year.

As the various communities around Ipswich grow and change, it could be expected that they will also have differing views on what they want from their council compared to when the city was first established some 160 years ago.

Last year, a Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) investigation identified significant governance failures in Ipswich City Council as summarised in their report titled "Culture and corruption risks in local government: Lessons learned from an investigation into Ipswich City Council (Operation Windage)". As a result of these governance failures, the mayor and councillors were dismissed by a unanimous vote in the Queensland Parliament in August 2018, and an Interim Administrator put in place until the March 2020 local government elections.

The community's confidence and trust in your council has been severely tested.

With no councillors in place and no predetermined view by the current council administration, the Ipswich community can have a transparent discussion on what you think is the best way forward.

Would you prefer your councillors to be elected on a divisional basis or across the entirety of the local government area?

Please read on to see how you can have your say.

This community discussion paper is a summary of a range of issues. A more detailed report is also available at ipswich.qld.gov.au/shapeyourcouncil.

To have your say, just **answer a few simple questions**. Once you've read through this community discussion paper (and the longer background paper if you so desire), we are going to ask you to rank the three types of divisional models in your order of preference from most preferred (1) to least preferred (3). It's that easy! There'll also be space to share your additional thoughts.

Of course, if you want to also provide a written submission, we will be grateful to receive your views (email shapeyourcouncil@ipswich.qld.gov.au).



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A COUNCILLOR AND HOW SHOULD THEY CONTRIBUTE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE?

In representative democracies like Australia, citizens entrust the decisions about how they are governed to elected representatives.

Governance is about the way that elected representatives make decisions and oversee the functions of councils.

The Good Governance Framework (premiers.qld.gov.au) says that government bodies should also observe the core governance principles of:

- transparency,
- accountability,
- integrity, including resolution of potential and actual conflicts of interest with selflessness and objectivity in the public interest,
- due diligence, and
- economy, efficiency and effectiveness.



The primary accountability of a local government is to its community, and that the decisions of the local government must be made with regard to the benefit of the entire local government area.

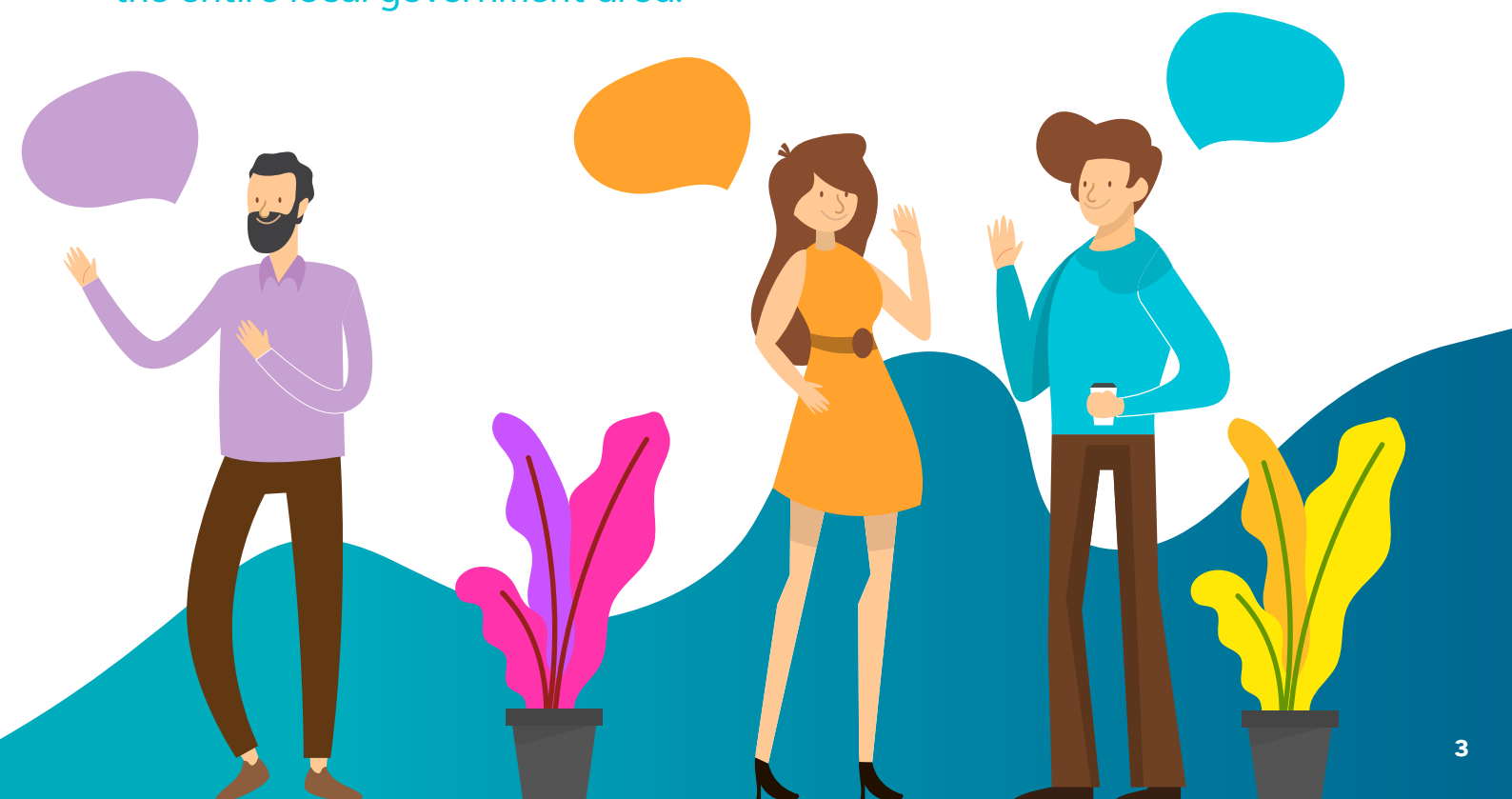
The *Local Government Act* is very clear that this applies regardless of whether a council has electoral divisions (like Ipswich currently has) or is undivided (ie. has no councillor divisions). The core obligation of a councillor is to make decisions in the best interests of the entire council area.

In considering councillors' accountability to the community, the Operation Windage report highlights that it is also useful to draw comparisons with the duties placed on directors of companies by the *Corporations Act 2001*, including the duty to act with care and diligence, and to act in good faith in the best interests of the company (or the community, in the case of councillors).

Another issue that needs to be appreciated is that the law clearly distinguishes between the roles and responsibilities of the elected councillors and the administrative (council employees) arms of local government.

The primary role of councillors is to focus on policy development and ensure the strategic delivery of services in the public interest. Councillors are responsible for planning for the future and developing corporate plans and strategies to achieve their goals and deliver outcomes to the whole of the community, and monitoring the performance of the council against these.

Councillors are not responsible for overseeing the internal day-to-day work done by local government employees. This is managed by the chief executive officer and senior staff.



WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?

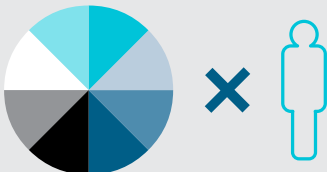
There is no single accepted view of which model is best-placed to contribute to good governance; that is the best way to ensure that councillors provide strategic guidance and leadership to their local government area as a whole.

There are three broad models of electing councillors as community representatives (each model will result in a minimum of eight and maximum of 12 councillors being elected):

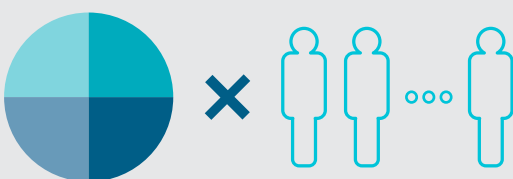
OPTION 1: UNDIVIDED (8 to 12 councillors)



OPTION 2: DIVIDED – 1 councillor per division (8 to 12 divisions)



OPTION 3: DIVIDED – 2 to 3 councillors per division (4 to 6 divisions)



As you read through the overview of these three options on the pages to follow, we encourage you to keep these questions in mind:

1. How would each model assist or hinder a councillor's obligation to provide leadership and strategic delivery of services in the public interest of the whole of the city?
2. How would each model assist or hinder the responsibility of your councillors to focus on planning for the future and developing corporate plans and strategies, as opposed to a focus on day to day operational issues?
3. Which model would best allow for the diversity of Ipswich's communities to have their interests represented on council?
4. Which model best promotes "good governance" (ie transparency, accountability, integrity, ethics and effectiveness)?

OPTION 1

UNDIVIDED COUNCIL (8 TO 12 COUNCILLORS)



An undivided council has no divisions.

All candidates for council are listed on a single ballot paper for the entire local government area, and all voters nominate their preferences across all candidates. There will be a separate ballot paper for the position of the Mayor. The (typically) eight to 12 candidates who receive the most votes become the councillors. This is the most common approach in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, although it is far more common in rural councils than in urban councils.

The following Queensland councils have adopted this model:

- [Toowoomba Regional Council](#)
- [Noosa Council](#)
- [Mackay Regional Council](#)

Possible **ADVANTAGES** include that it:

- Delivers a more unified, citywide, strategic focus to council governance.
- Gives voters a choice of councillors they can approach with their concerns.
- Promotes councillors, as per the Act, to address issues in the best interests of all residents in the local government area, as opposed to a 'my backyard' approach.
- Leads to more integrated policy making.
- Allows voters to express a preference for every candidate in the council election.
- Allows voters to select candidates based on their capabilities as community leaders and decision makers across the whole local government area rather than just on their geographic associations.
- Results in a simpler voters' roll for elections.
- Avoids the requirement for regular divisional reviews (reviews needed to ensure the proportion of councillors to voters does not vary by more than 10 per cent between any division in the local government area).

Possible **DISADVANTAGES** include that:

- There are risks that most councillors will be elected from a single part of the local government area and that some 'communities of interest' could be unrepresented.
- A councillor's capacity for local engagement and representation may be diminished if they become inaccessible to residents in parts of the local government area.
- Councillors' responsibilities may become confused and their efforts duplicated if there is no clarity around roles and representation among the councillors.
- It is a far more costly exercise for candidates to campaign across an entire local government area, as opposed to a division, which may disadvantage independent candidates who do not have the financial backing to market themselves to the whole community.
- It may make it difficult for voters to assess the performances of individual councillors across the local government area.

OPTION 2

DIVIDED – 1 COUNCILLOR PER DIVISION (FOR 8 TO 12 DIVISIONS)



A divided council is where the local government area is split into (typically) eight to 12 divisions (currently in Ipswich we have 10 divisions). Each division has more or less the same number of voters.

The electoral ballot papers for each division only have those candidates who have decided to nominate for that particular division included, plus all candidates for mayor. The candidate with the most votes in each division becomes a councillor.

Single-councillor representation is the most common model used in urban councils across Queensland, and is the model most Ipswich voters are familiar with.

It is important to understand that the current 10 divisions across the city cannot continue to apply; two of the 10 divisions will be outside the 10 per cent variation of the number of voters allowable under the *Local Government Act* by March 2020.

Possible **ADVANTAGES** include that it:

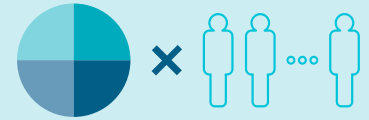
- Encourages a diverse range of candidates to run for council as they only have to incur electoral campaign costs for a division (and not across the entire council area).
- Allows for councillors to be truly local representatives (for their division), easily accessible to residents and more aware of local issues.
- Ensures that geographically-formed 'communities of interest' are likely to be represented at the council.
- May contribute to ensuring that sectional interests are less likely to dominate the council.

Possible **DISADVANTAGES** include that:

- Councillors might be elected on local, minor, or parochial issues and lack perspective on or offer less support for policies that benefit the whole council (ie a 'my backyard' approach).
- Divisional boundaries might divide larger communities of interest and might be hard to define.
- When this model is accompanied by other practices, such as the portfolio system in which areas of responsibility are allocated to individual councillors, the culture of the 'lone councillor' looking after 'my patch' is reinforced.
- When combined with a divisional funding program (which was discontinued in Ipswich) that allocates funds to each councillor to dispense more or less unchallenged, a councillor can develop a preoccupation with funding for their own division rather than the priorities of the whole city.
- Voters might have fewer options to select from for their representative.
- If a division has a high growth rate, boundaries will be more susceptible to change (as population changes put numbers above or below the 10 per cent quota), which could mean more regular reviews.

OPTION 3

DIVIDED – 2 TO 3 COUNCILLORS PER DIVISION (FOR 4 TO 6 DIVISIONS)



In a divided council model – multi-councillor representation, the local government area would be divided into divisions (usually four to six), with each division having roughly the same number of voters with between eight and maximum 12 councillors elected. Residents are represented by more than one councillor, with two or three typically elected per division.

Between 30 and 40 per cent of councils in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory operate under this model. Obviously, the divisions tend to be larger than in a single-councillor model.

The ballot papers for each of these larger division have those candidates who have decided to nominate for that

particular division, plus all candidates for mayor. The top two or three candidates with the most votes for each division become councillors.

The following councils have adopted this model:

- [City of Greater Geelong](#)
- [Wollongong City Council](#)

Possible **ADVANTAGES** include that it:

- Offers all of the advantages cited for the divided – single representative model.
- Supports representation of different interests in a division.
- Allows for greater consideration of multiple views on issues than the single representation model as each division would be represented by more than 1 councillor.
- Can make divisional boundaries easier to identify and less susceptible to change as a result of uneven growth population or decline than does the single representative model.
- Provides councillors in a division with increased opportunity for discussion and shared responsibility.
- Provides residents with 3 or 4 councillors to contact about issues – their 2 or 3 local 'divisional' councillors plus the relevant committee chair (if committees are utilised), therefore increasing the level of local representation.

Possible **DISADVANTAGES** include that:

- All of the disadvantages cited for the divided – single representative model may also be relevant.
- Groups may come together along interest lines, leading to issues between divisional councillors.
- Councillors may duplicate their efforts if they do not communicate or share their workloads effectively.
- Different views on issues within a division may make these issues more difficult to resolve.

HAVE YOUR SAY

To have your say, all you have to do is answer a few simple questions, starting with a request to rank the three divisional models you've just reviewed from most preferred (1) to least preferred (3).

Find the survey form by:

- Visiting council's **website** at ipswich.qld.gov.au/shapeyourcouncil.
- Visiting council's **central administration office** or any community office to collect a hard copy version of the survey or online access.

- Visiting any of council's **libraries** to collect a hard copy version.
- Telephoning council's **call centre** on **(07) 3810 6666** for a survey form to be mailed or emailed to you.

You are free to provide any submissions to council on your views and preferences for any matters or issues regarding how best to deliver good local governance for the City of Ipswich (email shapeyourcouncil@ipswich.qld.gov.au), and the survey will also provide space for additional feedback.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

If you feel that you need more background information before you can make your decision visit ipswich.qld.gov.au/shapeyourcouncil for the detailed report that informed this discussion paper.

A public information session will be held on
Monday 25 March 6.00 pm
North Ipswich Reserve Corporate Centre
2B Pine Street, North Ipswich, QLD.

The session will feature three guest speakers from relevant local government areas who will be presenting on the three models and will be available to answer your questions. Additional information can be found at ipswich.qld.gov.au/shapeyourcouncil.

KEY DATES

You have until **12.00 pm on Sunday 31 March** to share your views and opinions.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

While we are seeking your views and preferences and encourage all local residents to have their say, the community cannot directly determine the local government representative model. *The Local Government Act* is clear that is a matter for the state government to decide.

Your views will be included in a report to the Minister for Local Government who will be asked by council to consult the state government's Change Commission for their assessment. The Change Commission will share the results of its assessment with the Minister and the public.

