

Item 2: Draft Local Government Commission Action Plan

SESSION TYPE: Workshop

PURPOSE/DESIRED OUTCOME:

In December 2023, the Local Government Commission confirmed its decision not to proceed with an investigation into a reorganisation initiative to secede the Wānaka-Upper Clutha ward to form its own district council. In making its decision, the Commission made four recommendations regarding communications and engagement with the community, representation of capital investment in the ward, empowerment and engagement with the Community Board, and strengthening relationships with Iwi. Council is required to prepare an action plan in response to these recommendations to be submitted by 31 May. This session is to provide a brief introduction to the draft action plan and enable discussion for the elected Council and Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board.

DATE/TIME:

Tuesday, 21 May 2024 at 10.35am

TIME BREAKDOWN:

Presentation: 10 minutes

Questions and Discussion: 50 minutes

Prepared by:



Name: Naell Crosby-Roe
Title: Governance & Stakeholder Services
Manager
10 May 2024

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Meaghan Miller
Title: General Manager Corporate Services
10 May 2024

ATTACHMENTS:

A	Local Government Commission – Decision on whether to investigate Wānaka-Upper Clutha reorganisation initiative
B	Draft LCG Action Plan [to follow]
C	Communications and engagement activity audit [to follow]



Local Government Commission
Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Decision

on whether to undertake a reorganisation investigation into constitution of a separate Wānaka-Upper Clutha district.

Introduction

1. This decision relates to a reorganisation initiative for a separate Wānaka-Upper Clutha District initiated by electors of the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Ward of Queenstown-Lakes District Council (QLDC).

Background

2. On 27 March 2023 the Local Government Commission (the Commission) received a reorganisation initiative requesting a separate Wānaka-Upper Clutha district (the initiative), in accordance with clause 3, Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the LGA).
3. On 30 May 2023 it was confirmed that the petition accompanying the initiative had the support of at least 10% of electors, as required by clause 4(1)(b)(ii) of Schedule 3 of the LGA. On 15 June 2023 the Commission agreed that the initiative contained the relevant information required by clause 4, Schedule 3 of the LGA.
4. In accordance with clause 5(2), Schedule 3 of the LGA, the Commission consulted QLDC as the local authority that would be affected by the reorganisation initiative.
5. The Commission received a response from QLDC in July 2023, which was considered at the Commission meeting on 17 August 2023. At that meeting the Commission agreed that there was insufficient information in the Council's response to enable the Commission to assess whether or not an investigation was justified in the context of clause 6, Schedule 3 of the LGA. The Commission agreed further to:
 - Seek the views of the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board on the initiative;
 - Seek the views of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu on the initiative;
 - Seek further information from Queenstown-Lakes District Council on alternative methods that could be employed to promote good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance.

6. Responses from each party were requested by the end of September. At QLDC's request, this timeframe was subsequently extended to the end of October. The Commission received responses from:
 - The Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board on 21 September 2023;
 - QLDC on 27 October 2023;
 - Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu on 4 December 2023.
7. The key points of this decision can be found in paragraphs 79-80. We also make recommendations at paragraph 85.

Matters for decision by the Commission

8. Section 24(1) of the LGA defines the scope of local government reorganisation. Of relevance to this initiative is clause (b), the constitution of a new district or region, including the constitution of a new local authority for that district or region.
9. For the purposes of this decision, the Commission is required to consider the factors outlined in clause 6, schedule 3 of the LGA and how these apply to the potential constitution of a new Wānaka-Upper Clutha District. These factors are:
 - (a) *The purpose of reorganisation set out in section 24AA; and*
 - (b) *The potential scale and scope of improvements to local governance and services that might result from the investigation; and*
 - (c) *The potential costs, disruption, and other negative effects on affected local authorities and their communities that may be caused by the investigation; and*
 - (d) *Any time or other constraints that apply to the opportunity to achieve potential improvements to local governance and services; and*
 - (e) *The need for urgent resolution of any problem identified by the Commission, or in the investigation request or reorganisation initiative; and*
 - (f) *The resources available to the Commission to undertake the investigation in a timely manner; and*
 - (g) *The likelihood of significant community opposition to any reorganisation that might result from the investigation.*
10. The Commission may also use its powers to 'promote good practice relating to a local authority or to local government generally', under section 30(1)(b) of the LGA, to make any specific recommendations.

Information received by the Commission

Information contained within the initiative

11. The initiative focuses on issues relating to QLDC decision-making and its effect on Wānaka-Upper Clutha. The main points of the initiative can be summarised as follows:
 - Wānaka-Upper Clutha does not have adequate representation at QLDC;
 - There is insufficient prioritisation of Wānaka-Upper Clutha based issues and insufficient allocation of rates funding towards addressing them;
 - There is insufficient planning and investment in Wānaka-Upper Clutha infrastructure and community facilities, especially given rapid growth in the area;
 - Financial and infrastructure decisions made by QLDC are primarily focused on issues and projects in the Queenstown-Whakatipu and Arrowtown-Kawarau areas, and compromise QLDC's ability to sufficiently prioritise issues relating to Wānaka-Upper Clutha.

Information received from QLDC

12. Information received by the Commission from QLDC includes the initial response received from QLDC in July 2023, and QLDC's response to the Commission's request for additional information, received in October 2023.
13. The main points included in the information received from QLDC can be summarised as follows:
 - There is fair and proportionate representation from Wānaka-Upper Clutha on the QLDC;
 - There is proportional investment in, and allocation of resources and expenditure across all wards in the district;
 - There are high growth levels across the district, placing pressure on infrastructure across the district, not just in Wānaka-Upper Clutha;
 - An acknowledgement that QLDC needs to improve its awareness of community needs and be more visible in Wānaka-Upper Clutha, including identification of possible actions to improve engagement with Wānaka-Upper Clutha;
 - There are concerns regarding the potential impact and costs of an investigation, both on QLDC itself, and on its communities.

Information received from the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board

14. The Commission received a response from the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board (the Community Board) following the Commission's request for further information.
15. The main points included in the information received from the Community Board can be summarised as follows:
 - There is a community perception that QLDC's focus is on Queenstown rather than on Wānaka-Upper Clutha, and that prioritisation and resourcing of projects is not equitable across the district;
 - There is inequity regarding the location of council meetings and workshops, with the majority held in Queenstown;
 - The community board supports any independent and objective assessment of how representation of Wānaka-Upper Clutha can be strengthened;
 - There are concerns that a reorganisation investigation may not be the best way to achieve resolution of community concerns relating to communication, engagement, resource prioritisation and transparency of information, and the potential draw an investigation could have on council and community resources;
 - The petition indicates some community support for the initiative and there does not appear to be any organised community opposition against it. However, the issue is likely not top of mind for most of the community.

Information received from Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu

16. The Commission received a response from Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, endorsed by rūnaka Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou, Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki, Te Rūnaka o Awarua, and Hokonui Rūnanga (ngā Rūnanga).
17. The main points included in the information received from ngā Rūnanga can be summarised as follows:
 - Ngā Rūnanga hold rangatiratanga over the takiwā of QLDC and have sought to form meaningful relationships to enable partnerships to develop. Each rūnanga has many councils within its takiwā to maintain relationships with, which is predominantly done on a voluntary basis;
 - Ngā Rūnanga are at the beginning of their relationship with QLDC;
 - Constitution of a Wānaka-Upper Clutha council will result in duplication of already limited rūnanga time and resources;

- There is a move towards larger regional groupings for managing resources nationally;
- Ngā Rūnanga have questions around how a potential new council would work in terms of partnerships and mana whenua involvement in decision-making.

Additional information received

18. In addition to the information received outlined above, the Commission also received communications from several community members that are supporters of the initiative.¹
19. As well as supporting the initiative, additional points were raised in these communications, which expanded on issues raised in the initiative:
 - Concerns that QLDC has a pattern of deferring Wānaka-Upper Clutha-based projects;
 - Concerns regarding fairness of distribution of funding from external council partners, such as Crown Investment Partners and Waka Kotahi;
 - Concerns that recent planning decisions are inconsistent with Environment Court-mediated outcomes;
 - Concerns regarding ease of access to council meetings, such as via audio-visual means;
 - Concerns regarding a perceived lack of transparency from QLDC.

Factors to have regard to in considering whether to investigate the initiative

20. When deciding whether to investigate a reorganisation, the Commission must have regard to specific factors set out in clause 6, schedule 3 of the LGA.

Clause 6(a) Purpose of reorganisation

21. The Commission should be satisfied that the purpose of the reorganisation is 'to promote good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance' before deciding to investigate the initiative.

¹ The Commission has received correspondence from Councillor Niki Gladding, Friends of Bullock Creek, Cheryl Walthew (acting Chair of the Hāwea Community Association but corresponding in a personal capacity), and local residents Edward Coad, David Barton and Grant Bisset.

22. There is no definition of 'good local government' in the LGA, nor is there a legislative definition of 'promote'. The Commission has previously interpreted 'promote' to mean 'to advance, help forward enhance or improve'. The Commission has also previously had regard to the purpose of local government in section 10 of the LGA, and the principles relating to local authorities in section 14 of the LGA in considering 'good local government'.
23. Section 10 states that the purpose of local government is:
- (a) *To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of communities; and*
 - (b) *To promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.*
24. Section 14 outlines the principles relating to local authorities. These largely relate to how a local authority should conduct its business. Relevant principles to consider in relation to the initiative include:
- (1) *In performing its role, a local authority must act in accordance with the following principles:*
 - (a) *A local authority should*
 - (i) *Conduct its business in an open, transparent, and democratically accountable manner; and*
 - (ii) *Give effect to its identified priorities and desired outcomes in an efficient and effective manner*
 - (b) *A local authority should make itself aware of, and should have regard to, the views of all of its communities; and*
 - (c) *When making a decision, a local authority should take account of*
 - (i) *The diversity of the community, and the community's interests, within its district or region; and*
 - (ii) *The interests of the future as well as current communities; and*
 - (iii) *The likely impact of any decision on each aspect of wellbeing referred to in section 10;*
 - (d) *A local authority should provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes*
 - (...)
 - (g) *A local authority should ensure that prudent stewardship and the efficient and effective use of its resources in the interests of its district or region, including by planning effectively for the future management of its assets.*

25. Section 10 and section 14 are inherently linked to each other in terms of the concept of 'good local government'. That is, when considering the purpose of reorganisation in clause 6(a), the Commission needs to consider the factors of sections 10 and 14 holistically and analyse whether, on balance, the promotion of good local government and improvements to local governance are supported by the reorganisation initiative.
26. The initiative does not specifically address factors relating to the purpose of local government. There are some concerns noted that relate to environmental well-being, for example, the initiative refers to sewage systems being at capacity and overflowing and the current drinking water source being contaminated with lake snow. Likewise, comments regarding a lack of community facilities suggest concerns relating to social well-being. However, it is not clear from the initiative how formation of a new Wānaka-Upper Clutha District would enhance the four well-beings in the area.
27. The main points of the initiative largely focus on dissatisfaction with current operations and decision-making of QLDC and reflect concerns regarding the levels of service received by Wānaka-Upper Clutha. These concerns relate to how QLDC conducts its business and are aligned with the section 14 principles relating to local authorities. In particular, the initiative infers that QLDC decision-making is not transparent and informed by the views of Wānaka-Upper Clutha and does not display prudent stewardship.
28. Information received from the council asserts that investment and funding in Wānaka-Upper Clutha is proportionate to the population, suggesting that QLDC considers that social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wānaka-Upper Clutha is equally well provided for as other communities in the district.
29. However, the Community Board feedback notes frustration in Wānaka-Upper Clutha that the prioritisation and resourcing of projects is not perceived to be equitable across the district. This frustration could either suggest that the four well-beings are not being advanced as strongly in Wānaka-Upper Clutha as they are in other parts of the district or that they are not well understood by the Wānaka-Upper Clutha community.
30. Alternatively, given that Wānaka-Upper Clutha is the only specific community within QLDC that the Commission has received feedback from, there is a possibility that this sentiment is echoed district-wide. The QLDC response suggests that any issues faced in Wānaka-Upper Clutha are replicated across the district. If this were the case, a reorganisation investigation would not solve the issue.
31. With regards to how council operations are currently conducted, the information from both QLDC and the Community Board acknowledge that there are areas for improvement, particularly with regards to communication, engagement, resource prioritisation and transparency of information. These factors correlate with some of the principles relating to local authorities and suggest that improvements are possible in these areas. However, as noted above, it is likely that these issues are replicated across the wider district.

32. It has been acknowledged by both QLDC and the Community Board that there are opportunities for improvement in some of the factors relating to the section 14 principles relating to local authorities, particularly regarding communication, engagement and transparency. In this regard, an investigation could potentially result in some improvements to local governance. However, it is less clear it would result in similar opportunities for enhancing the factors relating to the purpose of local government.
33. Information received from ngā Rūnanga emphasises that the natural environment is a taonga and that local government kawanatanga and management of the environment must happen in partnership with mana whenua. However, ngā Rūnanga advise that they are at the beginning of their relationship with QLDC, and emphasise the time, energy and resources required to initiate and maintain such partnerships.
34. This feedback suggests that the environmental and cultural well-being of Wānaka-Upper Clutha will not necessarily be best served by considering the creation of a new district. Furthermore, questions are raised regarding how a new council would partner with ngā Rūnanga and how it would include mana whenua as part of local decision-making. This point is relevant to consideration of the opportunities QLDC currently provides, or a new council would potentially provide, for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes.
35. The Commission needs to consider the information sought from the various parties in deciding whether it has been sufficiently demonstrated that the purpose of the reorganisation is to promote good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance.
36. In a broad sense, the initiative proposal suggests that, because all decision-making in a newly established Wānaka-Upper Clutha District would be focused on the area, that this in itself would improve the enablement of democratic local decision-making and promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the community.
37. This argument assumes that decision-making by a new council would automatically achieve advances in the four well-beings. It is equally possible that decision-making by any new council would achieve similar outcomes for the four well-beings, or even potentially result in less favourable outcomes. Given the uncertainty of this, it is difficult to place substantial weight on the broad argument outlined above.
38. Furthermore, feedback from ngā Rūnanga suggests that the environmental and cultural well-being of Wānaka-Upper Clutha may not be best enhanced by considering the creation of a new district, given the time and resources required to build meaningful relationships between ngā Rūnanga and any newly established council.
39. There is no guarantee that any new local authority for Wānaka-Upper Clutha would conduct its business in a manner more closely aligned with the principles relating to local authorities than QLDC currently does. While opportunities for improvements in some of the factors linked with the

principles relating to local authorities have been identified, it does not necessarily follow that investigating the establishment of a new council is the best and/or only method of ensuring improvements in these areas. Furthermore, there is no evidence that an investigation would guarantee these improvements being realised.

40. Given the time and resources required to carry out an investigation, there should be a clear understanding of potential enhancements to democratic local decision-making, promotion of the four well-beings and improvements in factors linked to the principles relating to local authorities before the Commission decides to undertake a reorganisation investigation.
41. While there is the potential for some gains to be made especially regarding the principles relating to local authorities, the promotion of good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance should be considered in a holistic manner.
42. On balance, there does not appear to be sufficient demonstration that the purpose of the reorganisation is to promote good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance, to suggest that an investigation is warranted.

Clause 6(b) Potential improvements

43. The Commission needs to consider the 'potential scale and scope of improvements to local governance and services that might result from the investigation'.
44. The initiative does not identify specific improvements to local governance and services that might result from the investigation. Rather, there is an assumption that in a separate Wānaka-Upper Clutha district, decision-making and resources would focus on Wānaka-Upper Clutha, which would in itself result in improvements to local governance and services. It is unclear whether consideration has been given to whether levels of services would be increased, maintained at current levels, or potentially would need to be decreased if a reorganisation were to proceed and a new council be established.
45. The council considers that local governance and services are currently provided to the Wānaka-Upper Clutha area in an equitable and proportionate manner that is consistent with those provided to communities in the rest of the district.
46. The Community Board has, however, noted that there are local frustrations regarding the prioritisation and resourcing of projects, and there is a sense that these are not equitable across the district. The council has also noted that it is open to increasing investment in communication and engagement with the Wānaka-Upper Clutha community.
47. Feedback from ngā Rūnanga notes a move towards larger regional groupings for managing resources and that reducing the size of councils will result in inefficiencies for rūnaka and local government.

48. As noted above in consideration of clause 6(a), it is possible that improvements to how QLDC carries out its business might result in improvements to local governance and services, however it is unclear what the potential scale and scope of such improvements would be. Based on the information received by the Commission, it is suggested that the potential scale and scope of improvements to local governance and services that might result from an investigation have not been sufficiently demonstrated to support an investigation proceeding.

Clause 6(c) Potential negative effects

49. The Commission must have regard to the 'potential costs, disruption, and other negative effects on affected local authorities and their communities that may be caused by the investigation'.
50. Any reorganisation investigation would be primarily resourced by the Commission. However, there is a requirement to consult with affected parties a number of times throughout the process, including engagement with the Wānaka-Upper Clutha and wider Queenstown-Lakes communities. Some resource commitment by QLDC would be required by QLDC to support such engagement.
51. The focus of the initiative is on the potential opportunities a separate district would provide for the Wānaka-Upper Clutha community rather than addressing potential costs, disruption and other negative effects on QLDC and its communities that may be caused by an investigation.
52. The Council notes that input is likely to be required into any investigation, particularly from finance and corporate staff, to assist in modelling and transfer of functions into any new district that might be established through an investigation. It further notes that any poll required as part of an investigation would cost approximately \$90,000 to hold.
53. The Community Board likewise seems cautious over the potential draw that an investigation may have on council or community resources.
54. Ngā rūnanga note that a reorganisation would result in in duplication of already limited rūnanga time and resources, and that the relationship with QLDC is still at beginning stages.
55. The Commission's experience of reorganisation investigations suggests that there might be a reasonably significant time contribution required for a limited number of QLDC staff in providing information to the Commission, particularly in considering matters such as potential financial models and resourcing for a new entity.
56. It is also possible that an investigation may result in community members more strongly identifying with Wānaka-Upper Clutha or Queenstown throughout the process, which may lead to a sense of division in the community.

57. Considering these factors together, it appears that there is the potential for negative effects to arising from a reorganisation investigation, including costs and disruption for QLDC and the Wānaka-Upper Clutha community.

Clause 6(d) Constraints

58. The Commission should understand 'any time or other constraints that apply to the opportunity to achieve potential improvements to local government and services'.
59. The initiative does not identify any time or other constraints to the opportunity to achieve the potential improvements the initiative is seeking.
60. Information received from QLDC notes high growth levels in the district, which may act as a constraint in the provision of infrastructure and community facilities. Information received from the Community Board does not directly touch on this matter.
61. Ngā Rūnanga note constraints on rūnaka time and resources to build effective partnerships with councils and that establishing councils of reduced size will result in inefficiencies for rūnaka and local government.
62. Taking into account the information received, there are potential constraints that may serve to undermine potential improvements to local government and services if an investigation were to be undertaken.

Clause 6(e) Need for urgency

63. The Commission needs to consider if there is a 'need for urgent resolution of any problem identified by the Commission or in the reorganisation initiative'.
64. The initiative does not specifically address timing factors. However, a sense of urgency is conveyed, in that the initiative suggests a genuine belief that the interest of Wānaka-Upper Clutha will be detrimentally affected if no action is taken.
65. A sense of urgency is also noted in relation to some of the specific issues identified, such as the sewerage system reaching full capacity and overflowing.
66. QLDC notes that there is no urgent need or fundamental failing in governance, service levels or council investment that warrant an investigation being undertaken. Community Board feedback does not touch on this matter.
67. Taking into account the information received by the Commission, there does not appear to be an urgent need for resolution of the issues identified.

Clause 6(f) Resourcing

68. The Commission needs to identify whether it has the resources available to undertake an investigation in a timely manner.

69. Clause 7(3)(b), schedule 3 of the LGA provides that the Commission can decide an investigation process that reflects the scale, scope and potential impact of the proposed reorganisation. However, any investigation would need to be sufficiently robust to allow the Commission to assess how best to achieve a number of objectives², including:
- Productivity improvements within the affected local authorities;
 - Efficiencies and cost savings;
 - Assurance that any local authority established or changed has the resources necessary to enable it to effectively perform or exercise its responsibilities, duties and powers
70. To be able to undertake an investigation, it is likely that the Commission would need to call on expert advice to understand the desirability of options relating to how best to achieve these factors. While the potential costs involved with seeking such expert advice are not currently known, based on previous investigations undertaken by the Commission it is reasonable to expect that such costs would be more than minor.
71. In addition, there would be associated costs for any travel required for consultation and site visits. It is noted that it may be possible to conduct some consultation in a virtual manner, or it may be possible to combine any required travel with other Commission engagements.
72. Any investigation would largely overlap with the Commission's legislative responsibilities for completing the next round of representation reviews by April 2025.
73. The Commission has not placed weight on the resources available to the Commission in coming to its decision.

Clause 6(g) Likelihood of community opposition

74. The Commission should understand the 'likelihood of significant community opposition to any reorganisation that might result from the investigation'.
75. The petition attached to the initiative demonstrates that there is support for the initiative from a proportion of Wānaka-Upper Clutha. The Community Board has advised that no groups have been formed to oppose the initiative and there does not appear to be much rhetoric against it. However, the Community Board also notes that the initiative has received moderate publicity, and the issue is likely not top of mind for most of the community.

² Clause 10, Schedule 3 of the LGA sets out the various objectives that the Commission must consider in a reorganisation investigation.

76. No information has been provided regarding potential levels of support for or opposition to the initiative in the rest of the Queenstown-Lakes District. However, QLDC notes concern that public engagement as part of any investigation may increase division between the Queenstown and Wānaka communities. It is possible that any such division might spur greater levels of opposition to, or potentially support for, the initiative.
77. The feedback from ngā Rūnanga notes the inefficiencies for rūnaka and local government from reduced size councils, and highlights this would create and the duplication of already limited rūnanga time and resources required to form meaningful relationships with a greater number of councils. This suggests a wariness to considering the establishment of a new district that could be mirrored in other parts of the community too.
78. The information received by the Commission does not indicate significant community opposition to any reorganisation that might result from the investigation. However, if an investigation were to proceed, consultation with all parties would have to be a key part of the process to be able to test this further.

Commission's decision on whether to investigate the initiative

79. Having assessed the specific factors in clause 6, schedule 3 to the LGA, the Commission has decided that an investigation into the separate Wānaka-Upper Clutha district proposed through the initiative is not warranted, and that the reasons for not undertaking an investigation into the reorganisation initiative are that, on balance:
 - (a) The information received by the Commission does not sufficiently demonstrate that the purpose of the reorganisation is 'to promote good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance';
 - (b) There is little demonstrated potential scale and scope of improvements to local governance and services that might result from an investigation;
 - (c) There is the potential for negative effects arising from a reorganisation investigation, including costs and disruption for Queenstown-Lakes District Council and the Wānaka-Upper Clutha community;
 - (d) There does not appear to be an urgent need for a reorganisation investigation to be undertaken.
80. A decision not to investigate the initiative would bring the initiative to an end. If the Commission agrees not to investigate, it is required, in accordance with schedule 6, clauses 5(1)(c) and (d) of the LGA, to notify the person who submitted the initiative of its decision and to explain the reasons for that decision, as noted above.

Promoting good practice to a local authority – whether to make recommendations to Queenstown-Lakes District Council

81. Under section 30(1)(b) of the LGA, the Commission has the power to ‘promote good practice relating to a local authority or to local government generally’. If the Commission wished to do so, it could use this power to make specific recommendations to QLDC to address some of the identified issues.
82. The information sought from various parties during the Commission’s consideration of the initiative identifies issues that may be able to be improved outside of any reorganisation investigation. In particular, there may be opportunities for QLDC to address:
 - Improvements in communication, engagement and transparency of information;
 - Clarification of resource allocation and prioritisation across the district;
 - Building a stronger relationship between QLDC and Wānaka-Upper Clutha;
 - Building meaningful relationships between QLDC and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the relevant rūnaka of Ngāi Tahu.
83. If the Commission were to make recommendations to QLDC, these should be targeted to achieve specific improvements that will enhance the relationship between QLDC and the wider community and result in increased confidence in QLDC. Any such recommendations should also result in identifiable improvements in the factors linked to the principles relating to local authorities in section 14 of the LGA.
84. Therefore, it is recommended that QLDC develop an action plan, including specific timeframes and adequate resourcing where appropriate, to identify clear steps towards addressing issues. It is recommended further that the action plan be provided to the Commission within a specified timeframe, so that the Commission can consider and provide feedback to QLDC. Including this step should increase community confidence in QLDC’s ability to make meaningful improvements.
85. Therefore, the Commission recommends that QLDC undertake the following actions and develop an action plan, including specific timeframes and adequate resourcing where appropriate, for presentation to the Commission by 31 May 2024:
 - (a) Work with the Community Board and the key initiators of the reorganisation initiative to identify specific actions targeting improved communication, engagement, and transparency of information, including consideration of regular meetings and other council activities to be held in the Wānaka-Upper Clutha area, with a view to developing a stronger

relationship between QLDC and Wānaka-Upper Clutha;

- (b) Work with the Community Board to consider the potential value of developing measurement tools for assessing the allocation and prioritisation of council resources, projects and budgets across the district, with a view to ensuring that there is an equitable balance of resources, projects and budgets across the district;
 - (c) Work with the Community Board to explore options for further empowerment of the community board, including consideration of increased delegated decision-making power and provision of a budget for projects or activities in Wānaka-Upper Clutha;
 - (d) Approach representatives of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu to seek any specific actions for strengthening the developing relationship between Queenstown-Lakes District Council and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the relevant rūnaka of Ngāi Tahu.
86. Given that some of the main issues identified relate to communication, engagement and transparency of information, it has been recommended that QLDC be requested to work with specific partners in developing an action plan, for the following reasons:
- Working with key initiators of the initiative on matters relating to communication, engagement and transparency provides an opportunity to build a relationship between QLDC and key supporters of the initiative;
 - The Community Board is in a unique position of understanding matters important to Wānaka-Upper Clutha as well as understanding the wider context of council processes and decision-making. Information received from the Community Board suggests that the Community Board will take a considered and constructive approach, which may assist in building community confidence in any actions included in an action plan;
 - Consideration of developing a measurement tool for assessing the allocation and prioritisation of council resources, projects and budgets across the district is included to build community confidence in QLDC decision-making by providing greater transparency on this matter;
 - Increased further empowerment of the Community Board, including consideration of increased delegated decision-making power and provision of a budget for projects or activities in Wānaka-Upper Clutha is included to build community confidence that issues specific to Wānaka-Upper Clutha are identified and potential actions undertaken or planned for in an efficient manner;
 - The suggestion that representatives of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu be approached to seek any specific actions for strengthening the developing relationship between Queenstown-Lakes District Council and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the relevant rūnaka of Ngāi Tahu reflects that ngā Rūnanga consider that the relationship with QLDC is at its beginning. Any

actions to build a stronger relationship should be informed by ngā Rūnanga and should take into account the constraints on the time and resources available to ngā Rūnanga, including the commitment to building relationships with other councils in the takiwā.

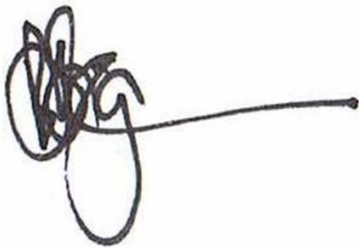
87. As well as assisting with building a stronger relationship between the community and the council, the recommendations also support additional secondary outcomes such as:

- Greater understanding in the community of council processes;
- A more informed and engaged community, which is better able to contribute to the decision-making processes of QLDC;
- Greater transparency and understanding regarding resource allocation across the district.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION



Commissioner Brendan Duffy (Chair)



Commissioner Bonita Bigham



Commissioner Sue Bidrose

13 December 2023