

Understanding success in local government representation on Auckland Council
through the diverse voices of elected local board members

By

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Abstract

Local boards provide the most localised form of government within Auckland Council, the biggest unitary authority in Australasia, representing an ethnically diverse and growing population of about 1.6 million people. This study explores the lived experience of local board members to understand their perspective of success in the role. The experiences of visible minority local board members are investigated alongside those of older, white, New Zealand Europeans, who have, until recently, been numerically dominant in local board representation in the Auckland region. Four questions frame the research: 1) How is success understood by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? 2) How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role? 3) What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? 4) How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

These questions are considered at three intersecting levels: the micro-level of individual behaviour and interpersonal relationships; the meso-level structures at the organisational level; the macro-level socio-political context and legislative directives. To do so, the study is framed within a critical realist paradigm and utilises a critical diversity lens and an intersectionally sensitive approach. Methodologically, the research sits within the tradition of organisational ethnography as it seeks to explore the everyday complexities of 21 local board representatives within Auckland Council in the 2016 – 2019 term. The positionality of the researcher as an elected local board member is melded into the study allowing for deeper questioning and analysis than might be possible otherwise.

The contribution of the research is four-fold. First, the focus is on the experiences of local board members and their understanding of success in a context where little research has been done on local government generally, less on the lived experience of representatives, and almost nothing is available on this community-based governance role. Second, the visible minority experience, is explored alongside the majority board member experience thus providing a more nuanced exploration of any diversity effects. Third, methodologically, the research brings a multi-layered understanding of the complexities of local government representation. Fourthly negative behaviour is explored to understand the dynamics of political bullying. The study also provides insights into how individuals and groups resist, disrupt, or condone the limitations of a dual governance model where authority is shared

between elected representatives and an employed bureaucracy. This includes what political astuteness means for local body elected members, how these skills can be improved to facilitate advocacy and decision-making on behalf of communities. At the same time the challenges of the shared governance model operating within Auckland Council are explored with recommendations for how Auckland Council could support a more welcoming working environment.

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Glossary of Māori terms

Aotearoa	Long Cloud. Originally the North Island - now used as the Māori name for New Zealand.
Hapū	Kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe - section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. It consisted of a number of whānau sharing descent from a common ancestor, usually being named after the ancestor, but sometimes from an important event in the group's history. A number of related hapū usually shared adjacent territories forming a looser tribal federation (iwi).
Iwi	Extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory.
Mana whenua	Mana Whenua 'Customary authority exercised by an iwi or hapū in an identified area' (s2 Resource Management Act, 1991).
Tangata whenua	The iwi or hapū that holds mana whenua over the area.
Te Reo	The language, referring to the Māori language.
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi is considered to be New Zealand's founding document. Signed both English and Te Reo Māori, there are significant differences between the two and the Māori version is recognised as the version that was understood by the tribes that signed it (Morrison & Huygens, 2019).
Whānau	Extended family - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society.
Whenua	Country, land, nation, state; territory; placenta
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship

Definitions from Te Aka Māori Dictionary online (n.d.) unless otherwise specified.

Key to Acronyms

CCO	Council Controlled Organisation
C & R	Communities and Residents, previously Citizens and Ratepayers
FLPA	Framework for Leadership with Political Astuteness
IMSB	Independent Māori Statutory Board
LGNZ	Local Government New Zealand
LGOIMA	Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987
NOM	Notice of Motion
OLI	One Local Initiative
PSGE	Post-settlement Trust Entity
SKEMLG	Skills and Knowledge for Elected Members in Local Government
YEM	Young Elected Member (under 40 years old)

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Shirin Desai Brown

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It is not easy being a local board member and navigating the needs of communities within the huge bureaucracy of Auckland Council. A huge thanks go out to all the participants for their thoughtfulness in talking about their experiences. In order to protect their identities no identifying characteristics have been provided and the participants are not mentioned by name in the acknowledgements. I hope I have been true to their voices and intentions. Thank you also to Auckland Council staff who answered my questions to help me better understand the processes within the organisation, and who do their best to meet the needs of local board members within the Auckland Council bureaucracy. Finally thank you to everyone who provided little snippets of their experience with local government which helped to inform this thesis, gave me encouragement or helped me see the funny side of life, especially Lisa Henley and Cathy Urquhart-Greaves. The advice to “keep moving even under fire,” from Ruby Ross and Jim Ross was particularly useful in those moments when life seemed too busy to maintain a connection with the work.

I have addressed some difficult issues as they arise in local government, some of which is critical of board members and Auckland Council. While, local government is a challenging space to work in, the vast majority of people I came across were committed to creating benefit for communities and supporting a local voice in decision-making. This voice is ever

more critical as we address the challenges posed by increasing centralisation of government services, the disruptions caused by Covid-19, and take a firmer approach in dealing with climate change.

I am conscious that living in Aotearoa New Zealand, serving in local government and being on this PhD journey are all a privilege. My hope that this thesis will provide food for thought, guide further study and that the recommendations can be used in some way to strengthen local democracy. While recognising that a thesis reflects formal discourse strategies, it is important to me that this content remains accessible to a range of users from academics, policy advisors, through to local board members making sense of the role, and the general reader seeking to understand local government.

I end these acknowledgements with a whakataukī (Māori proverb) that speaks to the place of this thesis in understanding the past to inform our current conceptualisation of local government.

Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua. Look backwards as we go into the future.

Ethics Approval

18/31 Diversity in Local Board Representation with Auckland Council: The Experiences of Elected Members

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Subcommittee.

Your ethics application is approved until 8 February, 2021

Chapter 1 Introduction

This doctoral study explores the lived experiences of local board members, elected to Auckland Council, from 2016 to 2019, the third term of Auckland Council. The importance of Auckland as the driver of the New Zealand economy, the demographic diversity of the population and the newness of the current governance model make Auckland different from the rest of New Zealand and provides an important site for research.

The largest unitary authority in Australasia (Orsman, 2008), formed in 2010, Auckland Council is the result of the amalgamation of seven cities and the Auckland Regional Council, and is now referred to as the Supercity (Greater Auckland, 15 May, 2009). Local boards were set up as part of the shared governance structure within Auckland Council at this time with design of this iteration of Auckland governance considered new and untested. The model assigns regional decision-making responsibility to twenty ward councillors and the mayor, and local decision-making and representation to 149 local board members elected across twenty-one local boards. The decision-making responsibilities are further complicated by the fact that Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs), which are part of the Auckland Council group of organisations, but also receive central government funding, manage Auckland Council assets outside the decision-making realm of councillors. The most important of these CCOs are Auckland Transport (responsible for roads and public transport), Watercare (responsible for water and wastewater infrastructure and management), Panuku (which holds the asset portfolio of Council) and Auckland Unlimited (which focuses on developing Auckland's economic profile).

The Auckland Plan 2050 (Auckland Council, 2012) identifies three key challenges facing the area over the foreseeable future. These are high population growth, an increasing disparity in wealth distribution across these populations and environmental degradation. Added to this are the potential for rapid changes brought on by climate change and the risks and opportunities created by being networked into a global community.

Local government plays an important role in the management of natural resources and waste through the consenting regime and provision of infrastructure. We are at least as likely to be affected by local government decisions as central government decisions, yet there is a paucity of research on local government (Drage, 2008). The New Zealand Covid response has also illustrated the potential of local government to communicate key messages within

communities. In the Auckland area for example, more vulnerable communities benefitted from the work of engaged and tireless local board members and councillors who helped ensure that younger people, and Māori and Pacific Peoples were vaccinated and protected against covid (Tangata Pacifika+, 19 October, 2021). In addition, the importance of local government has been emphasised by Local Government New Zealand (2020) who focus on the importance of local decision-making that puts communities at the heart of decision-making. This stresses a commitment to localism to strengthen local democracy and to “ensure a ‘place-based’ and integrated approach to the provision of services and local governance” (p.2).

The focus of this study is to understand and demystify the experience of local board members who live within their communities, and work at the interface of community aspirations and government decision-making as well as to reflect their insights on the processes of Auckland Council. Given the increasing diversity of Auckland, with over two hundred ethnicities represented (Auckland Council, 2012), a much higher youth demographic than other parts of the country, and the fact that gender parity on local boards was achieved for the first time in the 2016 election, this thesis also seeks to understand the experience of difference within local board representation. Lastly, given the growing awareness of bullying in political environments, and that eleven of the twenty-one participant board members reported the use of bullying tactics used against them, there is a focus on understanding how and when bullying arises and the strategies used by local board members to address this. At the same time the role and responsibilities of Auckland Council as a work site and how the Council can be more proactive in managing bullying behaviour through the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 is considered.

Aside from exploring how local government is structured in Auckland, this is also a personal and cathartic journey to make sense of my role as an elected board member. Standing as an independent candidate, I was elected to the Waiheke Local Board for two local board terms from 2013 to 2019. I was elected to one of the two smallest island boards, Waiheke, which represents a permanent resident population of about 9,000 people (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.), swelling to an upper limit of 45,000 in the Summer (Fleming, 2018) and is also the voice of the very sparsely populated islands and island nature reserves of the Inner Hauraki Gulf. This compares to 140,970 in the largest local board area (Statistics New Zealand, n.d. -b). The challenges of working with Auckland Council to meet the interests of a small semi-rural population were significant, particularly with respect to equity in service provision. This issue is exacerbated by having a small rating base while needing to address the costs of services for

this huge influx of visitors (Boladeras, 2020) in an area which Auckland Council promotes as “the Jewel in the Crown” (Auckland NZ, n.d.). In addition, because of the location of Waiheke Island in the Inner Hauraki Gulf, the Waiheke Local Board has often found itself speaking out in favour of better marine protection, or in support of better environmental controls to protect water quality (Our Auckland, 2021a) on behalf of Aucklanders who seem more disconnected to the marine environment.

In exercising this role, I was struck by how the demands of the elected role are very different to other employment experiences. I found the experience fascinating in terms of standing and winning an election, understanding the workings of Auckland Council and negotiating outcomes with other board members. However, at the same time it was often a challenging and isolating experience. In exploring aspects of the role with elected board members, I also hope to provide some insights that future elected members in local government may find useful in serving communities successfully. This research centres on local board members’ understanding of success in their role and factors which influence this. The research agenda has evolved to focus on the following four research questions:

RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards?

RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

1.1 A focus on success

The focus on success emerged from my feeling that being successful in local government was more akin to an art than a science, depending on a range of factors, many of which did not relate to predetermined goals or institutional directives. Success for elected members is also measured by what is accomplished, projects often only reaching fruition years after the elected member has left political office. As such, the exploration of success in this PhD encompasses both measurable achievements and aspects of a role that are less quantifiable and more personal. There is also a focus on the alignment of institutional and legislative factors which contribute to success and how these features interact and influence each other

and come together, often it appears, more by luck than design, to achieve successful outcomes.

1.2 Background and motivation for this study

My experience in the role, both in terms of understanding local government and in the struggle to communicate with fellow board members provides the starting point for the questions I ask, and the themes explored. Born of a British father and an Indo-Persian mother, I grew up mostly in France. I arrived in New Zealand in 2000, having worked in a number of different countries as a language teacher and teacher trainer. I became a mother in 2002 and a New Zealand Citizen in 2007. I have never really felt I belonged to a place, but through experiencing a sense of community on Waiheke Island, having children on the island and being involved in the arts as a film-maker, I have developed a sense of belonging here. As a consequence of loving where I live and putting down roots in the Waiheke community, I became more and more interested in becoming politically involved. At the time I was elected I was in my 40s and was a relatively young, elected member. Part of the feeling that standing for political office was a credible option, stemmed from the Auckland Council “Step Forward for Auckland” campaign to encourage candidates to stand for election in 2013. The pictures in the brochure represented a diversity of ages and ethnicities and was different from the cohort of elected representatives, certainly on Waiheke.

In 2013, like many people on Waiheke Island, I was concerned about what many residents saw as the pro-development stance and lack of advocacy for community issues of the elected local board. The local board were all New Zealand Europeans, all but one of whom was at retirement age (over 65 years), so not surprisingly there was a feeling that the local board lacked diversity. Two issues were particularly salient – firstly, the community aspiration to close a coastal dirt road and make this accessible only to pedestrians and cyclists to encourage a cycling and walking culture and create a safe walkway for children travelling to school. The second was a proposal for a marina at the ferry terminal and key gateway to Waiheke. In both cases significant parts of the community felt that there was a lack of advocacy from the local board members. In response to this, a different group, ostensibly of environmentally focused, left-leaning candidates was formed to contest the 2013 election. This was organised primarily by one member and his supporters who had been elected in a by-election half way through the previous term and expressed vocal opposition to existing local board.

I was initially part of the latter group but left to run my own campaign as an independent candidate. At the time I was a member of the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand. I was struck by how there were numerous decisions to be made in terms of whether to stand with political party branding, as a totally independent candidate or to form a group that was not aligned to a political party. Each of these choices had their own challenges and potential impact in terms of electability and potential alliances and are discussed within this research. My choice was to stand as an independent aligned with a non-politically branded group. This group and I were elected in a landslide result which elected one incumbent candidate while ousting all the previous members of the board and the chair. In the 2016 election I was no longer a member of the Green Party and again stood and was elected as an independent.

As the 2013 political term unfolded, I was surprised to see that the Waiheke community was generally supportive of my work, as witnessed by the positive affirmation I received from members of the community both online and in social situations. This was not reflected, however, in the behaviour of local board members. I often felt targeted or undermined by these colleagues and had to rely on the moral support of friends and family to continue raising the profile of issues that I felt would be of interest to the wider community. As I reached the end of the first term, I felt that my biggest achievements were in finding out more about Auckland Council, offering civic leadership and advice about Auckland Council to the public, and the fact that I had been able to maintain a sense of personal integrity. This was different from my expectations of the role. I had assumed, perhaps naively, that board members who had a strong community focus and valued cycling, walking and better housing outcomes, would work together to bring about positive change. Instead, I found that I was often out on a limb for raising issues. I experienced significant self-doubt and anxiety, while surprised at how the personal attacks seemed quite gendered. This was unexpected given my experience of professional working environments within academia and business. To be specific this included being shouted at, talked over, told I didn't understand the issues or told I was overstepping my governance role by fellow board members. Occasionally, a member of staff or board member would intercede on my behalf and suggest that people were behaving inappropriately or that I had the right to comment.

Aside from the experiences with board members, Auckland Council processes seemed to facilitate community input, but the actions then taken by the organisation did not reflect community aspirations. Projects which were important to the community and the board either languished or were delivered poorly. Attempts to seek accountability or progress reports were frowned on by the organisation, and board members, as interfering with staff

responsibilities. Statutory consultation processes seemed to attract high levels of resourcing in terms of materials developed and staff time. At the same time this was not matched by the level of organisational support for project delivery. Meanwhile, community members expressed frustration at being asked for their views (yet again) but then not seeing these addressed in Auckland Council's service delivery.

More details of my background can be found in Appendix G, where I reflect on my own answers to the interview questions asked of participants. The personal identity characteristics that stood out were my younger age, that I was a working mother of young children and, a migrant.

As a migrant with substantial experience of living in different countries, but not growing up in New Zealand I now wonder if I experienced "different poppy" syndrome, rather than what is commonly called "tall poppy syndrome". In other words was I being undermined/criticised because I appeared different to the norm? I was somewhat baffled at the fact we were all elected to the role, but there seemed an entitlement on the part of the older New Zealand European men and women that their views had more gravitas and an acceptance of this by Auckland Council officers. I wondered if growing up in different social contexts where there was a less normative view of the world made me more sensitive both to the importance of diversity in representation and more likely to consider how different groups or communities might be affected by local board decision-making.

At the time I enrolled for this PhD, I was finishing the first term and standing for a second term as a local board member. I had a strong desire to use the study as a way of making sense of my own experience. The following is a list of considerations that guided my initial interest in this topic:

- How were decisions agreed upon and what factors informed a decision-making process that seemed opaque?
- Were there structural features of the institutional and/or cultural context which resulted in some participants being more successful than others?
- How did board members use "the system" (both people and processes) to be successful?
- Were there aspects of my lived experience and personality that meant that I often seemed to draw different conclusions from the information presented?

- Were qualities of my experience shared by other elected members regardless of whether they had majority or minority backgrounds?
- Were these reflections of the “cut and thrust of politics” which all politicians use to their political advantage or was aggressive behaviour being normalised in a way that would be considered inappropriate in other contexts?
- Looking to the future, are there actions that elected members could take to be more successful?
- Are there things the organisation, Auckland Council could do for local board members to generate feelings of success?

The interests above inform the questions that are used in this qualitative study to focus both on the elected member experience, but also how visible differences in elected members (specifically age, gender and ethnicity) affects this experience. The above illustrates the challenge of understanding success in board work generally, trying to identify features which influence this success, as well as how this might differ depending on the qualities of the individual board member.

1.3 Rationale and significance

This study explores the experience of local board members within Auckland Council, the lowest tier of democratic representation serving Auckland. The role of local government in democratic representation is often neglected, particularly in New Zealand (Drage, 2008). However, local governments are responsible for the allocation of local resources and have an important role to play in creating liveable and equitable communities into the future. It is therefore essential to understand how local government provides for an effective community voice. There is a view that there are problems with the current iteration of local government which must be addressed for this to happen:

For local governments to play their role in addressing issues like changing climate, community resilience, community cohesion, inequality and demographic change, we need to address the problem of centralisation, for economic as well as democratic reasons (Reid, 2018, p. 16).

By exploring the experience of local board members, this study clarifies the tensions in the shared governance model (between local board members making local decisions for their communities and elected councillors making regional decisions). This is a key feature of this iteration of the governance for Auckland. It also highlights the difficulties arising in a dual

decision-making model where elected members make governance decisions which are operationalised through the bureaucracy.

Local board comments are also used to reflect how the civic leadership role is understood and provided for by local board members and how this can be enhanced to ensure local democratic participation. This work builds on the research on the effects of New Public Management in New Zealand including Howell et al., (1995); Drage (2008); Reid (2016, 2018). By doing this, there is some reflection on the thinking that informed the creation of Auckland Council and various reviews of local government that have occurred since its creation (Salmon et al., 2009; Reid, 2009; Shirley et al., 2015; Crothers, 2016; Duncan, 2016; Dean et al., 2020). In doing so there is a consideration of whether this iteration of Auckland Council provides effectively for local democracy and what could be done to strengthen democratic participation.

Given the increasing diversity of Auckland communities, there are prescient debates around how diversity in representation should be addressed (Gooder, 2017) to ensure social cohesion and equitable participation in society. This debate is echoed in other Western democracies that have also been the site of significant external migration (International Organisation for Migration, 2015).

The significance of this study lies in capturing the experience of elected members and how this is affected by working together on boards which increasingly vary in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Recommendations are then made to ensure that different voices are heard at the decision-making table. The study period provides a snapshot of a changing diversity profile in elected representation. Gender parity was achieved on local boards in 2016, and, for the first time in 2019, Pacific Peoples and Māori are represented on boards in numbers that reflect their numbers in the population. In addition, by collating quantitative data relating specifically to elected member by age, gender and ethnicity across the five terms of this iteration of Auckland Council, I add to the quantitative data already collected in this field relating to candidates and elected members in local government in New Zealand (Allpress & Osborne, 2017; Webster & Fa'apoi, 2017; Webster et al. 2019; Reid, 2020b). This is relevant as some of the data is incomplete and has not been collected systematically to date across different studies for those standing and elected.

An important feature of this thesis is also in understanding the skills and knowledge required of local board members to perform the role effectively. This aspect of the study builds on

work by Rao (1993) in the United Kingdom, Hartley and Fletcher (2008), Hartley et al. (2013), Hartley and Manzie (2020) predominantly in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, as well as studies by Drage (1993), Tester (2014), and Reid (2020a) which explore the experience of locally elected politicians in New Zealand. This work has primarily included work with bureaucrats, central government, and higher tiers of local government or local government experience outside of Auckland. The focus of this study is in understanding the experience of board members who provide the most localised tier of local government decision-making within the large unitary authority of Auckland Council. A framework of key competencies, the Skills and Knowledge for Elected Members to Local Government (SKEMLG) is also outlined. It is envisaged that this will be useful tool for elected members seeking to upskill as well as local government entities developing relevant training programmes for elected members in local government.

Lastly, there is a specific focus on negative behaviours including bullying and harassment. This includes a description of the types of behaviours experienced, responses to these behaviours and a discussion of when these behaviours arise in relation to local board members working with each other. When this PhD was started, there was little discussion of these issues in the political arena. However, as a result of more vocal comments from elected politicians and examples of specific instances of inappropriate behaviour, there has been increasing research into the extent of negative behaviours including bullying and abuse which occurs in central government (Francis, 2019) and local government (Reid, 2020a). This includes bullying by politicians towards each other, harassment of staff and abuse from the public. This PhD builds on the observations made by Gillard (2019) on the use of bullying as a political strategy. Solutions are offered which contribute to how this can be addressed by individuals, in both local and central government into the future.

1.4 Project design

My initial interest was in the experience of women elected to local boards. When I was first elected, in 2013, there was a view that women were struggling to be represented equitably in Auckland Council, with numbers hovering between 30% and 40% over a number of election cycles, although numbers of elected women in Auckland was considered higher than in other parts of New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2016). By 2016, however, 51% of local board members were women (Webster & Crothers, 2022). The numbers of those of Asian descent, Māori and Pacific Peoples were also increasing substantially but were still not representative of numbers in the population. In addition, my own observations and

experience, supported by the initial interviews carried out in 2018, was that a number of factors interacted to determine whether board members felt successful or not.

My experience in the role, both in terms of understanding local government and in the struggle to communicate with fellow board members provides the starting point for the questions I ask and the themes explored.

This study is based on interviews with twenty members of local boards elected between 2016 and 2019, and interviewed between March 2018 and July 2019. In addition to this, one local board member who had stood down in 2016 but had been elected to both a legacy community board and a local board was also interviewed as part of the initial interviews in March 2018. Their data was interesting and relevant to the debates raised in this study and I have therefore also included their comments, making a total of twenty one interviews. I was also able to speak informally to people working within Auckland Council and the CCOs, and past elected members to develop a greater insight into the role. The primary qualitative data is supplemented with secondary material from document research and the collection of quantitative demographic information.

In the first stage of five interviews, questions focused on directly asking participants about their experience of diversity. The answers seemed to lack depth and suffer from participant bias (Brewer, 1979). Participants from minority backgrounds focused on how well (or not) they were included in the decision-making process, and majority participants focused on how inclusively they acted towards others. For subsequent interviews, the questions were reviewed with a change in focus to reflections on success and the challenges of the role. This allowed for a broader discussion of the experience of local board members and a focus on both organisational and interpersonal features which might affect their performance of the role. This also created the opportunity for an indirect focus on their experience of difference and participants talked about this if they felt this was an important factor contributing to their sense of success.

Through these interviews, it emerged that there was considerable complexity in how board members experienced the role. These issues played out differently on different boards. Moreover, not all boards were dominated by New Zealand Europeans. Some boards in the South of Auckland were significantly more dominated by women and Pacific Peoples. Depending on the makeup of the local board, older New Zealand European men were also just as likely to feel undermined by the political process, Auckland Council or fellow board

members. Aware, however, that there might be additional challenges in being a visible minority candidate, the design process included balancing the cohort of participants as far as possible in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. This enabled the study to provide some insight into the experience of difference within the broader consideration of success for all local board members.

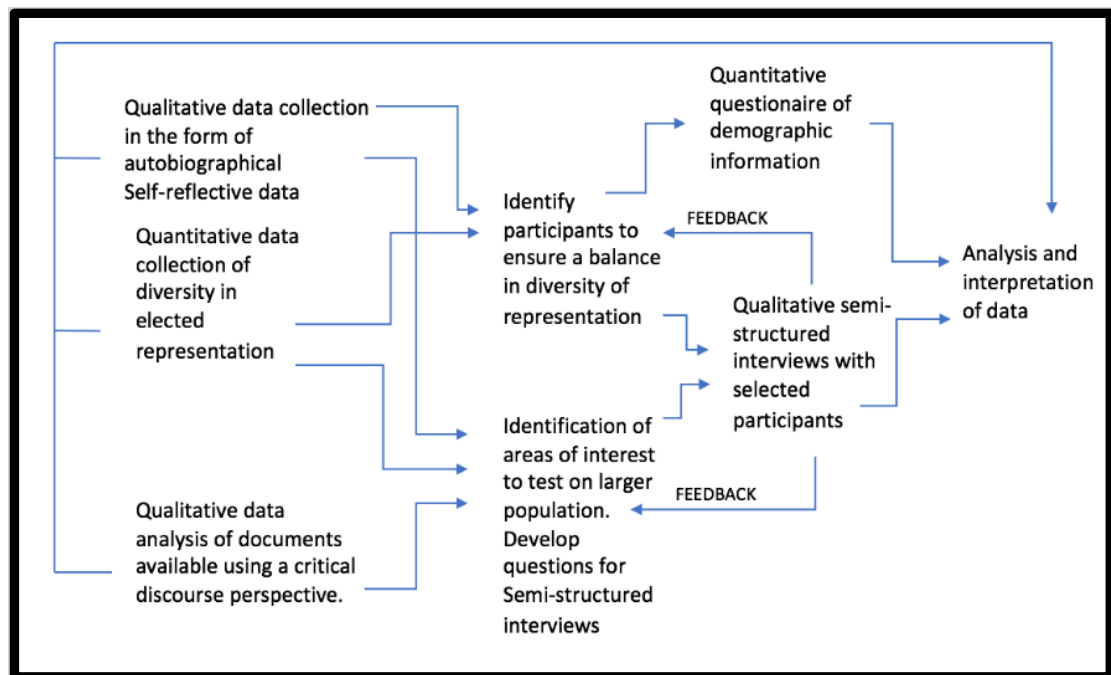
Concerns around the risk to reputation for local board members in sharing aspects of their decision-making has been at the forefront of how the data was collected, analysed and presented. As a local board member I understood these risks clearly, and was able to reassure participants (including those who were unknown to me before their participation in the study), that I would be careful to protect their identities and that I understood the constraints under which they worked. This resulted in people with a range of political views, including those that were different from mine, agreeing to be interviewed and sharing their personal perspectives with me. This insider perspective has both allowed candid stories of elected representation to emerge while also providing the conditions for detailed questions to be asked about Auckland Council processes. In order to contextualise the data, quantitative analysis of the diversity profile of elected members of Auckland Council is a further addition to the research. This complements the quantitative data already publicly available and adds to an understanding of the changing diversity profile of elected members over the first five terms of Auckland Council (2010-2022).

1.5 Research path

The research comes together using multiple strategies and sources (see Figure 1.1). The process started with a self-reflexive component which identified the successes, challenges and peculiarities I noticed in being a local board member myself and reflecting on issues that have arisen in the process of standing for and working as a local board member. In a parallel process, I analysed the documents relating to governance provisions in Auckland. This includes both historical documents on how formal governance mechanisms arose in Auckland as a result of the signing of Te Tiriti O Waitangi [The Treaty of Waitangi], how these have evolved over time. This is followed by a consideration of the impact of the neo-liberal reforms on local government from the late 1970s through to the 2010s. Finally, there is an analysis of the legislation determining the formation of Auckland Council, as well as how this is interpreted within the Auckland Council Governance Statement (2020) and documentation Auckland Council provides about itself. This is intended to contextualise the place of local boards within Auckland Council's governance structure.

Figure 1.1

Diagrammatic conceptualisation of research path



Note. Framework adapted from “Feminist approaches to mixed methods research: Linking theory and praxis 1,” by S.N. Hesse-Biber, 2010, in A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioural Research* (p.170), SAGE. Copyright 2018 by SAGE.

At the same time quantitative data was gathered on the profile of elected members in terms of age, gender and ethnicity to understand aspects of the visible demographic profile of elected members and how this has changed over the five terms of Auckland Council. This data then informs the selection of participants for the semi-structured initial interviews including the questions asked to capture core demographic information about the participants. The five initial interviews were transcribed and some coding was done to identify patterns and themes that were salient to participants. An iterative process was used, with later interviews exploring some of the themes that emerged in earlier interviews. Finally the data was analysed and interpreted to identify key themes.

1.6 Chapter breakdown

Following Chapter One, the Introduction, Chapter Two situates the research within the evolving historical context of local government in New Zealand. The significance of the New Public Management reforms of the 1980s and 1990s and the influences of this period in shaping the legislation which now governs Auckland Council is explored (Richardson, 2008). The focus then turns to the current legislation and processes within Auckland Council to clarify how and where decision-making occurs. This includes a discussion of how local board

members are provided for within the current governance structures, as well as how the role is conceptualised.

Chapter Three defines success and the challenge of understanding political success and provides some key theoretical concepts which are used to frame the research. This includes insight into some of the debates around the nature of political representation and the role of responsiveness in representation. The knowledge and skills that are important for political representation and the concept of political astuteness, are also introduced.

Chapter Four discusses the research design and the need for a methodology which is able to address participant experience in relation to the structural constraints operating within an organisation. Critical realism is used as a way of explaining the experiences described by participants in terms of the ontological realities which underpin this. It then explains how a relational framework (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009) initially developed for an exploration of diversity, can be used to understand success within local government. This chapter includes a description of the methods used, including the use of semi-structured interviews for data collection, thematic analysis to identify key themes, and the use of abduction and retroduction as reasoning tools to analyse and theorise the data.

The findings and discussion are found in Chapters Five to Ten. Chapter Five sets the scene with an analysis of the profile of difference across the five terms of Auckland Council focusing primarily on gender, ethnicity and age of local board members as visible markers of difference. This combines data from primary and secondary sources and provides the context for the qualitative data collected in the interviews. Chapter Six answers RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? And RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role? The focus here is on local board member experience of success and how this experience varies for members who are visibly different from the more typical local board demographic of older male and New Zealand European elected member.

Personal factors which affect this success are discussed in Chapter Seven in response to RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? This includes a focus on micro personality and interpersonal features that local board members identify as important for success in their role. These features are then incorporated into a new framework, the Skills and Knowledge for Elected Members to Local Government

(SKEMLG). This builds on the framework of skills identified for political success of bureaucrats working with central government elected representatives developed by Hartley et al. (2013), the skills identified as important for elected members by Auckland Council (2016b) and the additional skills identified as important for bureaucrats working with central government politicians (Hartley & Manzie, 2020). In Chapter Eight, the discussion turns to how board members feel their success is influenced by organisational and legislative factors, and answers RQ3 from an institutional and legislative perspective.

Negative behaviour from local board members to each other emerged as a specific and recurring challenge to board members and was identified as strongly associated with perceptions of success. Given the fact there was significant discussion of how and when this behaviour arises, this is dealt with as a specific finding of the research in Chapter Nine and provides further insight into RQ1 and RQ2. This includes specific recommendations of how the legislation, namely the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, provides an opportunity and untested mechanism to address the behaviour of elected members who bully others. A critical realist perspective is used to understand how negative behaviour operates in practice. This chapter explains how abduction and retroduction are used to reveal the causal mechanisms of bullying, and the demi-regularities that occur in relation to the bullying. This offers insight into how bullying can be deployed as a political strategy while adding to an understanding of the methodological value of using a critical realist approach.

Chapter Ten synthesises the key findings. Behind the question of whether local board members feel successful in their role, lies the bigger question of whether this iteration of local government, actually provides effectively for community aspirations and concerns to be addressed. In addition, recommendations and directions for further research are also provided which answers RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role? In this chapter the role of political parties within Auckland Council elections is also discussed.

To end, Chapter Eleven reflects on the significance of the study and its limitations. It captures the essential features of the study and its potential value within the local government landscape in New Zealand. By doing so, the much-debated and presently topical broader question of the value of local boards and how local boards fulfil expectations around delivering local democratic participation is brought to the fore.

1.7 Spelling, acronyms, abbreviations

I have followed British English spelling for this thesis. However, many of the quotations use American spelling, so the study sometimes reflects a linguistic tussle between whether words are spelt with an “s” instead of “z” such as in “organisation” or “organization,” for example.

I have avoided the use of acronyms and abbreviations, preferring to spell these out in full, except in the case where the acronym is likely to be more familiar to those involved in local government than the full name. For example, local board members refer to Notices of Motion as NOMs and refer to a LGOIMA process to access privileged information from Auckland Council rather than the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act process.

1.8 Māori themes and language within this thesis

Māori people are recognised as tangata whenua, people of the land who were here before European migration. At the same time, within this study Māori are also considered as a political minority in terms of actual representation. The latter recognises that many of the challenges facing people who identify as Māori, are shared by visible ethnic minority migrant groups seeking political representation. Of note, many of those who identify as Māori (and indeed those identified as other minority ethnicity) also have dual identities. In this study Māori identified as Māori as well as other ethnicities, including New Zealand European, European and Pacific Peoples but their own dominant positionality came from identifying as Māori. Understanding how these different ethnic concerns are similar and different, will hopefully lead to increased and equitable participation from all marginalised groups, as well as provide some insight into how a Māori voice can be heard more equitably in a bicultural, and now multi-cultural environment of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In the public discourse, there is considerable discussion on representational structures and how these need to be adapted or used to ensure Māori representation under Te Tiriti o Waitangi [Te Tiriti] (Hayward 1999; Ruru et al., 2019; Bargh, 2016 & 2021). While these issues mentioned in relation to how they were experienced by board members in making resource allocation decisions, and in their role as representatives of local government, the ongoing debates are beyond the scope of this PhD. I have tried to capture how this experience fits into the Auckland political landscape in terms of equity in political representation within a democratic society as alluded to above. However, I have avoided discussions on how governance structures can provide for Māori rights under Te Tiriti.

In terms of Māori words, the spelling and use of macrons is consistent with the Te Aka Māori dictionary (2003-2023). However, these have not been used when referring to legacy concepts or in quotations, so for example the Waitākare Ranges Local Board (post 2010) has a macron but Waitakare Council (existing prior to 2010) does not. While there is a move to rename New Zealand with a Māori name, possibly Aotearoa, this name is not yet officially recognised. In recognition of indigenous names, I have referred to Aotearoa New Zealand, the first time it is referred to, but thereafter refer to this country as New Zealand. This also occurs with institutions and geographical place names that now have both Māori and English names. Where Māori words are used I have provided a translation for the overseas reader and there is a glossary for ease of reference. New Zealanders will generally have come across these terms and may have a richer understanding of their significance and meaning than readers who are unfamiliar with the New Zealand cultural context.

There are two versions of Te Tiriti O Waitangi [The Treaty of Waitangi]. While both are recognised as official versions, I refer to Te Tiriti as this was the document signed and understood by the vast majority of the Iwi that signed it.

1.9 Choice of reference material

In some instances, particularly in relation to historical material, but also with respect to theoretical discussions, early source material has been used in order to capture an understanding of the historical context from a vantage point which is closer to when the events occurred or to the original ideas of the theorist.

1.10 Referencing participant quotations

In order to protect the identities of local board members, I have removed any identifying characteristics in quotations and do not mention which board members have taken part in the study or acknowledge them by name. The cohort of local board members is small, and I therefore refer to they/them as a generic way to identify a speaker in situations where identifying them as a man or woman might inadvertently identify a particular participant. Participant quotations are provided in italics.

In Chapter Two the study turns to a description of the historical factors which affected the creation of Auckland Council and provides a description of the context of local board work.

Chapter 2 Auckland Council, history and context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the emergence of local government in Auckland and then discusses this iteration of Auckland governance, Auckland Council and the role of local boards within this. In doing so the purpose of the chapter is to provide the vital backdrop to help answer the research questions that frame this thesis.

RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards?

RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

The first part of Chapter Two clarifies how local government has evolved in the specific post-colonial context of New Zealand, where Māori were settled on the land before the arrival of settlers, predominantly from the British Isles. It also sets out a brief history of New Zealand before colonisation to show how relevant Māori governance structures pre-dated those of Europeans, and how the unique relationship between The Crown and Māori have continued to influence local government into the present. The relevance of this becomes apparent in three streams of work which relate to Māori (Auckland Council, 2022a). These include addressing inequity, building relationships with local Iwi, and looking for partnership opportunities with Iwi and post-settlement trust entities. The first two are particularly relevant to the work of local board members who distribute grants and manage local resources such as parks and community facilities.

This is followed by looking at how local government emerged in the formation of the New Zealand as a British colony, with a particular focus on the Auckland area. This includes a description of the role and expectations of local government and its key players over time. Tensions between local government and central government continue to plague how local government is provided for within relevant legislation. Lastly there is a discussion on the reforms of the 1980s to the 2000s, which were a product of the ideological shifts brought by

New Public Management (NPM) reform and have informed the present iteration of local government and the formation of Auckland Council.

The second part of the chapter describes how Auckland Council is structured, how local boards are provided for within the current legislation and how they operate on a daily basis. This includes a description of how decision-making occurs and how governance responsibilities are interpreted, shared and allocated across different parts of Auckland Council. This has a direct influence on the extent of local board decision-making.

The importance of understanding local government is illustrated by Drage (2016) who points out that while local government is essential to a strong and healthy democracy and is at the “leading edge” of discussions on issues of concern such as balancing economic growth with community well-being and environmental protection, it still often runs “under the radar” of public debate (p.2).

While providing a selective approach to local government analysis, the features discussed aim to illustrate how ideological and historical features have influenced the current iteration of Auckland Council. This informs the resulting tensions which arise in terms of decision-making and representational responsibilities for local board members and contribute to their feelings of success in their role which are described in Chapters Six to Nine. It also illustrates how the current statutory framework sees local government in minimalist terms, providing only those functions deemed necessary in delivering basic services like rubbish removal and necessary infrastructure like roads, while neglecting other features which could be regarded as important such as improving social cohesion or addressing equity in services.

2.2 Early history and government in New Zealand

The legal status of local government in New Zealand arises from specific local government legislation. As the New Zealand legislature is unicameral, the purpose and functions of local government can be changed by the party or parties with a majority in government (Drage, 2016). This has contributed to the way local government in New Zealand continues to suffer from a certain fragility:

Characterized by a state of existential uncertainty, that is, a state of being in which its role, structure and even existence had been contingent on the views of a relatively small number of political actors and the degree to which industry groups, such as local government associations, have been able to successfully lobby and mobilise public opinion (Reid, 2016, p.22).

While there have been arguments to entrench the role and functions of local government within a written constitution (Palmer, 2019), there has been little progress on this from central government politicians.

To understand the New Zealand political context, the next section focuses on pre-European New Zealand and the peculiarities of a relatively new coloniser settler culture. It shows how governance structures were used to protect resource allocation in a situation where Māori were long established on the land and how some of the decisions arose to address the ongoing tensions around behaviour and land use.

Two themes are important for the emergence of New Zealand governance, and local government in particular. Firstly, that it was reactive, starting as an attempt to deal with the management of British citizens but quickly changed to prioritise the needs of settlers in terms of land management and control over the use of resources at the expense of Māori interests. Secondly, there is a failure of early governments to embed Treaty principles in legislation and a positioning of Māori so that their agency and control over land and decision-making is progressively eroded. This approach has been changing since the 1970s with legislation increasingly providing for a Māori partnership voice within new legislation.

2.2.1 Pre-European governance

The following includes a potted history of New Zealand prior to European settlement to provide insight into the unique features of New Zealand governance and how it came to be a colony, with English governance systems in the Southern Pacific Ocean. New Zealand was settled in around 1250 AD by Polynesian navigators who travelled across the Pacific. Social organisation included iwi [tribes], hapū [sub-tribes] and whanau [extended families]. These allegiances were dynamic and relied on “persuasion, consent and voluntary acknowledgement of the customary rights of others” (Ballara, 1998, p.179).

Mead (2003) explains that tikanga “the set of beliefs associated with practices and procedures to be followed in conducting the affairs of a group or individual” determined the social norms on which effective governance relied. This determined what was right and wrong and provided a “right and proper way to conduct one’s self” (p.12). Tribal decisions enforced tikanga and “the chief’s authority over them [the people] was recognised only as long as they consented to it” (Ballara,1998, p. 206). Palmer (2021) compares the authority of the leaders

(rangatira) to that of a contemporary political leader within a political party, operating with the support of the caucus.

Knowledge was passed through reciting whakapapa [kinship relationships], karakia [blessing or prayer], whakataukī, [sayings to guide actions], waiata [songs] and korero [speech and conversation] (McCrae, 1998). Information, stories and connections were also held in landmarks, carvings, and performance (Kāretu 1992). The emphasis was on whanaungatanga [relationships] and whakapapa [genealogy and knowing your connection to place and within kinship groups] and offered a stark contrast to the contractual written rules dictating conduct and land ownership which were a cornerstone of European settlement behaviour which came to dominate governance structures after European settlement.

2.2.2 Early Māori and European history

From the late 1700s Māori noticed European ships off the coast. There are existing records of Russian French and Dutch ships (Abel Tasman in 1642) as well as that of the British, most notably Captain Cook's visit in 1769 (Ruru et al., 2019). These Europeans shared seeds and left animals such as cows and ship rats but did not put down roots and were likened to "kaahore i tupu te paa harakeke [the flax plantation that never grew]" (Hohepa, 1999, p.182). Much of this early interaction involved Europeans mapping resources such as kauri trees used in shipbuilding, identifying safe havens with friendly "natives" who were open to trade and could help replenish stocks of fish and freshwater, while also providing resources for ship maintenance. From a Māori perspective there was curiosity and interest in accessing European resources such as iron, domesticated animals and guns (Ollivier & Hingley, 1982).

The first Europeans to formally attempt settlement were from the Church Missionary Society in 1814 through Reverend Marsden. By establishing a Mission in the Bay of Islands he extended the reach of the Society which was already established in New South Wales, Australia. Through this settlement, Marsden and his fellow missionaries befriended the influential Māori chiefs Ruatara, Hongi Hika and Korokoro, amongst others, to support the creation of a foothold for the Church Missionary Society in New Zealand (Jones & Jenkins, 2017).

Aside from this, deserting sailors, whalers, sealers and people working in the fledgling flax and timber industries formed the bulk of non-Māori (Palmer, 2021). Often paid in alcohol they could pose a problem to the good order of local communities. To address the lawless and

drunken behaviour occurring by British Citizens outside territories controlled by the British, the British Parliament passed the Murders Abroad Act 1817 (UK), the first act to have effect in New Zealand. This was “an Act for the more effectual punishment of Murders and Manslaughters committed in Places not within His Majesty’s Dominions” (Chapter LIII) and was a response to the poor behaviour of sailors and whalers coming to land in New Zealand (Palmer, 2021).

In 1832 James Busby was appointed by the British to provide local leadership resulting in the signing by 34 indigenous leaders of He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene [The Declaration of the Independence] in 1835. This document contained four points clarifying that the governance role for the colony resided in the huihuinga [collective authority of the chiefs]. They further agreed to meet in Waitangi to make rules for the territories, and to acknowledge the British King’s role both in showing “friendship” to New Zealand, but also asking that he become “its protector from all attempts upon its independence” (Orange, 1987, p. 255). This formalised to some extent the role of Great Britain in managing their subjects on the land mass of New Zealand, while also enshrining a special relationship between the British Crown and Māori in light of the interest from other colonial powers in settling in New Zealand, particularly the French.

The British Crown found itself under increasing pressure from colonists seeking to buy and settle land in New Zealand. In 1839, Edward Gibbon Wakefield appealed to the British Government to provide protection to its New Zealand Company migrants and drafted up a plan of self-government. There was some urgency in these demands as land had been traded with Māori but there was no protection of land title. Wakefield, a British citizen with colonising interests and a well thought out plan for colonisation, forced the government’s hand by on selling the land to migrants and organising for boatloads of colonists to set sail from the United Kingdom to New Zealand. The British Government made it clear that the land claims were unsupported by legislation, but the Report to the Select Committee on New Zealand (House of Commons, 1844) points out that the Crown was left in a difficult position - concerned both about the welfare of the migrant population as well as potential abuses against the Māori population:

It is impossible for Her Majesty's Government to leave them [the colonists] exposed without protection to the dangers which their own rashness may draw down upon them, or to allow them to exercise, without control, and perhaps to abuse the power which their superior civilization gives them over the rude natives of the soil (p.iv).

The Select Committee also notes that the NZ company set out to:

Establish a colony, not only without the sanction, but in direct defiance of the authority of the Crown. This attempt led at once to a violation of the law by the first settlers entering into a voluntary agreement for the establishment of an authority by which they hoped, in the absence of any legitimate power, to maintain order amongst themselves (p.iv).

It was in response to this that the British government hastily drew up Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi which exists in a Māori and English version “written in 4 days and translated into Māori overnight” (Salmon et al.,2009, p.111). Both Te Tiriti o Waitangi [Te Tiriti], the Māori version, and the English version are recognised as official versions, although it is Māori version that was signed by the Crown’s representative, Hobson, and over 500 chiefs in 1840 (Hancock & Gover, 2002).

This treaty paved the way for Europeans to settle “en masse” in New Zealand but also enshrined Māori authority and jurisdiction over land and resources. The notion of whether sovereignty was ceded continues to be a contested issue for some. The Waitangi Tribunal Report (Wai 1040, 2014) He Whakaputanga me Te Tiriti/The Declaration and the Treaty, establishes that sovereignty was not ceded to the British. From a local government perspective, this has implications for who are the recognised decision-makers in allocating natural resources. Ruru et al. (2019) point out that:

For much of its history, the courts and successive governments did not recognize the Treaty as a document of legal, constitutional or political significance. This was reflected in court rulings and in political attitudes to the Treaty (p.214).

Māori were alienated from their land in a number of ways which relied on the authority of state in endorsing this process. Actions involved prohibitive taxes on collectively owned land, only allowing voting rights to landowners with individual rather than collective title (Shripton & Mulgan, 1921). There was a general perception that Māori were not making use of their lands and that it was therefore acceptable to “transfer of the waste lands to the Settlers, reserving only sufficient for the use of the Natives” (Sewell, 1869, p.4). This was combined with the seizing of land during the localised fighting of the 1860s, a process legitimised by The Native Lands Act in 1865 involving the confiscation of over two million acres of Māori land in the Auckland province (Stone, 2007). Four Māori seats were created in the house in 1868. Ruru et al. (2019), note that this should have been 14 or 15 seats to be proportionate to the Māori population at the time. The creation of Māori seats in Parliament was therefore also an act of limiting the franchise for Māori voters.

Subsequent to this, the courts failed to uphold Te Tiriti in its decisions, most notably *Wi Parata v The Bishop of Wellington* (1877) where Judge Predegast asserted that the Treaty:

Must be regarded as a simple nullity [because] in the case of primitive barbarians, the supreme executive Government must acquit itself, as best it may, of its obligation to respect native proprietary rights, and of necessity must be the sole arbiter of its own justice (Predegast 1877, as cited in Ruru, 2012).

These assertions allowed the principles of Te Tiriti to be progressively eroded in favour of New Zealand settlers for the next 100 years.

This short history has been provided to clarify the particular conditions of colonisation, where Māori governance authority was reduced, in violation of a signed understanding of the relationship between Māori and the Crown. The above also illustrates the lack of forethought in how New Zealand was settled by Europeans, as well as how the governance structures set up after 1840 were designed to reflect European societal organisation and to advantage and protect the interests of the migrants. The next section shows how increased recognition of Te Tiriti since the 1970s has emphasised an Iwi voice, in the allocation of natural resources, which is an important current function of local government.

2.2.3 Recognition of Māori rights under Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The 1970s and early 1980s saw an effective, nation-wide rise in Māori consciousness, and a recognition by the Crown of Māori rights under Te Tiriti. This began in 1975, with Dame Whinia Cooper leading a hīkoi [march] to Wellington to demand an end to alienation of Māori land (Ruru et al., 2019). This was followed by the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 which established the Waitangi Tribunal, to “make recommendations on claims made relating to the practical applications of the principles of the Treaty” (Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, preamble).

The Treaty of Waitangi Act, 1975 paved the way for increasing Māori input into resource management decisions and formal decision-making. This was reflected in the Resource Management Act, 1991 which formally acknowledges the duty of the Crown to recognize, as a matter of national importance “the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, [sacred sites] and other taonga [treasures which could be landmarks or artefacts] and some protections for indigenous vegetation” (s.6c), aspects of “historic heritage” (s.6f) and “customary rights” (s.6g). This recognition is increasingly recognised through the preparation of Cultural Values Assessments by Iwi in relation to the use of natural resources in a particular area.

Te Tiriti principles are also firmly embedded in the principles of the Resource Management Act 1991:

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (s.8)

While the above has been a welcome change to governance arrangements which recognises the specific relationship of Māori to the Crown, political influence has continued to determine how effectively legislation provides for Māori representation in practice. This is evident in the creation of Auckland Council (see section 2.3.4) where the Independent Māori Statutory Board was created to advise committees of the Auckland Council, but the process stop short of creating Māori wards to have an elected Māori voice within Auckland Council.

The above provides a background to the intersections between Māori and Auckland Council, much of which occurred at local board level. This includes engagement around the allocation of natural resources over which Iwi have authority and should be consulted in terms of use. Secondly, Māori continue to be recognised as a disadvantaged sector of the population and therefore benefit from community development initiatives. And thirdly, post-settlement treaty settlements mean that Māori entities increasingly have the potential to enter partnership agreements with Auckland Council (Auckland Council, 2022a).

2.3 Crown Government and Home Government: The early years

The following section provides the backdrop for how local government has come to exist in its current form in Auckland. Aside from the clash of Māori and indigenous culture in approaches to governance, early governance in New Zealand demonstrates the challenges posed by a settler population that was answerable to a colonial power located on the other side of the world. This is relevant as it illustrates the tensions between a centralised and localised approach to problem-solving which continues to play out in how resources are allocated between central government and local government.

Initially the laws of New South Wales, the nearest established British colony, were adopted for New Zealand which was treated as a sub-colony. Legislative and executive powers were vested in this representative of the Crown. His powers were “partly discretionary and partly defined by his [the governor’s] instructions. Until the Constitution Act 1852, the Crown

maintained its supreme authority by reserving a right of veto over all acts of its representative” (Shripton & Mulgan, 1921, p.93).

In the early colonial period central government was conflated with local government (Bush, 2008). As Shripton and Mulgan (1921) point out “in common parlance, the Crown Colony Government was termed the Local Government, to distinguish it from the Home Government to which it was subordinate” (p.93). The challenge of centralised governance for the colony was exacerbated by communication difficulties posed by the geographic distance between the main settlements, the rugged topography and disconnected infrastructure as well as the distance from the United Kingdom. It could take three weeks to a month to get from Auckland to Wellington, and ten to fifteen months for communications between New Zealand and the British Parliament. News could travel more quickly from Auckland to Wellington via ships to Sydney, than overland, if the wind speeds and direction were favourable (Shripton & Mulgan, 1921).

In order to maintain some cohesion in localised townships across the country, the Municipal Corporations Act 1842, provided for provincial government representation. It was under this legislation that Wellington became a borough and elected a Council on October 3rd, 1842, thus meeting the demands of the colonists for a representative government. However, in an early example of tensions between central and local decision-making where the centralised view prevailed, this was terminated by the Crown under a “notice of disallowance” in September 1843, (Shripton & Mulgan, 1921, p.98). Until the Constitution Act of 1852, New Zealand was therefore governed by the Colonial Governor and Commander in Chief fulfilling local, national and international responsibilities for the colony.

Tensions arose from settlers wanting the government to ensure land claims and provide protection of British citizens, while failing to understand the challenges faced by the Crown in doing so. Systematic appeals to the home government from settlers, resulted in passing of the New Zealand Government Act in August 1846 which provided for a Provincial Assembly and Legislative Council. Governor Grey “perceived insuperable objections to the enactment” and was apparently acutely aware of the “unjust disenfranchisement of the Maoris” (Shripton & Mulgan, 1921, p.101) in seeking a delay of five years in the creation of the Constitution Act. Again, we see the challenges posed by having to manage an aggressive settler population seeking autonomy including the right to buy and if not, occupy land, while being a minority of the population and failing to consider broader Māori interests.

2.3.1 Emergence of separate governance for the colony

The Constitution Act became legislation in 1852 and provided for a colonial legislature, with a governor and General Assembly and six provincial legislative bodies. The General assembly was made up of a legislative council elected from the provincial councils. This provided a way of addressing ongoing tension between the aspirations of the various settlements and providing a body to represent the colony to the powers in London, some way of addressing tensions around Māori and settlers, as well as engaging in some ad hoc infrastructure planning. The new Crown Colony Government was formally established in 1856 (Ruru et al., 2019, p.227).

The Auckland Borough was created in 1851 with “responsibilities including the police, schools and hospitals” (Salmon et al., 2009, p.114). The European population of Auckland which had been about 2,000 in 1840, now swelled to 9,156 (Bush, 2008). With this came the realisation that localised infrastructure was necessary but resentment from the settlers at having to pay for it. The City Board of Commissioners was established in 1862 and was the first local body to be able to collect a rate (Salmon et al., 2009) to pay for fledgling infrastructure requirements.

While seen as an essential step, the creation of a local body able to raise its own funds gave rise to the fear that decentralised power could lead to fragmentation. Acting Governor, Wynyard, speaking at the opening of Parliament in 1854 reflected on the dangers of the Provincial Councils obtaining too much power, stating that it was up to the General Assembly “whether New Zealand shall become one great nation, exercising a commanding influence in the Southern Seas or a collection of insignificant divided and powerless petty States” (Garnett, 1898 p.350). In 1866 the capital of the colony was shifted from Auckland in the North of the North Island to Wellington located at the South of the North Island and therefore a more central location. It was also considered wise given the tensions with Māori, particularly from Taranaki (located on the West Coast of the North Island) and northward (Waikato – Tauranga region to the East Coast of New Zealand and Wanganui). This was a consequence of what historians now term the New Zealand Wars, a series of localised battles and violent encounters over land ownership and where there was still some fear of insurgent attack (see Belich, 1996).

2.4 Key features of local government in New Zealand (1870-1974)

A number of aspects of the evolving local government landscape described above, continue to manifest in tensions apparent in the present iteration of local governance:

1. The exclusion of Māori from the franchise in the 1860s, as well as from decision-making and political thinking, so that the voice of communities was predominantly a settler voice demanding access to land and protection of their land rights while alienating Māori from both public and private resources.
2. A tension between the directives of an established state applying governance structures that were imported and untested within the bicultural conditions existing on the ground.
3. The challenge of reconciling the expectations of communities in New Zealand, living with a range of different challenges, with the centralised decision-making of a national government combined with the fear that decentralisation could lead to fragmentation.
4. The challenge of establishing appropriate functions of local government and developing a reliable way of determining how infrastructure should be paid for, and paying for this (whether through separate rates or central government funding allocation).

From the 1870s, local government structures started to stabilise and adopt the functions of local service delivery. In 1876 a national system of boroughs and counties came into effect with the abolition of the provincial system (Reid, 2016). This gave rise to 63 counties and 314 subordinate boards. Four were established in the Auckland area – Rodney, Waitemata, Eden and Manukau. Sinclair (1991) describes this as a “confused multitude of road boards, rabbit boards, drainage, harbour, hospital and education boards, borough, county and city councils, which have ever since managed local affairs” (p.160). Throughout the 1880s there were greater demands for infrastructure as the Auckland population increased to 51,000 in 1891 (Bush, 2008). Stone (2007) suggests that it was a belief in “economies of scale” (p.4) that encouraged a number of roads districts to amalgamate with Auckland City in 1882.

In the Auckland province, the next major restructuring occurred in the 1910s involving an extension of the Auckland boundaries into Parnell, Epsom and Grey Lynn and then in the 1920s to include Avondale and the Eastern Road districts of Orakei and West Tamaki. There was a focus on securing power through the Auckland Electric Power Board and water through the purchase of land in the Waitakare Ranges to access the water supply (Bush, 2008). By the

1920s this iteration of Auckland City Council “was the most progressive of all the councils in the region. It had purchased parks and constructed civic buildings and swimming pools, it had planned out an entire suburb, and built housing for low-income workers” (Salmon et al., 2009, p.117).

By 1926, there were 350 boards across New Zealand. In Auckland these included the Auckland Harbour Board, the Auckland Education Board, the Auckland Fire Board, and various roading boards:

The ad hoc model had the considerable virtue that, while avoiding treading on sensitive parochial toes, it enabled vital services or infrastructure to be provided in areas too small or impecunious to do it for themselves. What tended to be neglected, however, were cooperation and the wider metropolitan interest (Bush, 2008, p. 7).

This again illustrates the challenge of creating one model for the diversity of needs and functions across a geographically diverse area. It also illustrates how a multitude of governance bodies emerged to respond to different needs but then lacked coherence in how they related to each other. The changing of Auckland boundaries continues to be a feature of the Auckland area, as population growth outstrips that of the rest of New Zealand (Local Government Commission, 2017).

Attempts at co-ordinated regional decision-making for Auckland came in 1953 when the Auckland Regional Planning Authority was established, but it “lacked the means to implement its plans” (Salmon et al., 2009, p.118). This was replaced by the Auckland Regional Authority in 1963 under the visionary guidance of Dove-Myer Robinson. Covering 31 territorial local bodies it was Auckland’s “first step to multifunctional regional government” (Salmon et al., 2009, p.121) and took over the functioning of water, sewage and transport as well as civil defence and the international airport.

2.5 Influences behind the creation of Auckland Council

2.5.1 The reforms of the 1980s and 1990s

The next major reforms took place in the 1980s. The Fourth Labour Government (1984-1990) undertook significant structural reform of local government under Michael Bassett as the Minister for Local Government. These changes reflect an important ideological shift in New Zealand politics which saw the Labour Party embrace neoliberal tenets, including elements of New Public Management, under Roger Douglas as Minister of Finance in what became known

as Rogernomics (Hood & Jackson, 1991). In an attempt to improve efficiency “728 elected bodies were consolidated into 85 multi-purpose local authorities” through the Local Government Amendment Act (No 2) 1989 (Reid, 2016, p. 22). In Auckland, forty-four local bodies were amalgamated into four cities, three districts and a regional council (Shirley et al., 2015). According to Salmon et al. (2009) the 1989 reforms were the “first substantial restructuring of local government since the abolition of provincial government in 1876” (p.25). McKinlay (1998) points out that the Act introduced new expectations around consultation and accountability, particularly disclosure of information which were “clearly intended to act as constraints on local government activity” (p.3), the separation of regulatory from non-regulatory functions of government and the use of clear assessment measures to identify progress. The merit of these substantial policy shifts and challenges that arise from the processes of consultation and accountability are considered in the findings.

Overall however, the changes reflect the belief that the public sector is inefficient, and that public service can be run more efficiently if it is run like a private commercial business. The belief is that by modelling local government on business principles, contracts offered in a competitive open market drive down price and reduce costs for the ratepayer. People living in communities are reframed as customers, expecting accountable and transparent service which is delivered as cheaply as possible. This has an impact on how social outcomes and the public good is viewed. Firstly, these are no longer seen as a core focus of local government. Secondly, improvements can be difficult to quantify or evaluate unless they can be tagged to a marketable value (McKinlay, 1998; Kelsey 1995; Reid, 2016). Thirdly, running public services for private benefit can result in inconsistent service delivery where less profitable services (often in rural areas), are neglected in favour of better-used services.

This represents a fundamental shift in the perception of local government prior to the 1980s. Reid (2016) describes this as “tensions between different approaches to democracy, the relative roles of management and governance; and citizens’ desires to shape their own places versus the centre’s view of the national interest” (p.25). Kelsey (1999) refers to the actions taken by the central government at this time as “the New Zealand experiment” where “market liberalization and free trade, limited government, a narrow monetarist policy, a deregulated labour market, and fiscal restraint were taken as given, based on common sense and beyond challenge”. She also points out that “these radical policies were systematically embedded against change” so that we continue to experience the effects of New Zealand’s version of neoliberalism within local government.

The underlying ethos described above was translated into three “megatrends” (Naschold, 1997; Reid, 2016) in the New Zealand local government reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.

These include:

1. Internal rationalisation of councils including the standardisation of processes, accounting and performance measures;
2. Democratisation intended to increase public participation and accessibility;
3. Market orientation including the contestable processes for the awarding of contracts and the corporatisation and privatisation of local government services.

Reid (2016) identifies three further trends. These include:

4. Consolidation through the creation of larger units of local government;
5. Place-shaping rather than service provision as a new feature of local governance, (Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, 2007);
6. Recentralisation, where the role of elected representation is limited and local governments turn into “a form of decentralized service delivery agency” (p.15).

Through this process local government became framed as the “the provider of services as a last resort” (Asquith, 2016, p.206). This has further consequences today in how well local government is able to function, particularly when assets are sold, then limiting the ability of local government bodies to raise any revenue aside from that obtained through the rating system and making them more reliant on central government decision-making and funding.

The separation of governance from implementation was a key feature of the reforms. The newly named Chief Executives of local councils were assigned the role of employers of local authority staff whereas previously these had been employees of the elected council and answerable to elected members. The language of business entered the discourse of local government where:

Town clerks were replaced by chief executives, and public service standards and systems were overtaken by corporate goals such as strategic planning and performance appraisal. Infrastructure became assets, the public became clients and staff became human resources (Salmon et al., 2009, p.129).

Mayors and councillors were expected to focus on policy issues and on reviewing the performance of the Chief Executive of their council. The latter engaged with staff and ran the organisation to provide service delivery. In the changes, the role of elected members in relation to the CEO, and other areas such as community advocacy were poorly defined (McKinlay, 1998). Thus, a clear separation emerges between the duties and powers of the

elected members and the officers employed by the organisation, while also diluting the responsibilities of elected representation and failing to define this role with sufficient clarity. At the community governance level which local board members provide, the findings of this thesis reaffirm how this now normalised separation of governance and management is challenging for local board members to navigate.

The reforms also reflect the push for more transparency of governance decisions. The Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (1987) promoted increased transparency and enabled substantial access to local authority information by the public including rights of attendance to meetings. Consultation had been given formal status in the 716A of the Local Government Act 1974. The special consultative procedure required the local authority to publicly notify significant resource consent proposals and gave the public the opportunity to make written submissions and be heard in person. This included the right to be heard in relation to the spatial plan, long-term plans and annual plans of councils. It also included advice on how the sale of assets should be addressed. Under Section 594O of the Act “if a local authority proposes to divest itself of any undertaking that it regards as significant, it may deal with the proposal only in accordance with the special consultative procedure.” The importance of consultation continued to feature strongly in the development of the Local Government Act 2002. While consultation with the public has seemingly increased, with greater avenues for public participation through providing online feedback for example, the lack of formal opportunities to provide feedback as submissions, particularly from organisations who may be informed about a topic, has been eroded.

The Fourth National government (1990-1999) continued the local government reforms focusing on efficiency, accountability, transparency and centralisation. The drive for efficiency and the belief that the private sector would provide services more cost-effectively saw the Auckland Regional Council’s (ARC) powers increasingly reduced to fulfilling the role of regulator rather than managing Auckland’s assets. Transport, water, and ports services were all turned into lates (Local Authority Trading Enterprises) and the ARC was “expressly prohibited” from owning public transport infrastructure (Salmon et al., 2009, p.128). This period was also marked by a “compulsory corporatization” of electricity distributors, some of which were owned and managed by local authorities (McKinlay, 1998, p.4). McKinlay also points out that in the fervour to sell assets, there was almost no discussion of whether services should be provided by government:

The real issue which appeared to need decision was whether local authorities would be permitted to retain ownership of their trading activities once they had been

corporatised. Local government itself, seems to have, at least initially, taken the attitude that this was the issue which needed to be fought rather than the question of corporatisation itself. (McKinlay, 1998, p.14).

The resource management legislation was also reviewed around the same time, leading to the Resource Management Act 1991. The purpose of this legislation was to provide a framework for sustainable management of natural resources and to develop an integrated approach to planning which would minimise compliance cost and facilitate planning decisions which fall under the purview of local government. There was also a shift to an effects-based evaluation of impacts. McKinlay (1998) points out that the changes were “integral to the whole process of local government reform, especially as resource management is a major function of local government”(p.14).

Stricter accountability measures such as the introduction of annual planning documents and regularisation of reporting procedures and financial accounting measures were introduced through the Local Government Amendment (No 3) Act 1996. Increased transparency was seen as allowing the public to engage more meaningfully with local government decision-making that was often seen as opaque. However, McKinlay (1998) notes that the drive towards public accountability eroded the public service function of local government, and created a system that was “almost dysfunctional in the extent to which it denies local authorities the opportunity of developing options, in an informed way, before they get into the public arena” (p.25). Thus, the effects of New Public Management reforms have affected the ability of local authorities to act in the public good, particularly when consultation can be used by particular interest groups may sway decisions in ways that do not serve communities well.

A further drive in the reforms was one of centralisation with the business lobby seeking stronger direction from a single authority rather than having to deal with a plethora of regulations at the local level, with respect to consenting and transport decisions particularly. The Auckland Transport Action Group, for example, “presented a report to the Prime Minister asking for a single decision-making and priority setting process for regional transport projects, and for the mandatory implementation of the regional land transport strategy” (Bush, 2008, p.130). These issues of consultation, accountability, transparency and the separation between governance and management realms emerge as important in the way local board members discuss their role.

2.5.2 The Local Government Act 2002

The current purpose, functions and responsibilities of local government in New Zealand are set out in the Local Government Act 2002 and its amendments. This legislation was developed by the Fifth Labour Government (1999 to 2008). The purpose of local government, as stated in the Act, is to “provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities” (s.3, Local Government Act 2002). It establishes a framework and powers for local authorities to do this. Of relevance to the local boards created under Auckland Council is that local government:

3(c) promotes the accountability of local authorities to their communities; and
3(d) provides for local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of their communities, taking a sustainable development approach.

At the same time as, local government was expected to play a bigger role in representing communities, there was continued support for more assets to be held and commercially managed by Council Controlled Organisations, rather than be under the direct decision-making powers of elected members. As a consequence of this, Ports of Auckland and the Wynyard Precinct were transferred to Auckland Regional Holdings in 2004 (Auckland Regional Holdings, 2010). Roper (2021) points out that while proponents of the legislation advocated for a third way with a focus on social outcomes while allowing the market to regulate the economy, what actually eventuated represents a continuation of public management reforms with a focus on accountability and transparency in decision-making, with some interest in community engagement through consultation.

The following addresses some of the issues which arise in terms of decision-making and the representation of a community voice which stem from the Local Government Act, 2002. Given that Local Boards are modelled to a degree on community boards which they have replaced in the Auckland area, it is important to clarify how these fit into the governance landscape of local government in New Zealand.

The place of community boards

Community boards were provided for in the local government legislation of 1989 and 2002 and continue to exist around New Zealand. Richardson (2008), notes that community boards are “odd creatures ... Not ‘legal persons’ independent of council and yet dependent on council... elected but not accountable for anything” (p.424).

The roles and functions of community boards were determined by three different influences. Firstly, the New Public Management model of governance promotes a watchdog or accountability function for community boards, scrutinising government spending and promoting efficiencies on local councils. Secondly, a classical view of social capital views community boards working towards a common purpose which includes engaging with communities and building social capital. Thirdly, there is a focus on localised decision-making following the loss of autonomy created by the local government reforms where independent county and district councils were subsumed into larger city councils. Community boards have a dual role, either seeking to “support council in its decision-making or to challenge and scrutinise its performance” (Richardson, 2008, p.390).

In an evaluation of the functioning of the community boards across New Zealand Richardson (2008), also notes significant differences in the ways community boards operate and the functions and responsibilities they have held. These include whether they are able to raise revenue through rates, the level of administrative support and trust existing with their council staff and elected members, as well as the level of public engagement with the boards. In 2008, forty-six of the seventy-three city and district councils throughout New Zealand had established community boards, with thirteen having systematic coverage, and the rest only having partial coverage of territorial areas by community boards. The Auckland area, covered by the proposed Auckland Council, was served by thirty community boards and four city boards with variability in how well these functioned (Richardson, 2008).

From interviews with staff and elected members, Richardson (2008) identifies the Waitakare City Council community boards as the most engaged and effective of the legacy community boards (those existing prior to the formation of Auckland Council in 2010). Systematic processes meant they were able to consider the content of issues going to the Waitakare City Council and were well-supported through staff and formalised engagement mechanisms such as consultation processes.

The Auckland City Council community board members are described as generally frustrated with the way officers were increasingly tasked with managing community boards.

I take a moment here to identify those frustrations as they captured the views of staff and elected members ten years prior to the research for this study:

1. The boards are not seen as integral to the governance and public engagement with their areas. Board boundaries change, and community service support is progressively whittled away.

2. The culture of the organisation of Auckland City Council means that staff are antipathetic to boards, change frequently, there is an extensive use of consultants, the organisation lacks transparency and is dominated by a power elite.
3. The calibre of local board candidate is felt to be weak, with few able to dedicate time or the role thus attracting single issue, ineffectual candidates or people who know little about communities they represent. The salary of NZD 10,000 to NZD 12,000 exacerbated the issue (Richardson, 2008, p. 421).

Also mentioned was the way in which officers dealt with individual board members as delegated decision-makers (portfolio holders) for board decisions, rather than ensuring that decisions had full community board support. The biggest, and all-encompassing challenge was “the fight against irrelevance,” with community stakeholders and members of the public going straight to the administration or Councillors to resolve issues, rather than engaging with the community boards. Richardson (2008) advocates strongly in his recommendations to the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance for a change in the way they operate as “they are expensive in indirect costs and staff resource and add little real value, least of all to addressing the complex issues the council needs to be focused on addressing” (p.423).

As noted earlier, these community boards were used as a basis for the development of local boards within Auckland Council. The intention was that there would be clearer legislative responsibilities and delegations for local boards which would overcome the identified shortcomings of community boards (Salmon et al., 2009). For one, local boards would be resourced appropriately for them to carry out their role. Contrary to the intent, the findings show how the legislative responsibilities remain unclear and there continues to be tensions between officers and elected members as well as continued variability in the skills of elected members. Effective resourcing of the boards by Auckland Council is also an ongoing issue. Further, the practice of shared decision-making is a source of considerable frustration for local board members.

The role of elected members

According to the Local Government Act 2002, local government entities should “ensure that the relationship between elected members and the management of the local authority is effective and understood” (s.39e). However, the Act fails to provide clarity in the councillor role despite significant advocacy work by Local Government New Zealand (Drage, 2008). The only specific demands of the councillor role in the Act includes a) ensuring that not more than

four consecutive meetings are missed, b) needing to be a qualified elector to stand c) needing to declare financial interests and d) disqualification from office in the case of conviction. Instead, the Act contains governance principles which are expected to be clarified within the governance statements and codes of conduct for elected members to be developed by local authorities themselves. In the absence of clear directives within the legislation, Local Government New Zealand has supported local authorities to interpret the legislation and provide training and a Good Governance Guide to help elected members perform their role (Local Government New Zealand, 2022).

The effectiveness of consultation

While desirable to understand community voices, the value of community consultation provided for under the Local Government Act has been questioned. McKinlay (1998), for example, points out that in making submissions, the public have assumed that they are taking part in a genuine debate of the issue and that their views will influence the outcome. However, the consultation is often sought at a stage when there is little likelihood of significantly altering a proposal. This can lead to public frustration and disillusionment with local government decision-making, particularly when projects go through sustained public opposition.

Thus, although community boards provide the lowest tier of democratic representation within local government, the legislation around them has been vague leaving councils and Local Government New Zealand to create policies around these. This has resulted in variability in how well these function, and the strength of the community voice at the seat of the various council decision-making tables. The above also illustrates the tensions generated by separating governance and management decisions. Given that local boards have to an extent replaced the community boards, albeit with slightly different powers, this debate features prominently in the experience of local board members in the findings of the present research.

2.5.3 The Royal Commission on Auckland Governance

In 2007, The Fifth Labour government, led by Helen Clark, established a Royal Commission to develop an optimal governance structure for Auckland as New Zealand's largest city. This would address the continued and unresolved problems of "continued growth, patchy infrastructure, and international competition" (Salmon et al., 2009, p.111). The report in four volumes includes a number of background papers on different aspects of the challenges facing Auckland, the experience of Auckland governance to date and how specific provisions could

be made for Māori representation for example. It also received over 3,500 public submissions. The main infrastructure challenges facing the region were identified as a need for public transport and affordable housing stemming primarily from the demands of unprecedented population growth to over 1.3 million by 2006 (Mein, 2008).

The Royal Commission identified two key issues that needed immediate action. One was the need for regional planning to meet the demands of future population growth. The second highlighted that (both as a function of its population, and as New Zealand's economic powerhouse) Auckland needed particular governance structures to facilitate future planning.

The intention of this significant restructure was to provide a unified and strong regional decision-making body. It was argued that this was the only way to overcome the parochialism of the seven smaller councils (Duncan, 2016; Shirley et. Al. 2015). The Royal Commission, in developing its report was guided by four principles:

1. Common identity and purpose (developing a regional identity and integrated planning);
2. Effectiveness (delivering maximum value for cost and in terms of democratic representation);
3. Transparency and accountability (defining decision-making roles); and
4. Responsiveness (respecting and accommodating a diversity of views and communities) (Salmon et al., 2009, p.5).

Of note is that the Royal Commission report also highlighted that “environmental and social goals can no longer be seen as being in competition with economic goals, but must all be viewed as part of an integrated strategy essential to Auckland's prosperity” (Salmon et al., 2009, p.5). The importance of the four well-beings (social, economic, environmental, and cultural) that were identified in the Local Government Act 2002, as well as the importance of addressing inequity were also emphasised.

2.5.4 The Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009

The findings of the Royal Commission were used to inform the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, which establishes specific legislation to create the Auckland Council. While the reforms had cross party input, it fell to the Fifth National government, elected for three terms (2008-2017) to pass the Act after coming to power in 2008. While in power the National government had a confidence and supply arrangement with United Future (a socially conservative party), The ACT Party (supporting neo-liberal approaches to governance) and the

Māori Party (focused predominantly on furthering Māori aspirations) (Arseneau & Roberts, 2021). Notably, the coalition government gave the responsibility for reforming local government to Rodney Hide, ACT leader and Minister of Local Government from 2008 to 2011, who had already been vocal about his aspirations about “getting government out of our lives, and out of our pockets” (Hide, 2006). Hide was keen to reduce government spending to the bare minimum with a focus only on infrastructure and key services such as waste management. While the importance of community well-being had been emphasised by the Royal Commission, practical measures to enshrine these in the legislation were ignored, the Minister preferring to support the neoliberal orthodoxy of “small” government (Duncan, 2016). At the same time, the Royal Commission proposal for three councillors to represent Māori was rejected. However, as coalition partners in the government, the Māori Party successfully negotiated for the creation of the Independent Māori Statutory Board to ensure Māori viewpoints were provided for in new model for Auckland’s governance.

The National-led government of 2008-2017 passed a series of amendments to the Local Government Act (2002) which systematically dismantled provisions for meaningful community engagement. An example of the difference in values can be seen in the removal of the four well-beings as a purpose of the Act and its replacement with the following:

3(d) provides for local authorities to play a broad role in meeting the current and future needs of their communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions (s.4, Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012).

The Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Acts 2010, 2012 and 2014 all weakened the special consultative procedure to emphasise the process of engagement while removing obligations for systematic community engagement. Hence, the long-term community plan became the long term-plan and was reframed as a budgetary accountability measure rather than a plan to reflect community aspirations. Currently, this is referred to as the 10 year budget by Auckland Council, distancing it a step further from community engagement (Auckland Council, 2021b). In addition, Sections 91 and 92 which provided specifically for community outcomes were removed from the Local Government Act 2002. One positive feature was a better description of what the public could expect in terms of feedback with greater detail on the nature of the reports that needed to be provided. As an aside, the Labour government which followed (2017-2023) replaced the original wording relating to the four well-beings through section 4 of the Local Government (Community Well-being) Amendment Act 2019.

The Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 established a new governance structure and planning regime, including a strategic vision and a spatial plan, specifically for Auckland. In the final legislation, the Auckland Council (colloquially referred to as the Supercity) replaced seven well-established territorial authorities (Auckland City Council, Franklin District Council, Manukau City Council, North Shore City Council, Papakura District Council, Rodney District Council, Waitakare City Council) and the Auckland Regional Council. As one of six unitary authorities in New Zealand, it has replaced both the territorial authorities (city and district councils) and the regional authority (Auckland Regional Council). In so doing Auckland Council has become the largest unitary authority in Australasia.

The above illustrates how the choices that eventuated in the design of Auckland Council were heavily influenced by a neoliberal ideological drive to minimise the role of local government. Despite the recommendations made by the Royal Commission, local government's role in delivering core services was emphasised at the expense of community well-being and social outcomes. The importance of addressing inequality was most recently emphasized in the Auckland Council Pre-election Report (2022a). The lack of focus on social outcomes is noticeable in the kinds of experiences local board members describe in the findings in Chapter Six. In the following section the function and structure of Auckland Council will be discussed in more detail.

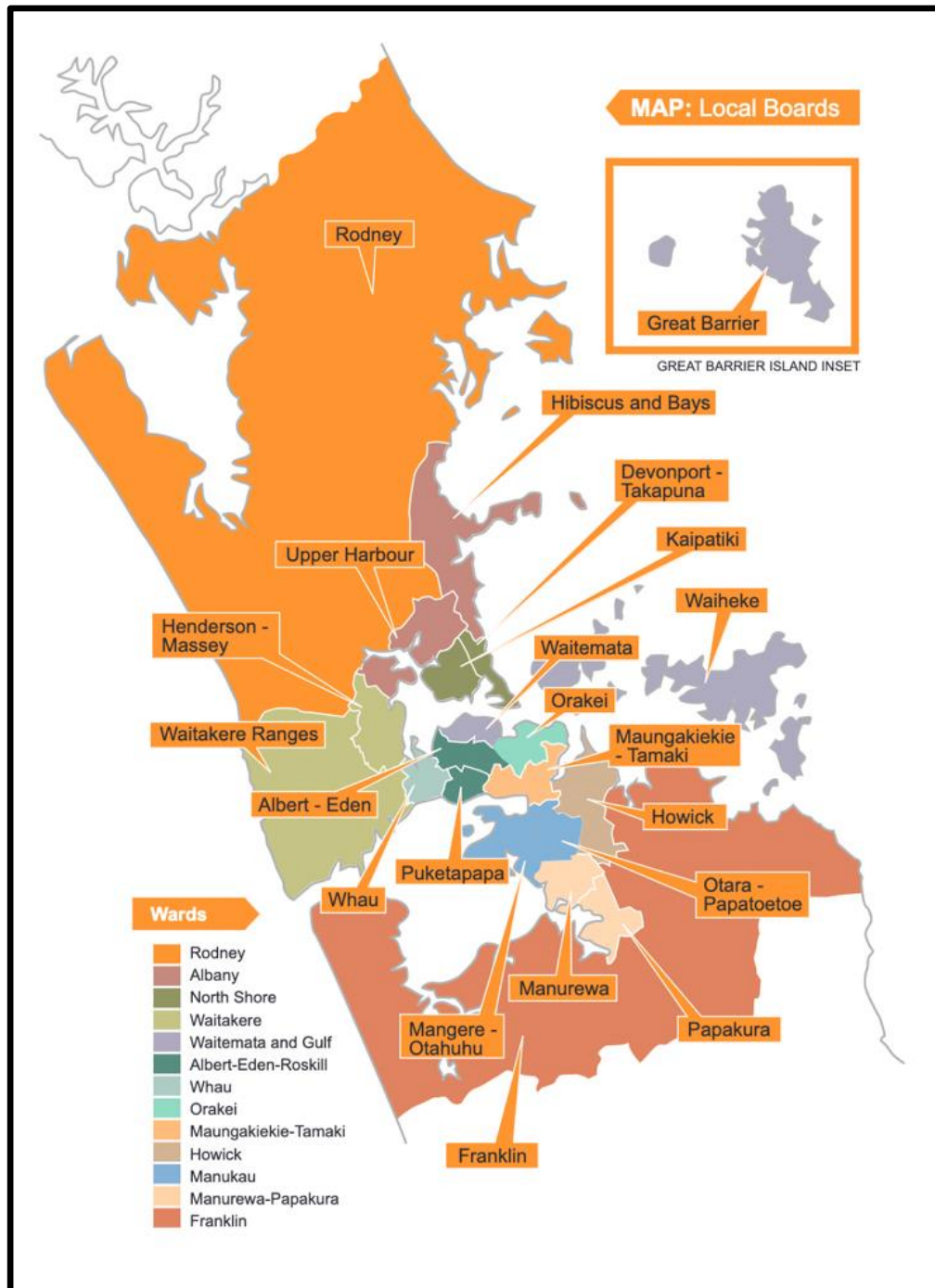
2.6 Understanding how Auckland Council is structured

2.6.1 Overview

The current iteration of Auckland Council, divides Auckland into 13 ward areas for a population of 1.42 million in 2013 increasing to 1.57 million in 2018 (Statistics New Zealand, n.d. -a). Each ward area elects one or two ward councillors, depending on the size of the ward area and led by the mayor who is elected by the wider Auckland populace and has no ward responsibilities. The twenty ward councillors and the mayor make up the governing body which is responsible for regional decision-making. Twenty-one local boards of between five and nine elected members, making a total of 149 representatives across the Auckland area. The funding and decision-making responsibilities are allocated to local boards by the governing body which is a unique iteration of local government for the Auckland area. These twenty-one local boards replace thirty community boards and while there are some similarities in the ways these operate, there are differences in decision-making responsibilities as will be seen below.

Figure 2.1

Auckland Council ward and local board areas



Note. Great Barrier was renamed Aotea/Great Barrier in 2018. Auckland Council (n.d. -i). Reprinted from "Map Local Boards". Retrieved June 1, 2023 from <https://www.watercare.co.nz>. Copyright 2023, by Auckland Council.

Ward and local board boundaries were negotiated so that "communities of interest" (Salmon et al., 2009, p. 413) where residents feel a shared sense of belonging could be kept together. Ward boundaries were therefore made to coincide with barriers created by motorways, rivers or volcanic cones. The Auckland Council area includes two island boards, (Waiheke and Aotea Great Barrier), two boards that are primarily rural and cover large areas, (Franklin and

Rodney), high density central city suburbs, and also some mixed density growth areas.

Initially, the local board boundaries and the ward boundaries aligned so that, for example, the Ōrākei ward area corresponded with the Ōrākei local board area. The difference in numbers on boards, and wards relates to population and geographic areas. So, for example, the Waiheke Local Board and the Aotea Great Barrier local board have a combined population of less than 15,000 and have been assigned to the Waitemata and Gulf Ward area.

Seven of the local board areas are divided into subdivisions, while eight ward areas cover more than one local board area. This adds to the confusion for electors who may be voting for different permutations of ward councillors and local board members while living on adjacent streets. Elections occur every three years, when property owners and residents are asked to vote for the mayor of Auckland, a ward councillor and between five and nine local board members (depending on the size of the electorate or the subdivision). Rodney, for example elects nine representatives across four subdivisions to ensure the opportunity for local representation across the ward area. The largest number come from the more densely populated Kumeū area but provision is also made for Dairy Flat, a sparsely populated area to select a candidate to represent them. In the same election, electors can vote for members of licensing trusts and, until the 2019 election, when these were abolished, electors also voted for their District Health Board representatives.

While all citizens and permanent residents have a vote in local elections, ratepayers are entitled to vote in each local board area where they own property and can therefore vote in different local board elections. For example a ratepayer with a house in the North Shore local board electorate and a house on Waiheke Island (a separate Auckland local board area) would be entitled to voting papers in both those rating areas. It is argued that this is an outdated practice which conflicts with notions of democracy that confer one vote to each adult elector (Molineaux, 2019).

The representative ratios (number of electors for each candidate that is elected) for Auckland are significantly higher than for other parts of New Zealand and have increased over time. Drage (2008) reported representative ratios of one to 9,433 (p.105) whereas the Auckland Council Determination (Local Government Commission, 2019) reports ratios of 11,123 on average. The highest figure of 1 per 16,688 is in the Howick Local Board area, where nine local board members represent a population of 150,200 people. Meanwhile, some wards in Auckland Council can have higher representative ratios than general electorates. In 2018, the Waitemata and Gulf ward consisted of 119,100 people, (Local Government Commission,

2019) whereas the Auckland Central general electorate, covering a part of the same geographic area, had a population of 62,919 in the 2018 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2019c). In recognition of the disproportionately high numbers of people in the Waitemata and Gulf Ward, and the Local Government Commission Determination in 2010 that Auckland should have no more than 20 ward areas and to keep all wards within a 10% population of each other, ward boundaries were changed in 2019 (Local Government Commission, 2019).

This issue has added to the challenges for both the elector and elected members. Adjoining streets which have experienced local board boundary changes, now find themselves electing a different ward councillor and/or find themselves in a different local board area, but with the same councillor as before. Changing boundaries adds to the difficulties in local place-making activities and consultation. It also makes it difficult for local board members to consolidate support and develop relationships with communities whose boundaries change (Niall, 2018).

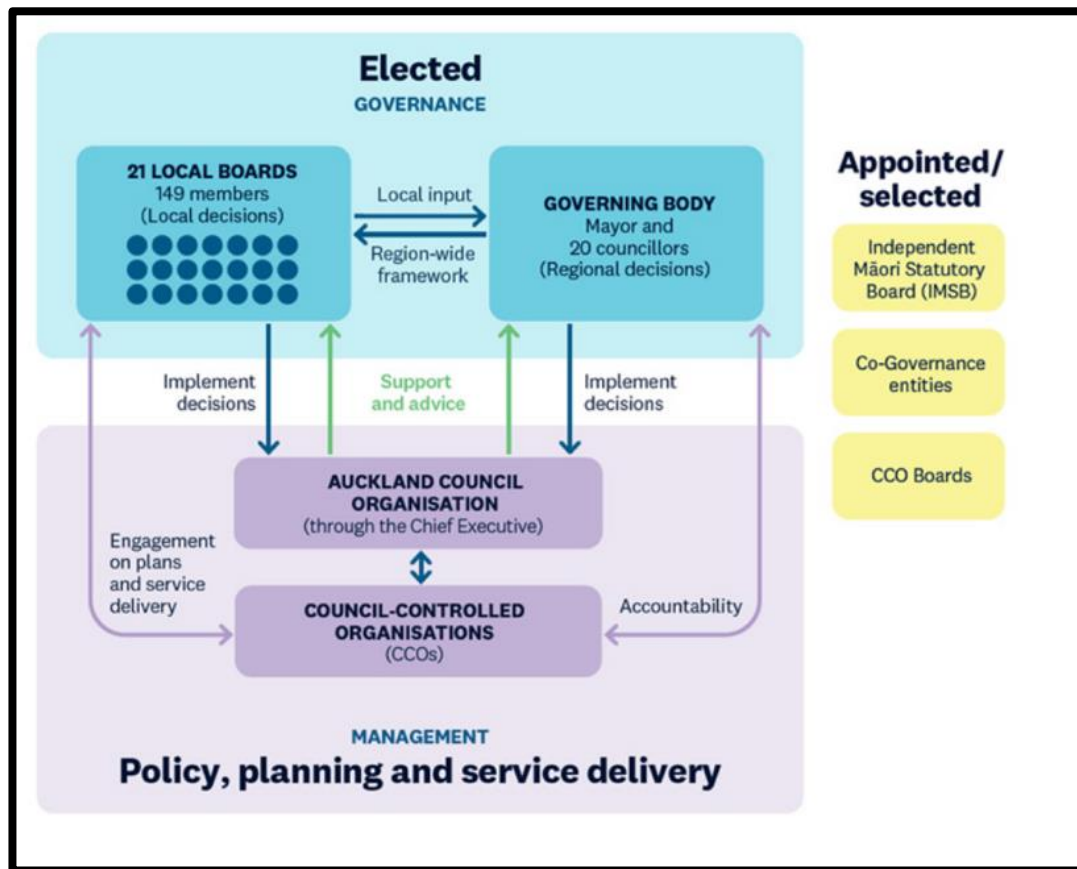
The following section contains more detail about the decision-making roles within Auckland Council, how the elected member roles are differentiated across wards and local boards and how these interact with the Council administration and Council Controlled Organisations.

2.6.2 Auckland Council's decision-making structure

The different components that make up Auckland Council's decision-making structure are presented in Figure 2.2. This illustrates that the local boards have elected decision-making responsibilities which are shared with the governing body, but also articulates how there are several decision-making and advisory areas within Auckland Council which affect local board areas but over which they have little decision-making authority.

Figure 2.2

Auckland Council model of local government



Note. Reprinted from Auckland Council Explained, by Auckland Council (n.d.-c). Retrieved May 1, 2023 from <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-councilworks/Pages/auckland-council-explained.aspx>. Copyright 2023, by Auckland Council.

The Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 identifies Auckland as having a shared model of governance where “the decision-making responsibilities of the Auckland Council are shared between the governing body and the local boards” (s.7[b]). The notion of shared decision-making in elected representation in Local Government was a new concept with New Zealand legislation and does not signify that the two voices carry equal weight. The allocation of decision-making responsibilities is explained below. Adding to the complexity of decision-making, decisions which affect local communities can be made within CCOs, CCO boards, and within the Auckland Council administration which have no oversight from elected members. All of these have the power to affect communities in quite significant ways. The number of decision-making realms creates the potential for decisions which conflict (particularly local board and regional priorities). The following section will clarify the role of each of the above entities and aspects of the organisation and how their work interacts with or influences the decision-making of local boards.

2.6.3 The mayor

Under the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, the mayor of Auckland is the highest elected representative holding a unique range of powers. These involve “articulating and promoting a vision for Auckland” (s.9[1][a]). Aside from leading the statutory planning processes including the Long-term plan, they are tasked with engaging with the people of Auckland, specifically “including those too young to vote”(s.9[2][b]), establish committees of Auckland Council councillors to which they can either appoint themselves as chair or nominate the chair person. In the 2016 term there were ten committees of Council (Forbes, 2019a).

The mayor also has a discretionary budget which is “an amount not less than 0.2% of the Council’s total budgeted operating expenditure for that year” (Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, s.9 [4][b]). In 2018, Auckland Council had an operating expenditure of NZD 4,015 million (Auckland Council Annual Budget, 2019/2020 [2019a]), thus the mayor’s budget was NZD 8.03 million. This allows the mayor to employ advisors, seek advice or lead initiatives independently of the advice received through the chief executive. Furthermore, the mayor has a key role in nominating directors for CCOs (Auckland Council, n.d. -d). As the figurehead of New Zealand’s largest city and economic hub, they also lobby on behalf of Auckland to central government on issues of regional importance. Notwithstanding the above, the mayor only has one vote at the decision-making table, admittedly the casting vote in the case of a tie, and needs the collaboration of the 20 councillors to pass resolutions (Molineaux & Asquith, 2022).

The first mayor of Auckland Council, Len Brown (2010-2016), was previously the mayor of Manukau City Council, one of the legacy councils that predated Auckland Council. As the mayor of Auckland, he prioritised the delivery of the Unitary Plan, developed a 30 year transport plan and started the City Rail Link project (Niall, 2016). The second mayor, Phil Goff (2016-2022), championed the Natural Environment Targeted Rate and Climate Action Targeted Rate, and focused on improved water quality for Aucklanders as well as encouraging a move to cycling and public transport (Auckland Council, 2019c). Wayne Brown, the third mayor of Auckland elected in 2022 stood as “Mr Fix It” (McConnell, 18 September, 2022). While his vision may appear to lack clarity, there does seem to be a focus on small government and leaving the administration to do the work with less scrutiny from elected members. In one of his first actions as the mayor, he has reduced the committees of the whole of the governing body from four in the previous term to two, and reduced the total

number of committees from twelve to eight (Kvigstad, 2022b). Thus, a measure of success at the governing body level includes how well the Mayor is able to mobilise ward councillors to support his initiatives (see below), and how well he is able to use the Mayoral funds to solve issues facing Auckland.

2.6.4 The governing body

The governing body consisting of the twenty councillors and the mayor is responsible for the regional governance decisions of Auckland Council. The governing body delegates its responsibilities to committees of the whole of the governing body, and to the staff through the Chief Executive. In the 2016-2019 term, the period during which this study takes place, the governing body made decisions as a committee of the whole and the following main committees: Finance and Performance; Regulatory; Audit and Risk; Strategic Procurement; Planning; Environment and Community; Community Development and Safety; Strategic Procurement; Appointments, Performance Review; and Value for Money; Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group (Forbes, 2019a). All regulatory functions lie with the governing body, and section 17 of the Auckland Council 2009 Act makes it clear that the allocation of non-regulatory decision-making responsibilities also lies with the governing body.

The governing body also delegates responsibilities to its council-controlled organisations (CCOs) through a statement of intent which includes the power to “acquire and dispose of council assets” (Auckland Council n.d. -d, s.10.3.4). It is also able to delegate some regulatory functions to the local boards, for example, input into resource consent applications. The priorities of the local boards should be considered in governing body decisions. As such, while the decision-making is described as “shared” the allocation of any decision-making to local boards is the responsibility of the governing body, who also have responsibility for setting the budgets and making region-wide decisions which can override local decisions. This potential source of friction will be explored in the findings of the present study.

2.6.5 Local boards

Given that the focus of this study is to explore the experiences of local board members, it is important to consider how local boards are provided for within the legislation. As noted above local boards have between five and nine elected members. They generally live within their communities and are responsible for local decision-making. The description of local boards

and their specific functions can be found in various parts of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009. The Act sets out the purposes of local boards as:

10 (a) enabling democratic decision making by, and on behalf of, communities within the local board area; and (b) better enabling the purpose of local government to be given effect to within the local board area.

Section 16 sets out the specific decision-making responsibilities of local boards:

16 (1) Each local board is responsible and democratically accountable for—
(a) the decision making of the Auckland Council in relation to the non-regulatory activities of the Auckland Council that are allocated to the local board in accordance with section 17; and
(b) identifying and communicating the interests and preferences of the people in its local board area in relation to the content of the strategies, policies, plans, and bylaws of the Auckland Council; and
(c) identifying and developing bylaws specifically for its local board area, and proposing them to the governing body under section 24; and
(d) the agreement reached with the governing body (as set out in the local board agreement) in respect of local activities for its local board area.

The specific decision-making is therefore identified as threefold: in relation to non-regulatory activities within board areas, leading public engagement and providing accountability for decisions they make through the local board agreement.

The non-regulatory activities over which the local boards have decision-making authority are defined as “providing services; providing and operating facilities; and providing funding and other support to groups and organisations” (s.4). This is primarily carried out through the prioritisation of activities made in the local board plan and the allocation of local board discretionary funding.

Although detail is provided on public engagement in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, this is expressed in vague terms. In exercising their responsibilities local boards “must communicate with community organisations and special interest groups within its local board area” (s.13[c]), with no clarification as to the purpose or nature of this communication. The requirement to consult is mentioned under the label of general scheme section 14, which like section 16, emphasises that the consultation must occur in relation to the plans and non-regulatory activities - as opposed to capturing the needs and aspirations of the community more broadly:

14(c) To determine local wishes and priorities in relation to [my emphasis] the non-regulatory activities for which a local board is allocated responsibility, the board must consult its communities. The local board does this by preparing a local board plan under section 20. This plan is used as a basis for the board to develop an annual local

board agreement with the governing body under section 21 in which the nature, levels, and funding of the activities are set out.

In practice, consultation is carried out to develop a local board plan (every 3 years) and local board agreements (yearly budgets).

The accountability of the board takes two forms, hence echoing the dual role noted by Richardson (2008) in relation to community boards. Section 16(b) talks of the board being held accountable. Section 13(b) suggests the board itself has an accountability function in monitoring and evaluating the work of Auckland Council in delivering the outcomes and “must monitor and report on the implementation of the local board agreement for its local board area.”

The Auckland Council Governance Statement (Auckland Council, 2020a) identifies Auckland Council’s obligations under various applicable acts, including the Health and Safety Act, 2015. These relate primarily to advocacy and compliance issues rather than decision-making areas and there is therefore no control over whether ideas will be either endorsed or implemented by the governing body, staff or within the CCOs. The board also undertakes functions delegated by Auckland Transport (s.13f). To date, no decisions have ever been delegated by Auckland Transport to the local boards.

Other functions of the local boards include the ability to propose a targeted rate to be approved by the governing body and provide input into regional plans. While initially local boards had the ability to make local bylaws, this was repealed by the Local Government Amendment Act 2014, thus reducing the authority of the boards for local decision-making. Local boards now advocate to the governing body to develop bylaws.

Provision is also made for local boards to “consider and report on any matter of interest or concern to the local board, whether or not the matter is referred to it by the governing body”. (Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, s.13e). This provides authority for the responsiveness to non-statutory requests from the public and the seeking of accountability functions of the board for which there is little specific provision in the Act.

Two issues limit the effectiveness of local board decision-making. In order to distinguish between decisions that fall under the governing body or the local boards, s.17(2)(a) notes that the subsidiarity principle should apply: “Decision-making responsibility for a non-regulatory activity of the Auckland Council should be exercised by its local boards.” The governing body,

makes the decisions “if the nature of the activity is such that decision-making on an Auckland-wide basis will better promote the well-being of the communities across Auckland,” (section 17(2)(b)). The tension between the governing body’s ability to decide if an activity is region-wide and the desire for subsidiarity is explored in the findings. Like the governing body, the local boards also delegate responsibility to the staff through the chief executive by way of the Local Boards’ Delegation Protocols (Auckland Council, n.d. -f, 3.5.3). This is a general delegation to the chief executive, subject to a list of terms and conditions that staff are required to abide by when exercising delegated authority. While the delegations are there to promote efficiency, the result is that significant decisions affecting local board areas are made within the bureaucracy with little ability for the local boards to advocate or influence the decision.

As a result, there is significant complexity in the way the local board role is described and the function of local boards as well as the status of their decision-making. The findings of this study shed light on how well this all works in practice with local board members primarily reflecting on their experience of shared decision-making (working with the governing body); their experience of dual decision-making (working with the Auckland Council bureaucracy); how effectively matters that arise both within and outside the statutory processes are addressed.

Before turning to how local boards interact with Auckland Council administration, the focus turns to two areas of decision-making which occur under the Auckland Council umbrella but make decisions independently of the administration. These include CCOs and the Māori Statutory Board.

2.6.6 Auckland’s Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs)

Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) are identified within the Local Government Act 2002 (section 6) as parts of Auckland Council that operate a trading undertaking for the purposes of delivering commercial services with a single focus, and to be able to deliver specific projects by liaising with key central government agencies (Salmon et al., 2009, pp.8-15). According to the CCO Review (Dean et al., 2020) in Auckland “they account for two-thirds of the Auckland Council’s services to the public, control two-thirds of its assets and absorb half of it’s [sic.] Operational budget” (p.1).

Through the amalgamation processes that created the Auckland Supercity, about 40 existing CCOs were merged into seven substantial CCOs (Dean et al., 2020). Each of the seven CCOs has its own board of directors, paid staff and an appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Following a merger between Auckland Council Property Limited and the Auckland Waterfront Development Agency to form Panuku Development Auckland, there were six CCOs operating in 2016: Auckland Transport (transport infrastructure and services); Watercare (safe water and wastewater infrastructure and services); Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development who create business opportunities alongside developing tourism and large event opportunities; Panuku Development Auckland who manage the Auckland Council property portfolio; Regional Facilities Auckland who manage stadiums and regional cultural assets such as museums; Auckland Council Investments Limited who hold Auckland Airport and Ports of Auckland shares. The CCO Review (Dean et al., 2020), challenges the view that CCOs solely serve commercial purposes even though they are responsible for managing the bulk of Auckland Council's assets:

Too much has been made of the notion that CCOs are commercial entities. They are not. Some of their activities are commercial in nature and they must often exercise commercial judgement and business expertise, but at heart they are community-owned entities that exist to provide services to those who partly or wholly fund them – Aucklanders. As a result they must be more conscious of community expectations and appropriately balance commercial and public interest (p.1).

The service delivery of the CCOs is funded through a combination of rates and other revenue sources including charging for certain services and funding from central government. This further complicates decision-making responsibilities and accountability. Decisions made in one arena can have negative consequences in another. Thus, for example, a decision to build a road can be supported by the governing body (Auckland Council) and Auckland Transport but be opposed by the local community or underfunded by central government through Waka Kotahi, the NZ Transport Authority. As Shirley et al. (2015) point out, the CCO model seems to have replaced the previous, heavily criticised geographic silos of the legacy councils, with functional silos where “assets and services operate independently from the rest of the council structure”(p.26). The challenge of moving projects forward is illustrated by the ongoing tensions between rail, road and cycling infrastructure which all compete for limited funding (Donnell, 2022).

The CCO Review 2020 judged the current CCO system to be the best way of managing Council assets. However, the question posed in the introduction to the review still resonates: “Has the CCO model delivered council services with a maximum of operational efficiency, transparency

and accountability or were there better ways to deliver such services?” (Dean et al., 2020, p.10). The Review commented on the lack of efficiency of service delivery, poor communication between the CCOs, council staff elected members and the public and suggested that Auckland Council should play a stronger governance role in setting the strategic direction of CCOs (Dean et al., 2020). The findings in Chapter Eight explore the experience of local board members when engaging with CCOs on projects in their local board area.

2.6.7 The independent Māori Statutory Board (IMSB)

In recognition of Māori under Te Tiriti, the Royal Commission Report, (Salmon et al., 2009) recommended that provision be made for two councillors to be elected through the Māori electoral roll. This was, subsequently rejected in the creation of Auckland Council. In order to ensure a Māori viewpoint as Treaty partners, the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, instead provides for the Independent Māori Statutory Board which consists of nine members. These nine members are a combination of mana whenua Māori (connected by genealogy to the land of Auckland) and mātāwaka who are identified as Māori living in Auckland, but “not living in a mana whenua group” (Independent Māori Statutory Board, n.d.). Under the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, this board must appoint two members to each of the Auckland Council committees that deal with the management and stewardship of natural and physical resources and may appoint members to other committees. This board also has representation on all Auckland Council committees (Auckland Council, n.d. -c).

Established in the first term of Auckland Council, the Independent Māori Statutory Board has to date produced several reports on how Council policy affects Māori in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Among the reports are three iterations of The Schedule of Issues of Significance and the Independent Māori Statutory Board Plans (2014; 2017; 2021). These all bring to the fore the needs of Māori living in Auckland, and how Auckland Council could address these needs. Te Tiriti o Waitangi Audits (Independent Māori Statutory Board, 2012; 2015; 2018) look at how well Auckland Council and CCOs are meeting Treaty of Waitangi partnership responsibilities. The Independent Māori Statutory Board Long Term Plan 2018-2021 Business Cases (Independent Māori Statutory Board, 2017) recommends that Auckland Council increase spending on Māori outcomes to NZD 22 million over the next 10 years and provides options on how these funds could be allocated (Independent Māori Statutory Board, 2017). In addition, The Kāinga Strategic Action Plan (Independent Māori Statutory Board, 2019),

developed out of a call to action from the Auckland Māori Housing Summit 2018, focus on the delivery of affordable housing. The Independent Māori Statutory Board has also provided advice into how reports should be written to consider Māori sensibilities and provide better outcomes for Māori across Auckland Council decision-making realms.

The Independent Māori Statutory Board members are selected through a process where the Government Minister of Māori Development invites the Mana Whenua Iwi of Tāmaki Makaurau to form a selection body to choose the nine members. In practice, there is some concern, from both Māori and non-Māori that these roles are political appointments, rather than elected positions. Criticisms from Māori include that the appointment is not accountable nor necessarily representative of the Iwi they are appointed to represent and, that urban Māori fail to have a say because their ancestral connections are unknown or fall outside the resources under discussion. Previous Māori board member John Tamihere is quoted as saying, “You get first class iwi and mana whenua and you get second class nobodies. A bit of an ugly little class system has arrived ... There is a problem that needs to be resolved in representation” (cited in Bell, 2020). Meanwhile Bernie O'Donnell, chair of the Manukau Urban Māori Authority refers to the IMSB as “a good start” but says that Māori wards should also be created to ensure better representation of Māori in Auckland (cited in Bell, 2020).

For some detractors, usually non-Māori, the IMSB is seen as conferring special advantages to an unelected body representing racial interests. This is illustrated in an inflammatory statement made in a change.org petition by David Rankin (2016):

The Maori Statutory Board has worked against the interests of Aucklanders, has cost rate-payers millions of dollars, and is an example of race-based politics. Most of the Board's work has been focussed on bans: bans on people accessing Mt Eden; bans on people developing their own sections without paying a 'taniwha tax'; and bans on equal rights for all cultures. The Board is anti-democratic and as an experiment, has failed. We call for the Government to legislate to abolish the Maori Statutory Board.

These tensions around whose Māori voice is represented is reflected in the Auckland Council Governance Statement which points out that “the IMSB has determined that their role is to monitor council’s performance and does not represent the views of mana whenua nor mataawaka in their roles on Committees” (Auckland Council, n.d. -f, s.3.8.5). Given the fact the Independent Māori Statutory Board’s plans are relatively recent, it is important to consider what effects these have in increasing Māori participation in the political life of Auckland and addressing “current gap in social and economic outcomes for Māori in Auckland (equivalent to an income gap of NZD 1.8 billion)” (Independent Māori Statutory Board, 2017). Local boards were able to use the findings in the IMSB reports, to inform projects in their local

board area. In the 2016 term, a dedicated local board funding stream to support Māori initiatives was established (regardless of whether this was identified as a local board priority). Local boards had decision-making responsibilities in allocating this funding towards local Māori initiatives. Given the paucity of research on intersections between the Treaty of Waitangi and its effects in local government, the above provides some description of how relationships with Māori and Māori entities were experienced by local boards. Given that some board members discussed successes and challenges in promoting Māori focused initiatives the above provides the context for the comments made by local board member participants in their interviews.

2.6.8 Other representative arrangements for Māori

Co-governance entities (shared governance between Iwi entities and the Crown or Councils) are also mentioned here as they sometimes include local board members, and are also concerned with the management of local assets which would normally fall under local board jurisdiction. These were created through legislation around resource management obligations arising out of Te Tiriti o Waitangi Settlements. These are settlements with Iwi (tribal groups) designed to address breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and to compensate Māori for land that was seized by European migrants or the government, as described earlier in this chapter. The returned land is generally in the form of public reserves or community buildings owned by the government or local government. In the Auckland area, these co-governance entities include the Ngati Whātua Ōrākei Reserves Board, The Parakai Recreation Reserves Board and The Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority (Auckland Council, n.d. -a) formed through the Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Deed 2014. The Maunga Authority involves 13 Iwi and Hāpu of the Auckland region and holds the responsibility for the management of 14 volcanic cones. It is comprised of equal representatives from Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau (the peoples with tribal affiliations to Auckland) and Auckland Council, together with Crown (non-voting) representation (Auckland Council, n.d.-a). In addition, post-settlement trust entities (PSGEs) have also been recipients of financial compensations and Auckland Council sees that there may be an opportunity to partner with PSGEs to invest these resources.

Iwi views are also heard through the Mana Whenua Kaitiaki Forum which provides formal representation for 19 Iwi and Hapū authorities which are connected to the land in the Auckland Region (Auckland Council, 2018). This is more of an advisory panel designed to capture a broad range of Māori perspectives but has no formal decision-making role.

Thus, while the recommendation for Māori wards in Auckland was rejected by the then Minister for Local Government, Rodney Hide, there are pockets of work led by the Independent Māori Statutory Board and representatives on various fora and committees that provide a Māori lens to Auckland Council's work. The Māori Responsiveness Framework (Whiria Te Muka Tangata) was also launched as part of the Auckland Plan in 2013. This policy document:

Outlines the organisation's high level commitment to raising responsiveness to Māori. The Framework provides the lens through which we can view all our processes, systems and policies in order to give effect to our commitments to Māori as they are articulated in The Auckland Plan (Research and Evaluation Unit, 2016).

As a result, Māori impact statements are now included on all board reports and there are dedicated funding streams within Auckland Council for access by Māori organisations.

Recently proposed legislation, the Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill, provides for the creation of Māori wards for Auckland thus providing for more equitable representation of Māori (Mahuta, 2022). This has come under attack on the grounds that separate elections foster separatism (Dean & Geddis, 2021). David Seymour, leader of the ACT party fuels this position, saying that "New Zealand's electoral system should focus on our common interests and treat voters equally, but Labour's plan for Māori wards would take us down a divisive path" (Radio New Zealand, 2021). A possible tension into the future (and mirroring the issues arising in the IMSB) is around whether these Māori seats are contested by tangata whenua with mana whenua authority over an area, and more closely focused on Iwi or Hapū interests, or mātāwaka Māori who are not necessarily connected to that Auckland area and provide for wider Māori interests of those who have migrated to Auckland.

This debate is pertinent as local board members intersect with Iwi in terms of decision-making on local resources such as parks. There can be some confusion about where the decision-making responsibilities lay and also board members vary in their political stance on Māori participation in local government. In addition, not all Iwi have gone through a Treaty Settlement process. As such, it can be difficult for local boards to make decisions around resources that may form part of a treaty claim and could include buildings or parks. Even when the importance of consultation with Iwi is recognised, there was, and continues to be, a lack of Iwi resource to capture the Iwi view.

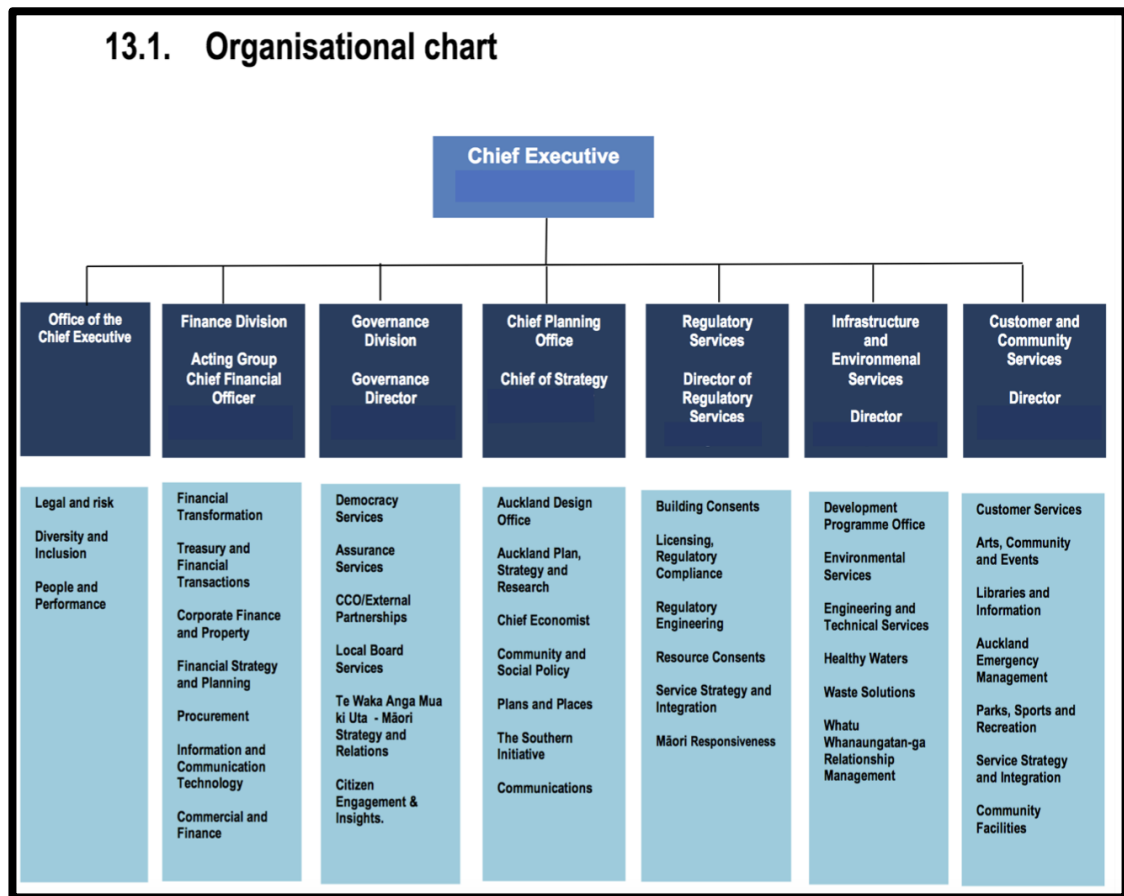
Moreover, Iwi politics are also strongly based around trust and established relationships, which can make it difficult for local boards to align with Iwi representatives when local board members are elected for a three year term and may fail to win re-election. Māori also engage with local boards as marae representatives, representatives of clubs or community organisations or as individuals and some of these views clashed with the Iwi view. Both Māori and non-Māori local board member participants in this study discussed their challenges in navigating this space, making decisions and forming strong working relationships with Māori organisations and Iwi. This is discussed in Chapter Six. Although not directly relevant to this study, discussions of changing representative arrangements to include Māori wards were starting to emerge in the 2016 term, gaining increased prominence in the 2019 term and have been mentioned to better understand the tensions within the political landscape although, as noted previously, it is beyond the scope of this study to address the issue of Māori wards.

2.6.9 Auckland Council's administrative structure

All local authorities in New Zealand are run by a chief executive officer (CEO) as provided for under The Local Government Act 2002. Their responsibilities are to employ and instruct staff members, advise the decision makers of the governing body and local boards and then implement their decisions. Under the separation of management and governance responsibilities, they are the only people who may lawfully instruct staff members. Council activities are divided into policy areas and service delivery. In 2016, there were 9,870 full time equivalent roles in the bureaucracy of Auckland Council (Auckland Council, n.d. -h). The following organisational chart sets out how Auckland Council departments were organised in 2016.

Figure 2.3

Organisational Chart of Auckland Council 2016-2019



Note. Names of people holding the governance roles have been removed. Adapted from “Local Governance Statement,” by Auckland Council 2020a, p.57. Copyright 2020, by Auckland Council.

From the local board perspective, the greatest interaction is with Local Board Services who provide the staff that support local boards. Aside from Local Board Services, there is ongoing engagement with departments that fall under Customer and Community Services as these are responsible for the management of local facilities and parks.

However, depending on the issue, local boards engage to varying degrees with other departments. For example, Te Waka Anga Mua might be contacted to facilitate relationship-building with local Iwi around the use of land in a local area. Healthy Waters would be involved in addressing stormwater issues, or the Procurement team and Environmental Services might advise the local board on the development of a waste recovery initiative.

Local board staff work internally with the rest of Auckland Council to follow up on progress in the different work streams on behalf of the local board they work for and develop the agendas which form the basis of local board decision-making. Departmental staff deliver work

programmes are often called officers, perhaps reflecting the fact they are acting on decisions which have been delegated by local boards and the governing body. Officers also attend local board workshops and local board business meetings to advise or report on progress in work programmes, to seek feedback (in workshop setting) to inform resolutions (in business meetings) or to consult on policy areas that are in development (for example a sports strategy).

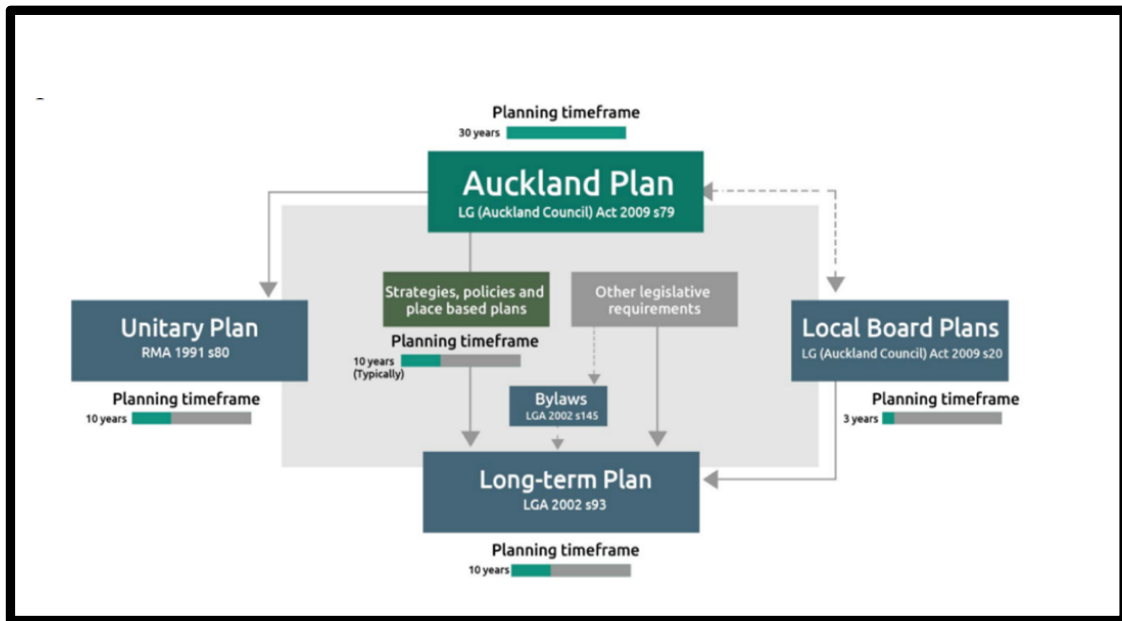
Unquestionably, the Auckland Council structure is complex. Departments have responsibilities which overlap with each other, or with responsibilities held by the CCOs. In an example from the Waiheke Local Board area, the overlap in responsibilities led to the neglect of necessary maintenance on a council facility. The old Harbourmasters building was held by Panuku (the CCO holding the Auckland Council property portfolio) but it was not until Community Facilities (department of Auckland Council) took over the responsibility for property management that the necessary maintenance was undertaken. This process was frustrating for local board members, as well as Auckland Council staff, as the eventual cost of doing the necessary maintenance was significantly higher than if the property had been properly maintained in the first place (Auckland Council, 2020b, s.29). Moreover, the maintenance costs were provided through local board funding streams in spite of the additional costs incurred while the property was held by Panuku.

2.6.10 Auckland Council plans

Auckland Council, under the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, is tasked with developing a planning framework and specific plans to guide Auckland's development into the future. The following diagram shows the linkages and complexities of the key statutory plans and policies.

Figure 2.4

Auckland Council Planning Framework



Note. Reprinted from “Local Governance Statement,” by Auckland Council 2020a, p.41. Copyright 2020, by Auckland Council.

[The Auckland Plan](#)

The Auckland Plan 2050 was initially produced in 2012. As a statutory document it is intended to “contribute to Auckland’s social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being through a comprehensive and effective long-term (20- to 30-year) strategy for Auckland’s growth and development” (Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, s.79). The Auckland Plan also needs to consider current and future infrastructure demands, as well as the current and future needs of people, communities and business. This includes the use of land and to anticipate how the Auckland region will “grow and change over the next thirty years” (Auckland Council, 2021d, p.41).

A revised version of the Auckland Plan was produced in June 2018. This was because, according to the Auckland Council website, “Our fast-changing world meant that the 2012 plan no longer provided the necessary direction for decision-making” (Auckland Council, 2018). Posting on the Greater Auckland Blog which focuses on urban design and transport, Polkinghorne (2018) laments that the revising down of the number of houses necessary to meet the challenge of regional growth from 420,000 to 320,00. He also comments that the “visionary” objectives have been adapted into something which is “not a target anymore, the language is much looser and the timeframes are inconsistent” with these targets now turned into measures for tracking progress and weakening the focus of the plan.

The Unitary Plan

The Unitary Plan identifies zones and a planning regime which regulates what can be built and where (Auckland Council, 2018). Originally consulted in 2013, it was released in 2017 and falls under the Resource Management Act 1991. The main focus is on how to achieve more housing within “a higher quality and more compact Auckland” while also providing for rural activities and “maintaining” the marine environment (Auckland Council, n.d. -j). Polkinghorne (2018) suggests that it was the original Auckland Plan that helped guide the unitary plan to provide for what was seen by some as quite radical zoning intensification decisions to combat urban sprawl.

In more recent developments, and showing that Auckland planning is not immune from actions of central government, a National Policy Statement on Urban Development was released in 2020 to increase the provisions for building intensification with new Medium Density Residential Standards created by the Resource Management (Housing Enabling) Act 2021 (Relab, 2022).

Local board plans

Local board plans provided for under the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 should reflect the “priorities and preferences of the communities within the local board area respect of the level and nature of local activities to be provided by the Auckland Council over the next 3 years” (s.20). This Act stipulates that the local board plans need to be prepared by October of the year following the election by the incoming local board. Hence the first year of the three year local board term is spent consulting and writing the local board plan, while being bound by the previous local board’s plan and budget. Thus, the local board is delivering the previous local board’s plan for the first year of their term. However, in some cases the new local board can change support for projects and overturn the decisions of the previous local board.

The Local Board Plans therefore inform the long term plan, provide for local decision-making and input, and also provide “a basis for accountability of the local board to the communities in the local board area” through the development of the local board agreements which set out local expenditure (Auckland Council, 2019a). In the 2013-2016 term the concept of an OLI (One Local Initiative) was introduced to focus local boards on defining one project that could be progressed in the local board area. Ideally these could be delivered over a three-year term

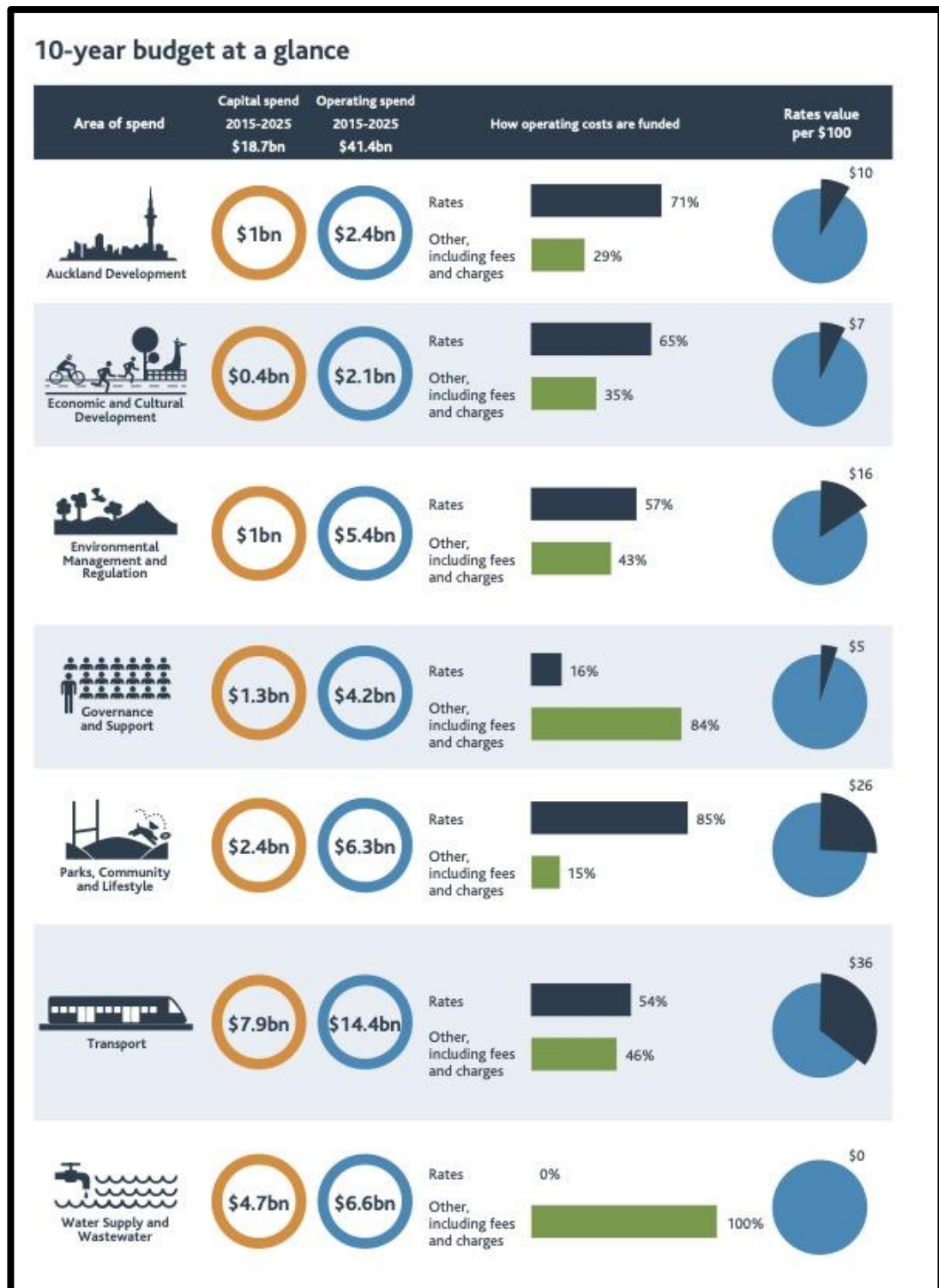
of the local board or they would try to secure funding over the longer term through the long-term Plan.

Long-term plans

The decisions of each local board plan are then captured in the long-term plans, which Auckland Council also describes as the ten-year budget. This is developed and revised every three years and sets out Auckland Council activities and budgets over the following ten-year period including that necessary to deliver major projects in the local board plans. The revenue and expenditure is set out across seven broad groups of activities of Auckland Council delivery. Figure 2.4 provides the expenditure areas is from the 2015-2025 Long-term Plan (2016c) which was in effect from 2016-2019.

Figure 2.5

The Ten Year Budget 2015-2025



Note. Reprinted from “Ten Year Budget 2015-2025” by Auckland Council 2016c, p.15.
Copyright 2023, by Auckland Council.

2.6.11 The funding for local boards

Funds are allocated to local boards through the Auckland Council local boards funding policy. The 2015-2025 Long-term Plan approved by the governing body provided funding for Locally-driven Initiatives (LDI) across the 21 local boards based on a formula including population, size of local board area and level of deprivation. Aotea/Great Barrier and Waiheke have had a separate calculation to ensure equity, given their low populations and higher deprivation scores. Examples provided of LDI expenditure include “local events, community grants, increases to library opening hours, feasibility studies, youth connections, and local playground enhancements” (Auckland Council n.d. -f, 6.4). This funding is discretionary because each local board has the opportunity to allocate and reallocate funding across the different service areas. As such, local boards will allocate funding to specific local projects, like an art festival or supporting the buying of equipment for a local sports club.

The second part of the funding package is for asset-based services (ABS). This is divided into capital expenditure to develop new infrastructure (such as a new playground or swimming pool renewal and operating expenditure (to run and maintain the asset), including staff costs and rental costs. Since 2013, the local boards have been asked to channel their advocacy for capital expenditure into the OLI as described above, because these require funding through the long-term plan. In terms of the operating expenditure “the local board has the governance oversight of these assets and can change service levels over time” (Auckland Council n.d. -f, s6.4). This means there is some ability to question/delay or bring forward certain projects which rely on operational expenditure and are managed through Auckland Council service delivery. So, for example, if a building is earmarked for painting but does not really need it, the local board could ask that this project is delayed in favour of another project. There is also some discretion in how often parks might be mown to be able to allocate increased funding to weed management, for example. Even though these services fall under the local board budget, the local board only has an advocacy role in relation to these asset-based services as the contracts are administered by the Auckland Council bureaucracy.

The funding model for local board stipends is also allocated based on rates, with the amounts set by the Remuneration Authority. In 2016, the highest paid chair, on the Howick Local Board was paid NZD 88,222 per annum while the lowest paid, the Great Barrier chair received NZD 45,211. A Howick Local Board member received NZD 40,344 while a Great Barrier member received NZD 21,713. In 2019 this was reviewed so that the Deputy Chair receives 60% of the stipend received by the chair and the rates have increased, particularly on the less well

remunerated local boards to reflect the work involved (Remuneration Authority, 2022).

Nonetheless, the differential in pay between a chair and members may contribute to the way this role can be fiercely contested, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

As part of the local board consultation and advocacy processes, local boards can suggest a targeted rate to the community to improve service levels or for new assets. In the 2016-2019 term, the Rodney Local Board proposed a targeted transport rate of NZD 150 per ratepayer to support bus services to Warkworth. Auckland Transport, responsible for managing the bus network, felt that the rural environment of Rodney was a low priority for two new bus routes. Nevertheless, the Local Board saw the need for a service to connect a community of over five thousand people which was otherwise isolated. After three years, with increasing patronage every year, Auckland Transport confirmed they will fund these routes from 2022 (Our Auckland, 2021b).

Auckland Transport also has a Capital Transport Fund worth NZD 10 million which local boards can allocate for local projects. Such projects would be seen as a low priority for Auckland Transport but a potentially higher priority for the local board area. Typically, these projects would include a cycleway, a roundabout or a pedestrian crossing which would improve local amenities or safety. As with local board funding, Waiheke and Aotea/Great Barrier receive a separate allocation. This system provides for projects which may have high local impact but do not meet the Auckland-wide threshold required for improvements because these affect far fewer people than on the main isthmus (Auckland Council, n.d. -f, s.6.4).

Importantly, in terms of local boards, the funding model has inbuilt inequities. For instance, legacy assets that came from different city council areas pre-amalgamation, continue to be funded more highly than others without such assets. This leads to complaints from some local boards that their services are neglected in comparison. Orsman (2019) points to this inequitable funding in relation to art galleries while Latif (2021b) highlights playgrounds. Inequities also arise from the way that established suburbs in wealthier areas collect substantially higher rates than areas with high deprivation and comparatively lower housing prices.

2.6.12 Local board organisation and support

As noted previously, local board are supported by the Local Board Services department of Auckland Council's administration. Each local board has the following support staff:

1. A relationship manager who keeps the local board up to date with key strategic policy issues, manages stakeholder relationships between their local board and Auckland Council, advises on how local projects may intersect with Auckland Council policies and work programmes more widely;
2. A democracy advisor who advises on meeting protocols during meetings and also puts together the local board agendas;
3. Local board advisors (usually two) to liaise with departments to ensure projects are moved forward, reports are developed for the local board meetings, statutory consultations are developed and reported on as well as to follow up on constituent queries;
4. An office assistant who is there to answer constituent queries, do some research, and ensure the office is open to the public and to support the Local Board Chair;
5. A strategic broker who ensures that local board supported projects are able to navigate their way through Auckland Council protocols, for example organising the lease for a community group to take over Auckland Council premises;

There is also communication support from people who help with stories for the Auckland Council's Our Auckland magazine, engage with media, manage local board social media content and advise on messaging for community consultations.

2.7 How local board work is operationalised

As shown in Part Two of this chapter, the evolving structure and operational scope of Auckland Council are complex and confusing. Given the primary purpose of this research is to explore how success is understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards (RQ1) the following provides a personal account of how I as a local board member in the 2016 local board term, interacted with Auckland Council staff, the community and Auckland Council processes. The intent is to bring some clarity to the role by providing a generally accurate account of how local boards function on a daily basis. In the process, the kinds of meetings (workshops, business meetings and cluster meetings) are described as well as the other kinds of work in which a board member engages. This description will also help clarify the quotidian aspects of the work in which local board members engage.

At the start of the local board term, one day (usually a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday) is set aside for workshops by agreement with the board members, some of whom may be working or have other commitments. As noted previously, these workshops provide the

opportunity for the local board to set the direction for a project idea or for staff to present items in the work programme, report on progress or ask for feedback. Drafts of reports that will be presented in the business meeting may also be presented and the recommendations canvassed with local board members. As a result, these recommendations might be tweaked, or the report reworked before it is brought to the business meeting. In the local board terms I was elected (from 2013 to 2019), workshops were generally closed to the public. The exception to this was the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board which resolved to have open workshops to promote accountability and transparency and encourage public engagement.

A typical workshop day might include an update from Auckland Transport on key initiatives with a discussion of roadworks and whether any issues might arise from the works, as well as a reminder of outstanding safety issues that have yet to be addressed. This could be followed by a session from a department, for example the facilities team providing an update on hall usage. Then there might be a session on receiving feedback from consultation on the Local Board Plan and lastly a discussion of allocation of budgets for the Annual Plan. Attendance for local board members at workshops is optional, although members are expected to attend these to inform their decision-making at the business meetings.

Once a month, public local board business meetings are held to make formal decisions which are recorded through resolutions of the local board. These are attended by at least one local board advisor, the relationship manager and the democracy advisor, as well as departmental staff whose item appears on the agenda, as well as the local board members for whom it is a formal requirement of the role. The statutory requirement is for agendas for local board meetings to be available two days before these meetings but in some cases they are uploaded earlier for the public and board members to read. The public have the opportunity to ask for a five minute slot to speak on an agenda item at the start of the meeting in the public forum segment of the meeting. This is followed by discussion on each item of board business which are then resolved (a resolution is passed in favour or against). Input for the decision-making comes from reports prepared by the staff for each agenda item which comes with recommendations. Additional information which influences the decision may come from the local board member discussion or input from public forum.

The standing orders process provides for each board member to have two formal speaking turns. The first is to ask questions of the officer about the report (in one question turn), followed by expressing a point of view on the resolution (in one comment turn). The

resolution is then voted on. The resolutions are recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Depending on the alignment of the board, some or all of the local board members may caucus before the meeting. Before the meeting, local board members may also lobby other local board members for support on resolutions, request more information from local board staff or departmental officers, or inform community groups who may be affected by a decision in case they wish to attend and speak to an agenda item. Caucusing and lobbying can be sites of tension and negative behaviour as will be explored in Chapters Six and Nine. While local board agendas are available to the public, the public are often unaware that items which affect them are on the agenda. This additional public engagement to inform sectors of the public that there will be a relevant agenda item, occurs through the efforts and knowledge of local board members. Community groups are known to complain when a decision is made on an issue that affects them and they have not been advised of this. There is no systematic Council process to ensure that affected parties are notified of items which may affect them.

In addition to the above, some local boards, including the Waiheke Local Board, held informal local board member discussion meetings to raise issues that were raised by constituents to follow up on things that are still awaiting responses or to raise new issues. In the 2013 term these were described as “political meetings” by the staff which involved elected representatives but did not require staff support. By the 2016 term, there was increasing recognition of the value of these meetings for both staff and elected members to keep everyone informed and to identify or follow up on work that needed to be done. This change served the dual purpose of ensuring that political tensions were diffused because staff were also present, and providing a mechanism to follow up on items that were not on the business meeting agenda.

Once a month, there are cluster meetings, usually on a Wednesday, where local board members can meet and interact with local board members from different local boards organised into four geographic clusters – North, South, West and Central. The island boards form part of the Central Cluster, even though in terms of need and demographic they may align better with the rural local boards. The agenda contains topics considered of general interest to all local board areas, for example the development of a playground policy or a session on how local board members can address unconscious bias. My observation from attending the same cluster meeting in different areas (as part of getting to meet potential participants and getting a feel for different local board areas) was that the cluster meetings had a different flavour depending on where they were held. The regulations around

swimming safety, for example, resulted in significant debate in the Southern cluster meeting where there was concern around drownings through lack of water safety precautions. The same item in the Central cluster was received as a briefing with hardly any comment from elected members.

There may also be meetings on other days with CCO representatives or around specific projects which have some relationship to the local board, for example the City Rail Link. These meetings are briefing meetings and do not involve decision-making, but local board members can provide feedback or request follow up engagement if the issue affects their local board area.

At the start of the 2013 term local board members agreed on portfolio areas – areas of the work programme in which they were more interested in taking a leading role. These were divided into areas like the arts, transport or the environment. This could also involve taking responsibility for representing the local board view for a specific project like the development of a new waste recovery facility. Local board members would then typically have meetings with department officers as the portfolio holder to check on progress and follow up on projects. In the 2016 term the portfolio system was removed – there was no support from local board staff to have these meetings and department staff declined to attend. The effects of this change are discussed in the findings in Chapter Eight. Interestingly, some local boards have managed to retain portfolios, and in the 2022 term the Waitemata Local Board have the portfolio roles listed on the Auckland Council website (n.d. -k).

In addition to the above, more engaged members respond to constituent enquiries, follow up with their own research on topics of interest and read Auckland Council reports prior to workshops and business meetings. Local board members also attend functions or meetings of community groups or constituents. These meetings may inform the development of local initiatives or local board advocacy items. There is also a civic representational role with attendance at cultural performances, or awards ceremony or citizenship ceremonies.

The workload for a local board member is considered to be about twenty hours a week, while the chair is regarded as a full-time role. In spite of some weeks having fewer hours the workload for a hardworking local board member is likely to be significantly higher than twenty hours. The chair has greater responsibilities and prioritises how workshop time is allocated in conjunction with the relationship manager. They chair all workshops and business meetings,

unless this is delegated by them to the deputy chair. They are the official representative and spokesperson for the local board and may have more demands on them to represent the local board at public functions. They also attend meetings of the local board chairs from across Auckland which occur once a month to discuss wider issues of significance to local boards.

At the start of a new term, elected members are provided with a laptop and information pack and invited to Auckland-wide induction sessions which included the CCOs, and departments of Auckland Council. Time is also spent clarifying the expectations for board member under the code of conduct and making sure that local board members have declared and understood both financial and non-financial conflicts of interest.

One of the challenges of the local board decision-making process is that local board members can only make decisions on issues that appear in the agenda. As such most of the items involve adopting resolutions based on reports prepared by officers. Outside of this process there are two options for local board members to formally raise issues which can be turned into resolutions. Firstly, the chair can use their report to raise matters of significance which can be resolved as part of their report. In addition, local board members can write a notice of motion (NOM) which is seconded by another local board member and can then appear on the agenda for a business meeting. This allows local boards to provide feedback on issues of national or regional significance that are experienced locally, usually because these are championed by local board members. This has included, for example, support of the Living Wage, opposition to the Transpacific Partnership Agreement or support for the Declaration of a Climate Change Emergency. It is, however, very difficult for local board members who are a lone voice on their local board to put items on the agenda as they are unable to find a seconder amongst the local board members to support a NOM.

Local board relationships tend to be more strongly developed within Auckland Council and local organisations. In theory, local boards could develop relationships with central government, or Local Government New Zealand, but advocacy to central government occurs by appealing to the committees of council or to CCOs to forward advocacy issues. The challenge for some local boards is that they are not able to access funding through Auckland Council as their funding limits are set (as noted previously) or they may not meet the criteria for core needs to be met, but they are also excluded from applying to central government for funding, for example through the Provincial Growth Fund. This can be an issue for outlying local boards which have different needs from the more densely populated city local boards.

The Waiheke Local Board, for example, which experiences a high number of tourists in the Summer but is funded through a small rates base, continues to receive complaints about the public toilet provision with no mechanism to address the building of new toilets. Caught between a rock and a hard place, the needs are not seen as important in relation to other needs within Auckland, and they are unable to apply for central government funding as they are within the Auckland Council area.

2.8 Summary of issues

The above gives a snapshot of the statutory provisions which affect the functioning of local boards within Auckland Council. With the Life in a Day of my experience on the Waiheke Local Board I provide an example of how local board work is organised on a daily basis. The findings chapters give more insights into how other local board members experience the processes described above.

The Royal Commission on Auckland Governance was tasked with addressing how reforms could make local government in Auckland “more efficient and less fragmented” (Dean et al., 2020, p.9). While it is generally agreed that change was necessary, and regional decision-making has improved as a result of the creation of the Auckland Council (Shirley et al., 2015), there is some debate as to whether a supercity was necessary, or whether the issues that drove this immense change (for example the integration of infrastructure) could have been resolved by a more empowered Auckland Regional Council and the legacy city and district councils working together more effectively. There are concerns that local decision-making and place-making has been undermined with more decisions and budget being allocated centrally by the governing body, that the mayor’s office operates without sufficient public scrutiny, and that the CCOs do not have elected representation oversight (Duncan, 2016). Additional costs stemming from running an unwieldy and large bureaucracy, and the difficulty of aligning work programmes and staff from across the organisation, appear constant. At the same time, there have been complaints about a decrease in local knowledge, local roles and local control over decision-making. Some local boards, particularly those which are Rurally-based or have high areas of deprivation, have tended to feel that the Supercity has neglected their specific needs (Rose, 2015).

The above illustrates how aspects of the work of a local board member is also heavily managed by local board staff in terms of researching topics and reporting to the local board. This calls into question the scope of the local board role. To demonstrate, how effectively can

board members hold the organisation to account, when their ability to communicate with departmental staff is increasingly mediated by local board staff and their role and funding is proscribed by the governing body?

Both North Rodney and Waiheke have been particularly dissatisfied with the lack of promised subsidiarity (decision-making which occurs as close to the affected communities as possible). The feeling is that responsibilities have not been devolved to the lowest level of governance, closest to the communities in which the impacts are felt. They have sought to break away from Auckland Council and become their own unitary entities. The final decision of the Local Government Commission (2017) was to recommend against the requests, pointing out that breaking away would create too much pressure on the communities with an exponential increase in rates and the cost-of-service delivery. Nonetheless, the issues around the loss of community voice, the lack of transparency and lack of accountability continue to be raised.

2.9 Conclusion

To conclude the purpose of this chapter is to provide the backdrop to the four research questions that frame this study. The chapter explains how Auckland Council has emerged as the current iteration of local governance in Auckland. It illustrates the cultural, historical, economic and geographic features that have shaped the way Auckland has become the powerhouse of the New Zealand economy and home to one in three New Zealanders. The legislation that provides for the current iteration of local government in Auckland is also discussed to understand the complexity of decision-making and responsibilities that are provided for within the system and the place of local boards within this. The political influence in how Auckland Council was developed to emphasise infrastructure requirements over social good has also been identified.

Key features that emerge include the effects of the 1980's neoliberal ideological shift and New Public Management tenets which has sought to corporatise the functions of local government. . The main features of this reform include the separation of core functions of Auckland Council into trading organisations (CCOs), a separation of functions between governance and management in the belief this will improve accountability, transparency and consultation. Auckland Council thus embodies features of neoliberal trends identified earlier, including the standardisation of processes, a strong focus on performance and accountability measures, and supposedly clear opportunities for formal public participation. These features influence the allocation of resources, which in-turn set the parameters of the local board role

and judgements, both public and personal, of success. Persistent criticism of what has evolved highlights how Auckland Council structures reflect a narrow view of governance which places emphasis on services and the management of Auckland Council assets rather than representation. This creates tension around other aspects of a representative role which could include building of social capital, a focus on community development, localised decision-making and whether the local board role provides a genuine local voice for communities to guide the actions of Auckland Council.

The chapter further illustrates that there was (and continues to be) a lack of clarity around how Māori voices are provided for under Te Tiriti obligations and some awkwardness around understanding and addressing Māori concerns in their roles within Iwi, as community representatives and as individuals.

The tension between regional and local decision-making is also highlighted by legislation which provides for a shared decision-making model yet it is the governing body that determines which decisions are regional, and which are to be allocated to local boards. The complexities of decision-making with multiple parts of Auckland Council and CCOs with overlapping decision-making responsibilities is also outlined. All of the above influence perceptions of local board members views of success.

Lastly, the role of a local board member and the daily functions this role entails has been demystified . The intent is to show how local board decisions fit into the decision-making landscape of Auckland Council. In the chapter that follows, Chapter Three, the discussion turns to the key theoretical issues that emerge in terms of local governance, representational responsiveness, and how visible difference is addressed by political parties and local government with respect to local board members.

Chapter 3 Conceptual Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed how the current iteration of local government for the Auckland area has emerged from its historical and geographic context. This included a discussion on the influence of neoliberal ideology and public management reforms on current local government legislation and a look at how local boards are provided for in the legislation. The decision-making role of local board members and how this is articulated within other decision-making arenas of Auckland Council was also discussed. As part of this, the dual decision-making role (between elected members and employed managers and advisors) and the shared decision-making role (between elected councillors and elected board members) alongside the possible tensions were outlined.

There is a paucity of literature on what success at this lowest tier of governance might look like and what representation means in practice. A number of conceptual issues and theoretical frameworks are therefore explored. Definitions which are pertinent to the research questions are clarified in relation to the particular context of local government. These clarify some of the debates and tensions around the research areas: Elected board members perceptions and experiences of success (RQ1, RQ3) and the ways dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) may affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role (RQ2).

To begin, key debates around the nature of political representation are addressed. Given that local government elected representatives consistently refer to the importance of representing communities (see Reid 2016) it is essential to understand how this representative role is conceptualised. This is followed by a consideration of what success could mean as it applies to elected representatives on local boards. In the first instance this involves exploring the choices and influences on standing for election. Being elected is the first step to success but this process is usually absent in discussions of the experience of elected representatives. Personality features which have been associated with success in political representation are then identified. Given that the literature available relates primarily to politicians and bureaucrats working in central government, these insights have been adapted to show what success could mean for elected local board members. Finally, there is a discussion of dimensions of visible difference, specifically being younger, female or non-New Zealand European in elected representation.

Thus, building on the literature discussed in Chapter Two around the context of local board work, this chapter focuses on theorising issues which influence individual choices that then contribute to experiences of successful representation.

3.2 Theorising representation

Representation is a multi-faceted term. At one level representation is the act of being elected to a role where a smaller group represents the views of a larger group of people. However, the act of representation can take different forms and the focus of representation is also confusing. Loewenberg (1972) points out that:

Representation ... is an ill-defined concept that has acquired conflicting meanings through long use. It may be employed to denote any relationship between rulers and ruled or it may connote responsiveness, authorization, legitimation, or accountability. It may be used so broadly that any political institution performs representative functions or so narrowly that only an elected legislature can do so (p.72).

There are four recognised models of political representation or styles in a liberal democracy such as that existing in New Zealand:

1. The trustee makes decisions on behalf of others based on their own analysis of the facts. This is often linked to a classist view that some people have better skills, intelligence, or knowledge to act in the interests of others.
2. The delegate acts in accordance with instructions provided by the people they represent.
3. The politico operates between the two positions.
4. The mandate or partisan view suggests that people govern based on promises, an agenda or a manifesto, that is a predeclared set of intentions that will be realized once elected (Drage, 2008; Pitkin, 1967; Riemer, 1967).

Rao (1998) describes this as the style of representation. Style can be contrasted with focus where the representative acts primarily to protect the integrity of the political system, for the interests of their constituency, or for the sectional interests within the constituency (Rao, 1998; Whalke et al., 1962).

Alongside the style and focus of representation, Pitkin (1967) describes three qualities of democratic representation – authorisation, responsiveness, and accountability. Authorisation or representativeness (Beetham, 1996) gives elected representatives the right to act on behalf of constituents and occurs through the election process. In the case of local council elections, this occurs every three years. Responsiveness “requires that policy makers take into account

what citizens want” (Trounstine 2010, p.413). Aside from whether the representative seeks to represent the constituents, there is also the challenge for elected members to understand what constituents want, how to prioritise the needs of different communities, and to make decisions which have some impact within the legislative framework (Rao, 1998; Whalke, 1971).

Eulau and Karpis (1977) define four aspects of responsiveness:

1. Political responsiveness: How the representative acts in the development of public policy and how far they choose to act in accordance with the will or the best interests of their constituency.
2. Service responsiveness: How well the representative obtains positive outcomes for individuals or the community. Requests for service are usually driven by constituent needs but can reflect needs identified by the representative. Clap (1963) sees this as casework, Eulau and Karpis (1977) point out that this role may involve specific advocacy and lobbying.
3. Allocation responsiveness: How well the representative attracts the allocation of resources. Eulau and Karpis (1977) distinguish this from service delivery as it involves political trade-offs which they refer to as “pork-barrel politics”(p.245). In this aspect of the role, the representative seeks to anticipate needs and attract resources or funding for local initiatives where they see an opportunity to do so.
4. Symbolic responsiveness: This reflects the relationship that exists between representatives and those represented. Wahlke (1971) suggests that this reflects trust in the process and the potentiality of the role. Thus, it may never result in any action but there is the feeling from the electorate that they can call on the representative if they need help, that they trust them to make appropriate decisions within the decision-making process and that they will accept the resulting decisions.

These distinctions are useful as they allow some segmentation of the representational role which can present a confusion of decision-making and responsive behaviours relating to different aspects of the role. The roles may vary depending on the political system and the demographics of the electorate and can highlight some interesting features of representation. Harden (2013), for example, found that American politicians developed a strategic approach to responsiveness. He identifies political responsiveness as conferring longer term benefits to communities and being more prevalent in politicians serving wealthier demographics. Legislators in poorer or majority-black districts were seen to prioritise service allocation. He points out that this is of concern as:

The nature of how the different dimensions benefit constituents leads to the somewhat counterintuitive conclusion that responding to district demands for representation may ultimately contribute to the development and persistence of inequality in American political representation (Harden, 2013, p.177).

Thus, segmenting the role reveals that the focus on service allocation (neighbourhood improvement in poorer areas) may address immediate need and therefore leave less resource to address policy changes thereby having long-term effects on inequality.

Rao (1998) notes the dual role of councillors in local government. They seek to “engage themselves in both the management of service provision and representing local views and interests” (p.35). In her survey of 250 Councillors across the United Kingdom (Rao, 1993), elected councillors described the importance they felt in the representative role in addressing constituent concerns, but noted that in practice they spent more time in the decision-making role to deliver outcomes for the organisation. The decision-making role arises from the organisation providing for elected members to meet their statutory obligations and has more of a top-down aspect, whereas the representative role has a more of a bottom up function, capturing the views of constituents and feeding these into the organisation, ideally to be used as a basis for decision-making. Rao (1998) describes this as reflecting representative responsibility where elected members in local government balance the needs of individuals and particular constituencies with the needs of the wider electorate. Pitkin (1967), suggests that by responding to community needs, councillors may act more as delegates, but in making governance decisions they may act more as trustees.

In the New Zealand context, Drage (2008) found that in interviews with 50 candidates for the Wellington Council in 2001, most of the interviewees favoured the role of community representative over the role of decision-maker. Further, newer elected members tended to work more as delegates, wanting to be a conduit from communities, whereas incumbents emphasised their role as trustees, entrusted to make decisions on behalf of communities by virtue of being elected, without having to consult with them on specific decisions.

The above suggests that elected members’ perception of their role as delegate or trustee is fluid, varying in terms of the demands of the role and, over time. Likewise, there is some debate as to the how the role itself is changing. Drage (2008), argues that “changes in corporatism, new management structures, downsized council committees, a greater focus on policy than service provision had weakened the position of councillors as decision-makers” (p.45). One aspect of the increased corporatisation of the role with its emphasis on

accountability, is a call for councillors to have stronger business, governance and financial management skills (Howell et al., 1995). This may come at the expense of the role of community representative and may attract a different kind of candidate who has a strong professional background but has less community experience or interest.

Another dimension of representation is reflected in the tension between the practice of participatory democracy and notions of a representative democracy (Drage, 2008). Within participatory democracy, citizens are asked for their opinions directly through different consultation mechanisms, while representative democracy provides for representation of the public through those who are elected. As Drage (2008) points out “the role of political representatives as decision-makers has become blurred with the debate on strengthening democracy” (p.34) provided by direct consultation. Judge (1999) argues that this poses a fundamental challenge to the traditional model of representative local government. Aside from the three yearly right to vote in elections, there is increasing direct engagement of the administration with constituencies in a way that bypasses elected representation. The People’s Panels of Auckland Council (Auckland Council, n.d. -g) provide an example of this. Here the Auckland Council administration canvasses the public through polls and engagements with people identified in communities of interest such as Pacific Peoples, or young people. It is, nonetheless, unclear how this influences Auckland Council decision-making and how this feedback is used (Slade, 2015).

Lastly, a tension is further noted between the governance role of elected members and the management and delivery role of local government bureaucracy. Howell et al., (1995) suggest that, in reference to local government reform in the 1990s, “representations had been made that elected members interfered in administrative areas on the one hand, that staff were virtually determining council policy on the other”(p.1).

The above shows a bewildering array of terms which overlap and illustrate the complexity of the theoretical debates in this field. Pitkin (1967) concludes her seminal work by pointing out that what makes representation “is not any single action by any one participant, but the overall structure and functioning of the system, the patterns emerging from the multiple activities of many people” (pp. 221-222). This section has identified different aspects of the representative role and factors which influence this. The literature reveals a tension between the roles of decision-maker and community representative both of which respond to different aspects of the representative role. Behaviour in the role also reflects the choices and interests

of those elected. The way local board members view their representative role will be explored in the findings as they describe their experiences of success.

3.3 Defining success

This study focuses on the experience of success of local board members to answer RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? There is a vast body of academic literature on performance indicators of success (e.g., management, leadership, organization studies, education), which often draws on objective, quantifiable measures of success. In contrast, this research focuses on the subjective and nuanced complexities of success through the experiences of local board members. Given the significance of context, success is a slippery concept to define. Reputable dictionaries provide a useful way to glean common-sense understandings which are useful as a starting point to clarify elected members understanding of success in the political context, which are provided in Chapter Six. For example, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d), “success” is defined as the “achieving of the outcomes wanted or hoped for” or the “achieving of positive results.” The Merriam-Webster (n.d.-b) dictionary includes “the attainment of wealth, favour or eminence” in the definition of success. Hence, there is a focus on achieving outcomes as well as on personal achievement, accomplishment and public recognition.

Success can be used as a synonym for effectiveness. The latter appears to be used more within a local government context. A basic search through the EBSCO database of “local government” and “effectiveness” gave 428 results by title. The same result with “success” as a search term resulted in 194 items. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.-a) suggests that effectiveness reflects whether “policies, treatments, arguments, and techniques do what they are intended to do. People can also be described as effective when they accomplish what they set out to accomplish.” While less prevalent in the academic literature, there is a plethora of choice in how to be successful in the self-improvement literature. To illustrate, a search for “How to be Successful” as a Google (n.d.) Search term reveals numerous prescriptive lists such as 15 habits to adopt today, Being successful in 14 steps (with pictures), 23 life changing tips and 10 tips to get what you want.

While both effectiveness and success capture notions of improvement and achievement, the above reveals features which distinguish the terms. Success is outcome-focused, has a personal quality which is not necessarily related to predetermined goals. Effectiveness sits comfortably in managerial and policy contexts and focuses on the process rather than the

outcome of achievement. At the same time, implicit in the term effectiveness is a sense of evaluation, measuring something in relation to the goals that have been set.

Exploring success, brings to the fore how positive achievements in local government are dependent on a range of factors. Indeed, the intent behind this research study is to understand what success means to elected members in local government and the contextual factors that facilitate/hinder notions of success. Many of the factors identified do not relate to predetermined goals or institutional directives. The term provides a way to describe aspects of a role that are less quantifiable, more personal, and may be beyond the control of an organisation. The focus on success also distinguishes the work of elected members from employed bureaucrats. Public accountability demands that people standing for election explain what they hope to achieve and standing for re-election requires candidates to point to tangible results in order to support their bid for re-election. As will be revealed in the Findings chapters, exploring perceptions of success also provides a mechanism to hear the lived experience of local board members more generally and the many factors which coalesce to produce successful outcomes. The next section explores the existent models / frameworks on how personal and interpersonal qualities of individuals affect success with a focus on the importance of a group of skills identified as political astuteness (Hartley et al., 2013).

3.3.1 Personal dimensions of success

This section considers the personality and individual traits that are associated with success. The focus is on understanding the personal dimensions of success from a personal perspective to inform RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

There are a number of models used for analysis of personality traits and values (e.g., Ashton & Lee 2007; Costa & McCrae, 2008; Goldberg, 1993; Schwarz, 1992). The following studies reveal that certain features are more present in politicians than in other roles. Using the Big Five Inventory-2 personality scales as developed by Soto and John (2017), Florczak et al.,(2020, p.5) found that personality traits of politicians in central government varied from the political advisors they worked with in a number of ways. Politicians tended to score more highly in Extraversion (representing sociability and assertiveness), and Conscientiousness (reflecting responsibility and productiveness). This group had higher Openness scores, reflecting higher intellectual curiosity and imagination, and scored more highly on Agreeableness which reflects compassion and respectfulness. They tended to score lower on

Negative Emotionality, appearing to suffer less from anxiety, depression, and emotional volatility.

Nørgaard and Klemmensen (2018) noted how high Openness of politicians elected to central government correlates with higher levels of education. They also found this group scored highly on Extraversion, even when controlled for education and demography. In relation to the general population, they exhibited low Emotionality (being more self-assured and independent in their thinking) and were found to be slightly more conscientious than the general population, although the correlation was not strong. This suggests that politicians share qualities of being sociable, extrovert, curious and have generally good mental health.

The studies above focus on qualities present in politicians but do not connect these to experiences of success, which is the focus of this study. Much of the qualitative work on representation in academia focuses on the experiences of central government elected representatives and the experience of bureaucrats working with elected members (Best, 2011; Costantini & Craik, 1980; Hanania, 2017). However, as previously mentioned, there is a paucity of studies which consider the lived experience of elected members at local government level.

While this present study does not analyse the differences between values and traits, the expectation is that both are identified by elected members as important features in describing their success. Relevant studies on the New Zealand experience of elected representatives include Drage (1998) and Howell et al.,(1995) who both consider the effects of the 1989 reforms on local government elected members in New Zealand. Tester (2014) examined the lived experience of women councillors in the North Island of New Zealand in the 2010s and Jakimow (2022) looked at the roadblocks for diversity candidates in the Australian 2021 local body elections. The findings in this thesis also draw on survey data collated by Rao (1998) on the experience of local body elected representatives in the United Kingdom.

Hartley et al. (2013) introduce the notion of political astuteness as a collection of skills required of central government bureaucrats working with politicians for them to be effective. These were presented in the Framework for Leadership with Political Astuteness. The Elected Member Handbook for elected members (Auckland Council, 2016b) identifies the skills deemed by Auckland Council as important in carrying out their role. While both frameworks have limitations, for example, the Auckland Council list seems to prioritise the skills it values in

board members from an organisational perspective, nonetheless they do identify qualities associated with success.

Building on Hartley et al. (2013), Hartley and Manzie (2020) point out that there are specific challenges of leadership in government. In particular, they comment that much of what is written on leadership in government does “not sufficiently express the complexities and dilemmas of the dual leadership relationship of elected politicians and bureaucrats working together (p.569)” They go on to identify dual leadership as a dynamic which needs “a nuanced mixture of advice-giving and receiving; managing stakeholder processes; making ethical judgements; and managing implementation”. They also make the case that civil servants should be taught “political astuteness.” This is described as “savvy” or “nous” and as “a set of skills (capabilities, knowledge and judgements) about the interests, goals and values of stakeholders and how to exercise leadership in ways which take account of diverse and competing interests among stakeholders” (p.571). These “capabilities” together are described as a “meta-capability.. [or].. Key behaviours, attitudes, judgements, and cognitions which make the difference between public servants who are politically astute from those who are politically naïve, politically clumsy or “too political” (p.571). While recognizing that political astuteness may have “Machiavellian” undertones as the manipulation of data for self-serving benefit is implied, Hartley and Manzie (2020) point out that these skills must exist alongside intentions that include ethical behaviour and a respect for integrity and transparency (Lawton, et al., 2013). Thus, technical and professional expertise, combined with political astuteness, ethics and empathy are identified as necessary features of politicians and bureaucrats working together in a socially constructive way to create public good. Empathy is described as an understanding the circumstances of elected politicians and the demands arising from being answerable to communities of interest (Hartley & Manzie, 2020). They identify this dual relationship as a “dance on ice” (p.575) as it requires flexibility as well as the ability to respond to the changing dynamics of each situation.

Hartley et al. (2013) identify five dimensions in their framework for leadership with political astuteness. These include strategic direction and scanning, building alignment and alliances, reading people and situations, interpersonal skills and personal skills (see Table 1, below). These capabilities combine with other features specific to the role of public servant to create strong leadership in democratically elected central government. These include personal integrity, empathy with the politician role as mentioned above, as well as technical skills and a knowledge of the history of the public service and the context of decision-making.

Figure 3.1

Framework for leadership with political astuteness (FLPA)

(Hartley et al., 2013).

Strategic direction and scanning	Strategic thinking and action in relation to organizational purpose. Thinking long-term and having a road map of the journey. Not diverted by short-term pressures. Scanning: thinking about longer-term issues in the environment which may potentially have an impact on the organization. Attention to what is over the horizon. Analytical capacity to think through scenarios of possible futures. Noticing small changes which may herald bigger shifts in society. Analysing and managing uncertainty. Keeping options open rather than reaching for a decision prematurely.
Building alignment and alliances	Detailed appreciation of context, players and objectives of stakeholders in relation to the alignment goal. Recognizing difference and plurality and forging them into collaborative action even where there are substantial differences in outlook or emphasis. Works with differences and conflicts of interest, not just finding consensus and commonality. Actively seeking out alliances and partnerships rather than relying on those already in existence. Ability to bring difficult issues into the open and deal with differences between stakeholders. Knowing when to exclude particular interests. Creating useful and realistic consensus not common denominator.
Reading people and situations	Analysing or intuiting the dynamics which can or might occur when stakeholders and agendas come together. Recognition of different interests and agendas of both people and their organizations. Discerning the underlying not just the espoused agendas. Thinking through the likely standpoints of various interests and groups in advance. Using knowledge of institutions, processes and social systems to understand what is or what might happen. Recognizing when you may be seen as a threat to others. Understanding power relations.
Interpersonal skills	'Soft' skills: able to influence the thinking and behaviour of others. Getting buy-in from those over whom the person has no direct authority. Making people feel valued. 'Tough' skills: ability to negotiate, able to stand up to pressures from other people, able to handle conflict in order to achieve constructive outcomes. Coaching and mentoring individuals to develop their own political skills.
Personal skills	Self-awareness of one's own motives and behaviours. Ability to exercise self-control, being open to the views of others, ability to listen to others and reflect on and be curious about their views. Having a proactive disposition (initiating rather than passively waiting for things to happen).

Note. Hartley, et al. (2013) originally called the Framework of Political Astuteness Skills, reprinted from "It's every breath we take here': Political astuteness and ethics in civil service leadership development," By Hartley and S. Manzie, 2020, *Public Money & Management*, 40(8), p.572. Copyright 2013, by Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2020.1777704>

As a whole, the Framework for Leadership with Political Astuteness (FLPA) is useful as it recognises that there is a dual focus in leadership in a government context involving employed managers and elected politicians. This differs from a business context, for example, where

lines of communication and responsibility are usually clearer. The framework foregrounds the importance of ethical behaviour in performing a public service role and relates this to other key skills. The main limitation of the framework is in how it reflects the perspective of the employed civil servant with a focus on safeguarding the organisation and understanding underlying goals. This comes through in phrases such as being concerned about issues that “potentially have an impact on the organization,” “knowing when to exclude particular interests,” “creating useful and realistic consensus,” “discerning the underlying not just the espoused agendas” “in order to achieve constructive outcomes” (Hartley & Manzie, 2020, p.572). This illustrates that the focus of the discourse for those employed within local government administration includes protecting the political system (see Rao, 1998, above) while also supporting the elected members.

This limitation speaks to a core tension in terms of public accountability and managerialism in government (Cheyne 2016; Mulgan 2008). The public feel the responsibility of bureaucrats is to enact the collective decisions of elected members and to represent community views as directly as possible, rather than be the keepers of an underlying “truth”. While their technical expertise may be useful in determining constructive outcomes, decisions often have a social impact which technical advisors can miss in their project evaluations. In addition, there is an emphasis on the importance of political neutrality in civil servants which might be unrealistic in practice (Svara, 1998; Peters 2010). The limitations of political neutrality are brought out by feminist scholarship which illustrates that organisations, and the way each operates, “conflates equality with sameness and does not account for gender, class, race and disability bias ingrained in administrative knowledge production”(Kulicka, 2020, p.341). Bureaucrats should of course aspire to political neutrality, but it should not be assumed that their behaviour is necessarily values free.

There are also differences in terms of how employees and elected members perform their role. While local board members may have subject matter expertise (for example a professional planning background), and this may influence their chances of being elected, they are not elected for this knowledge in a way that an employee is employed for possessing a particular skill base. Another difference with respect to this study is that local board members are embedded within their communities for whom they are making local resource allocation decisions. While they do provide input into longer term Auckland Council plans, their focus is on creating and delivering Local Board Plans which drive actions over the short to medium term (1-6 years), rather than a longer term outlook which may be a stronger focus in central government or for the governing body of Auckland Council. While accepting these

limitations, Figure 3.1 provides a useful framework with which to analyse the personal qualities and interpersonal relationships which contribute to the success of elected members.

The second document used in this research to identify the skills required of elected members is The Candidate Information Handbook (Auckland Council, 2016b) which describes “capabilities (knowledge and skills)” for elected members. Here the skill sets are divided into twelve areas. These include a combination of political astuteness skills, some of which are identified by Hartley et al., (2013) but are configured in a slightly different way. The following table shows the correspondence between the FLPA (Hartley et al., 2013), the additional capabilities described in Hartley and Manzie (2020), and the skills identified by Auckland Council as useful for elected members. The findings in Chapter Seven will discuss how far these skills and capabilities feature as important for local board members in the performance of their role.

Figure 3.2

The combined Framework for Leadership with Political Astuteness
And skills identified as important for Elected Members by Auckland Council

Framework of leadership with political astuteness (FLPA) (Hartley, et al. 2013)		Skills identified by Auckland Council (2013, 2016, 2019)	
Political Astuteness	Strategic Direction and Scanning	Strategic Thinking	
	Building alignment and alliances	Resilience	Relationship building and collaboration Communication and engagement
	Reading people and situations		
	Interpersonal skills		
	Personal skills		
Other skills	Empathy	Cultural awareness (broad view of culture)	
	Personal integrity	Ethics and Values Integrity and Trust	
	Technical and subject knowledge	Knowledge and understanding of Auckland Council and local government Computer literacy	

Note. This chart combines information from Hartley, et al. (2013), reprinted in Hartley and S. Manzie (2020) and Auckland Council (2016b).

In the Auckland Council description (Auckland Council, 2016b, pp.112-113), the Political Acumen and Leadership headings address general features that include subcategories, including the need to “manoeuvre through complex political situations” or “provide leadership and direction.” Relationship Building, and Communication and Engagement, reflect features identified in the FLPA under Building Alliances, Reading People and Situations, Interpersonal Skills, and Personal Skills. These include features such as “building rapport and trust” or “find common ground.”

Quality Decision-making and Communication and Engagement are two categories in the Auckland Council model which reflect the outward-facing nature of the role with an emphasis on being open-minded and balancing “conflicting opinions while putting aside personal bias” and making “good decisions based on a combination of staff advice, community views, wisdom, experience and informed judgement” (p.112). Communication and Engagement also addresses public engagement explicitly to “diffuse high-tension situations” and to be “effective... in a variety of engagement settings” (p.113). In this way it differs from the FLPA model which does not reference dealing with the public or decision-making. This reflects the fact that civil servants create information and options internally that are then tested among the public or are decided and resolved by politicians. It also masks the way bureaucrats do make decisions which are not factored into the decision-making process.

The Auckland Council (2016b) list also frames activities people engage in and how these should be performed, for example stressing the importance of being “financially prudent” (p.113). The list also prescribes the expectations Auckland Council has of local board members from an organisational perspective. For example, “represent and promote council in a measured, unified and dignified light to avoid risks to council’s reputation” (p.113) and “take a broad view and balance considerations and conflicting opinions while putting aside personal bias” (p.112). These items can conflict with directives like “represent all members of the local community by actively seeking and sharing their views with others and, advocating on their behalf” (p.111), which may involve some specific and ongoing advocacy. Whether by design or unknowingly, the role description reflects the tensions within the role.

Resilience is mentioned as a specific category. This includes the need to “manage time, prioritise, be flexible [and] cope with the pressures of being in the public eye”(p.111) all of which reflect the personal challenges of being in a public role. Further, in the Auckland Council description, there is a bicultural and multicultural overlay, which is absent from the FLPA model. Emphasised here is the need to “understand and empathise with different

communities ... understand tikanga Māori and the Māori Responsiveness Framework” (p.112) as well as “support equal and fair treatment for all”(p.112). This widely corresponds to the notion of empathy mentioned by Hartley and Manzie (2020) but gives greater emphasis to engaging with different kinds of communities, rather than with people as individuals. It also recognizes New Zealand’s bicultural framework, and the importance of adopting flexible approaches to engage with members of diverse communities within the Auckland region.

The Auckland Council role description also focuses on understanding “Auckland Council’s governance model ... central government’s policy and legislative framework... relevant legislation, council processes” (p.113). This corresponds to the “technical” knowledge of bureaucrats (Hartley & Manzie, 2020) which values knowledge of the topic and an understanding of the system. The categories of ethics and values focuses on ethical behaviour in relation to Auckland Council staff and in relationships. It asks elected members to “understand and uphold the code of conduct, understand and model the Auckland Council values and behaviours and discourage unethical behaviour, work respectfully with Council staff and others, and value their roles” (p.113). This does not, however, address wider ethical behaviour in terms of the safety of elected representatives in expressing their views. Integrity and trust focus on “respecting confidentiality” and “not misrepresenting him/herself for personal gain” (p.114), rather than behaving ethically in representing the issues or making ethical decisions in line with community aspirations. The Auckland Council list also includes “computer literacy” which will facilitate functioning in the role and which I have added to the knowledge base of the role (p.113).

The FLPA framework and additional capabilities (Hartley & Manzie, 2020), is useful as it classifies skills in a systematic way, and avoids conceptual overlap. The benefits of the Auckland Council model are that it recognises several facets of the role including its inward (Auckland Council-facing) and outward (stakeholder and community) aspects. It offers a greater detail in the specific skills required, as well as an understanding of dealing with different cultures. Conversely, there are attempts to manage or direct local board members in ways that could be seen to overstep the boundary between employed bureaucrats and those elected to a governance role. This undermines the importance of the role in representing community voices and the role of elected members in seeking public accountability for the actions of the Auckland Council bureaucracy.

Drawing on what has been identified above, this study explores the qualities local board members identify with success. In Chapter Seven those identified are refined into a model of

useful skills and capabilities for local board members (SKEMLG) to provide a more detailed picture of what success means for local government elected representatives on local boards.

3.3.2 Pathways to election

Success in local government starts with the process of becoming elected, a challenge with its own pitfalls to be navigated. This is an area that has been neglected in studies on elected members which tend to focus more on the experience of being in the role. This section considers the affiliation choices made by candidates standing for election to local boards as these choices affect campaign resourcing, community visibility and ultimately, candidate electability.

Aars and Rigkjøbt (2005) comment that voters in city areas with larger populations rely on party ideology to choose their candidate. This occurs because candidates are trying to enhance their profile across physically larger electorate areas or with greater populations. In the region covered by Auckland Council, Howick is the largest local board area, by population, with 153,400 people (Auckland Council, 2016b). Rodney is the most geographically spread, covering 2,474 square kilometres, 45% of the Auckland Region (Auckland Council, 2011). Clear and recognisable branding helps to raise the profile of a candidate who may otherwise struggle to reach potential voters.

At various times, local board candidates have run directly with political branding. Examples include The New Zealand Labour Party (henceforth, the Labour Party), The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand (henceforth the Green Party) or the New Conservative Party of New Zealand. Labour Party branded local board candidates currently win elections in the more socio-economically depressed areas such as South Auckland where the Labour Party also wins electorate seats for Parliament (McCulloch, 2020).

There are also historical factors which have created recognisable political groups in the Auckland region. Citizens and Ratepayers (C & R), established in 1938 (Auckland Star, 1938), and rebranded to Community and Residents in 2012 (Orsman, 2012) embodies values on the right of the political spectrum. More recently, they are seen as favouring asset sales, reducing the reach of local government activity to cover Roads, Rates and Rubbish, and broadly favouring a “user pays” models of service delivery. C & R elected members are generally members of a party on the right of the political spectrum: the New Zealand National Party (henceforth the National Party) or the ACT Party or are unaligned politically, but ideologically

favour a small government approach. City Vision emerged in 1998 (City Vision, n.d.). As a response to continued domination of Auckland City politics by C & R. Their political orientation favours a Left and Green perspective and, like C & R, also includes community independents. The outlook of City Vision tends to be more on retaining community assets, improving services, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources across all communities. Various other groups have also emerged which might have a loose affiliation to a political party and a geographic location, for example Manurewa Action Team in Manurewa which in 2016 was more aligned to the National and ACT parties, or Future West in the Waitakere Local Board which is more aligned to the Labour Party and the Green Party. There are also local groups which coalesce around a person, such as Team George Wood (former mayor of the legacy North Shore City Council) or around specific initiatives like Penlink First where the name refers to the support of the O Mahurangi Penlink roading infrastructure (Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, 2023).

Differentiating the ways in which a political group differs from a local group can be a challenge as there can be substantial overlap. While greater numbers of candidates are drawn to standing as a group in each successive Auckland Council election, there is also some fluctuation over different local board terms in how these groups are named and how closely they are affiliated to political parties. This may reflect that political parties and individuals are still working out the most effective way they can influence election results, whether overtly (with the branding clearly identifying their politics) or covertly (with the brand of the group more opaque to the public) (Asquith, 2012).

In a study looking at how candidates identify their political affiliation on their election nomination forms (Webster et al., 2019), affiliation is categorised in one of four ways. The following identifies the categories with examples from the 2016 Auckland Council election:

1. No affiliation declared (this part of the nomination form is left blank).
2. Self-declaration with a slogan (A marketing slogan such as Practical not political or Independent).
3. Local Group (existing in one local area with no political affiliation and changing or disbanding prior to the following election People and Penlink First.).
4. Political Party, at local board level this was the Labour Party (this also includes groups that are recognised as an entity connected to a political party and may be funded, supported or subject to their own formal processes or a political party such as Communities and Residents).

Webster et al., (2019) based their observations, on data from the 2007 election (before the Auckland Council amalgamation in 2010) and in the 2010, 2013, and 2016 elections. They note a trend towards increasing political party penetration in Auckland Council elections, with a greater number of political party affiliated candidates elected in successive elections. Over the four elections, 27% of candidates stood as part of a local group and 21% stood for a political party. In both cases, candidates with these affiliations were more electable taking 36% and 35% of the seats respectively. This suggests standing as part of a group leads to greater electability (Webster et al., 2019, p.582), than standing as an Independent (22% elected) or with no affiliation declared (6% elected).

By combining the candidates who did not provide an affiliation, and those that wrote “Independent” as an affiliation choice, Webster et al.,(2019) show that 53% have stood as independents (that is, not linked with other candidates), with a 28% success rate over the four elections. This implies that a substantial number of people are still elected as independent candidates onto local boards with more than half the candidates choosing to run outside a group.

There may be different reasons why people prefer the label “Independent,” use a slogan or leave the affiliation category blank. This choice was discussed with participants in this study. For the purposes of understanding the experience of the independent candidate, as well as the rise of community groups to contest elections which have different features to political parties but are forming an increasingly important part of the election landscape, I identify three main categories in which people stand and are elected to local boards:

1. Standing as an independent, non-affiliated candidate, with or without a slogan, and sometimes declaring their political affiliation as Independent on the nomination form.
2. Standing with a group who are unaligned to a political party (and belong to a local or community group);
3. Standing with a political party or party aligned group (which may have community independents but has political values which broadly align with the Left or Right of the political spectrum and have some political party support or constraints).

The specific choices made by individual candidates in how to run, the effects on group dynamics, and the role of political parties in the election process and subsequently in performing the role once elected will be explored in Chapters Eight to answer RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

Quantitative data on how these affiliation choices compare across visible characteristics of age, gender and ethnicity is discussed in Chapter Five.

The next part of this chapter, sees the discussion shift to some of the relevant theoretical discussions of diversity and difference in relation to the context of standing for election for local boards of Auckland Council. It seeks to clarify notions of diversity and difference in a political environment to inform RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

3.4 Equality, diversity, inclusion, and difference

Auckland Council is by far the largest local government authority in New Zealand, representing over 1.6 million people and 200 different ethnicities (Auckland Council, 2012). In terms of the diversity profile, in the 2018 census, 28% of people identified as Asian (up from 23% in the 2013 census, with the Auckland Council region, home to almost 63% of all Asian peoples in New Zealand. Pacific Peoples made up 15.5% of the Auckland population. Nineteen iwi [Māori tribes] are present in the Auckland area, representing 11.5% of the Auckland population and 20% of New Zealand Māori. Children and young people (under the age of 24) make up a 34% of the Auckland population. The average age of New Zealand Europeans (39.4 years) is considerably more than that of Māori (24.9 years) and Pacific Peoples (24 years) while the average age of Aucklanders is 34.7 years (Statistics New Zealand, n.d. -a). In total, one in three New Zealanders live in Auckland, and the population is predicted to grow 39% by 2043. Of this, the population of those 65 and over was expected to double between 2012 and 2032 (Auckland Council, 2012). The recent median-growth projections suggest that Auckland's population could increase by 300,000 people by 2033 (Statistics New Zealand, 2021). Auckland Council is therefore at the forefront of population growth and faces challenges arising from the fact its population is significantly more diverse than in other parts of New Zealand as well as accounting for approximately 38% of New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product (Wilson, 2023).

Responding to the rapidly changing Auckland demographic, was a cornerstone of the Auckland Plan 2050 (Auckland Council, 2012), the spatial plan intended to guide the city over the next 30 years. Addressing inequities continues to feature as a key concern (Auckland Council, 2022a). To address these, Auckland Council has, since 2015, adopted several measures to indicate its commitment to both engaging with a diverse population and increasing the diversity of its workforce and elected members. This has resulted in the

development of The Inclusive Auckland Framework (Auckland Council, 2017a) which defines diversity as:

The broad range of human difference. Each person has layers of diversity, making his, her or their perspective and lived experience different to others. These layers of diversity may include ethnicity, social disparity, culture, age, gender identity, sexuality, disability, nationality, religion and lived experience (p.5)

This definition recognises diversity as multi-layered, a product of each person's experience, encompassing of the more visible characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, age, and ablebodiedness. Also included in this definition are potentially invisible characteristics such as culture, identity and class which require additional data to be collected from other sources (Mor Barak, 2011, p.135). Inclusion is described as the participation of these different voices with inclusivity defined as the key to "intentionally addressing issues of access, equity and participation" (Auckland Council, 2017a, p.3).

The instrumental approach to managing diversity or what Wood and Landry (2008) describe as the diversity advantage, is emphasised in the Auckland Inclusive Framework. This view holds that global cities should court the best talent and business minds to "add to the fabric of the city and the economy" and to connect and represent "customers, citizens, and communities" (Auckland Council, 2017a, p.8). The Framework recognises that diversity might negatively affect social cohesion and discusses the importance of building a sense of "belonging, well-being and trust" by creating opportunities for participation and engagement across different communities thus trying to reconcile competing diversity discourses (Tomlinson & Schwabenland 2010). The Framework also reflects the intersectional nature of some of these issues and makes a link between poverty and ethnicity, with young people from certain ethnicities more affected than others. This is relevant given that there is an intersection between age and ethnicity where people who identify as Pacific and Māori Peoples are significantly younger than other ethnicities (see above).

The Framework adopts a four-pronged approach to addressing diversity:

Part 1: Promotes greater diversity in the Auckland Council workplace, including the embedding of diversity principles in Auckland Council employment practices and policies. An example of this is ensuring that interview panels are diverse and use inclusive interviewing techniques.

Part 2: Evaluates how processes, policies and services meet the needs of Aucklanders with a focus on improving engagement with different communities.

Part 3: Considers strategic leadership, with a focus on how businesses and government entities engage with key community stakeholders to promote social cohesion.

Part 4: Addresses the governance aspects of diversity. This involves the education of elected members to improve their ability to represent diverse communities, addressing diversity in Council Controlled Organisation appointments, as well as removing barriers to voting and access for people who want to stand as political representatives (Auckland Council, 2017a, Appendix A).

The importance of this diversity work stream is reflected in the fact a role was created for a diversity officer to implement the plan and report directly to the leadership team of the Auckland Council administration, reporting directly to the CEO. This broader view of diversity which includes a wide range of characteristics is appealing in a governance context as it assumes everyone can be included while avoiding issues of privilege and discriminatory practices that exclude certain groups (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994). Nonetheless several tensions arise with this view:

1. Organisations continue to be structured by race, gender and class which allows prejudice to be glossed over in ways that maintain these distinctions (Nkomo, 2009).
2. The approach is accused of suffering from an “upbeat naivety” (Prasad et al., 1997) where it assumes that people with substantially different backgrounds will be able to work together and find common ground that reflects the interests of all communities.
3. The process of managing diversity runs into semantic difficulties and makes no sense unless there is diversity in the workforce (Thomas, 1992).
4. Diversity is used to describe both individual and group variation. As Hearn and Louvrier (2015, p.76) remark, “In some senses it can mean almost anything to anyone; it can indeed function as an empty, often an ideological signifier”.

So while the word diversity recognises a workplace dynamic of difference, it potentially entrenches disadvantage by failing to create conditions which welcome all participants equitably. Recognising the limitations in the word, does require recognition that some difference characteristics are privileged and that diversity does not refer only to those who are different from a perceived norm (Hearn & Louvrier, 2015).

3.4.1 Diversity in elected representation and the challenges of resemblance

Understanding how to support diversity in elected representation has specific challenges.

Elected representatives are elected, rather than employed. Being selected and voted in relies on winning over the voter base, as well as being selected for one's skills and personality as would occur in a job interview. There are therefore particular challenges to ensure descriptive representation and equity in election outcomes based on visible characteristics of difference. It is recognised that elected representatives in New Zealand, like other Western political systems has been dominated by a narrow pool of candidates, generally older, New Zealand European and male (Drage & Tremaine, 2011; Hayward, 2016; Webster & Cheyne, 2017). To address this, Phillips (1995) advocates for a politics of presence which focuses on:

Demands for the equal representation of women with men; demands for a more even-handed balance between the different ethnic groups that make up each society; demands for the political inclusion of groups that have come to see themselves as marginalized, silenced or excluded (p.5)

Pitkin (1967) suggests that there is a distinction between symbolic (acting for) and descriptive (standing for) representation. In the former, representatives are agents for whom they represent, whereas in the latter there is a connection or resemblance. The resemblance model suggests that elected representatives should in some way embody or mirror or share characteristics of the people they represent, for example sharing the same qualities such as gender, age, or ethnicity. Arguments in favour of resemblance theories in governance focus on social cohesion and belonging and emphasise inclusion into the wider society (Price & Chacko, 2012). In addition, there is a desire to address inequalities that might remain unnoticed because they affect marginalised groups disproportionately. The attraction of descriptive representation rests on the fact that different groups bring their own perspective to the discussion and relies on the belief that their unique view can only be presented effectively by members of that group.

Descriptive representation can, however, be challenging to enact in practice. It is impossible in practice for all minority groups to be represented as there may be too many groups with competing interests to provide for effective representation (Goodin, 2004). Groups may also have intersecting dimensions and not be internally homogenous (Hearn & Louvrier, 2015) which can result in competing interests. For example, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the needs of younger Pacific women joining the workforce may be very different from older Pacific women of retirement age. Minority groups may also have complicated and intersecting needs across groups which means that it is difficult to agree on a single agenda. Here, Māori and Asian

women may both be underrepresented in local government, but their challenges of participation and opportunities available to them may vary in significant ways. Hickman et al., (2008) also point out that deprivation, disadvantage, and long-term marginalisation are systemic failures that must be recognised independently of social cohesion issues arising from migration or lack of engagement from young people. Creating opportunities for descriptive representation may therefore mask other issues or interfere with our ability to resolve these issues for society at large.

In addition, the agency of individuals in positions of power and representation needs to be considered. Good governance requires a greater range of skills than simply resembling the group represented (Chen, 2017). As such, descriptive representation may not be a sufficient condition for electability, or success once elected. Childs and Crook (2008), in discussing women's representation, point out that descriptive representation with tokenistic representation by one individual in a visible minority is unlikely to promote a change in the political agenda. Kanter (1977) suggests that critical mass is important with at least one in three decision makers needing to be women for agenda items about women to be addressed meaningfully. Meier and Severs (2018) describe a "dark side to representation" where role models, who share some resemblance with the electors, might not be representative or understand the issues people really face, might determine the nature of a legitimate viewpoint and might themselves act as gatekeeper for issues of concern. These representatives may claim "experiential authority in representation processes" (p.34) when in fact this is not shared with the group they are seen to represent. Meanwhile, Garboni (2015) suggests that critical mass of difference in elected representation is less important than the micro actions of individual actors, as some people are more effective than others at influencing decision-making. Accordingly, the role of personal agency (including skills, intention and integrity) as well as the context have influenced how successfully descriptive representation works in practice.

There is a historic dimension to the importance of resemblance (Rao, 1998) which may change over time. British electors in 1993 (Rao, 1993) were much less concerned about resemblance than responsiveness in their councillors than they had been in comparison to 1965 data (Maud, 1965). This mirrored the increase in representation from representatives from visible minority backgrounds. The implication is that resemblance is viewed as essential. However, once this has been achieved, the desire for substantive and responsive representation increases and becomes more important for electors in choosing a candidate. At the same time, descriptive representation is also important in influencing the political agenda. Several

studies show how higher descriptive representation increased substantive representation in terms of issues that are salient to women. (Celis et al., 2008; Garboni, 2015; Kanter, 1977). Given the changing demographic of elected members on local boards identified in Chapter Five, the findings in Chapters Six and Seven will reflect how far individual actors feel they can influence the political agenda.

Promoting equality, within discussions of difference, relies on the rights of the individual to access justice and citizenship equitably (Webb, 1997). This suggests that equality of opportunity exists when “all individuals are enabled freely and equally to compete for social rewards” (Jewson & Mason, 1986, p.307). In the approach adopted by Auckland Council, there is an attempt to recognise fair processes which will create a “level playing field” for those standing for election. For example, Auckland Council develops extensive promotional material that is available both as hard copies and as an online resource, and provides information sessions on the process of standing for election. This information is careful to represent people with a range of visible characteristics to emphasise that standing for local boards is accessible to all members of the community. To illustrate, the Candidate Handbook for 2016 (Auckland Council, 2016a) predominantly features a range of younger men and women from non-European ethnicities. This is strikingly different from the people who dominate the pool of candidates and elected representatives.

However, as Jewson and Mason, (1986) further point out, a more radical approach provides for equity of outcome – that everyone should access the rewards within society, such as elected positions, equitably. Collinson et al., (1990) suggests that tension exists in the management literature around notions of acceptability versus suitability. Webb (1997, p.161) points out, for example, that “aspects of masculinity and femininity become established as indicators of suitability” so that women are seen as less aggressive and therefore less suited to the confrontational arena of politics. They can then find themselves side-lined as candidates during a selection process or for additional positions of responsibility such as being chair or deputy chair once elected. Kirton and Greene (2004) argue that “while the liberal approach [to manage diversity] emphasizes the need to formalize procedures, the radical approach emphasizes the need to politicize the processes of decision-making”(p.117).

Auckland Council has worked to address equality of opportunity, but it is less clear how effectively equality of outcome has been addressed or what addressing it might look like. The difficulty in improving equity of outcome, is that some groups can be seen to be favoured unfairly which can have political consequences and lack of buy-in from the electorate

(Cockburn, 1991). A further problem is that it can give “disadvantaged groups a boost up the ladder, while leaving the structure of that ladder and the disadvantage it entails just as before” (p.217) so that some groups remain disadvantaged, while others are able to participate. Lastly, as noted previously, the election process means that everyone has a vote, so it is impossible, on a practical level, to guarantee that those elected will reflect the diversity of their communities.

To address these issues, Goodin (2004) reflects on the challenges and advocates for a workable approach to addressing equality of outcome which embraces “the sheer fact of diversity” (p.463). For this to occur, there needs to be some descriptive diversity but to be considered successful, it does not need to represent the full gambit of minority representative groups. The aim is for a “partial presence” which mirrors some of the most important differences (p.463). This has a number of goals. Firstly, it makes legislators “minimally presumptuous” in policymaking so they develop a broader understanding of how issues affect groups to which they do not belong. Secondly, it “will challenge the false consensus that keeps so many out” and thirdly it “expands the range of issues or concerns within government that are appropriate for social action” (p.464).

Simon-Kumar (2014) takes this further. She posits that social structures should be challenged to be more accommodating to all, rather than expecting conformity of minorities as a prerequisite to integration. In the Australian context, Jakimow (2022) points to the need to address the reasons for overrepresentation of men and “white” Australians in local government, rather than focusing on the underrepresentation of minorities. She also reflects that “narratives that identify the most critical barriers to diversity are also discursive practices that can reproduce as much as they challenge, the status quo”(p.78). In this view, women feel “out of place” (Puwar, 2004) in local government contexts dominated by ideologies of managerialism and fiscal responsibility (Jakimow, 2022). Minta (2012) also reflects this view, stating that the importance of descriptive representation lies in “changing a non-diverse environment to allow for other groups to make similar demands” (p.544). Hence, it can be argued that the greater presence of women has destabilised the view that only older, white males are suitable candidates for political representation, thus paving the way for a greater diversity of voices to be represented. The task then is to transform the structures so that diversity of representation is welcomed, and different voices have an equal right to participate and be heard.

Minta and Sinclair-Chapman (2013) also make the point that a key to effective minority representation is what they call “diversity infrastructure” (p.136). This which improves substantive representation of minority issues even when descriptive representation is low (p.136). Diversity infrastructure at local government level would for, example, include mechanisms such as caucuses to allow for the sharing and coordination of specific interests (Hammond, 1998).

Notwithstanding the challenges of descriptive representation, there is agreement that greater descriptive representation results in greater substantive representation. Cockburn(1991) suggests that societies should focus on a “long agenda” which would transform organisational structures and improve systems which favour certain concerns over others. Thus, an increase in the number of elected women, particularly working mothers, might mean that meetings are held earlier in the day rather than in the evenings when access to childcare is more difficult. Kirton and Greene (2004) point out that this “requires organizational actors to be fully committed to a transformative aim of equality policies” (p. 121). Increased diversity has been positioned by diversity advocates targeting large corporates as an advantage leading to the “mainstreaming” of diversity policies (Rees, 1998, p. 27) and their popularity among human resource practitioners. Research has shown how minority group individuals, do at times struggle with being seen as the token person to meet an organisations diversity targets (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2018). However, if, in this policy led process, organisations “create a culture of diversity in which people of a much broader range of characteristics and background may confidently flourish” (Rees, 1998, p. 27) then the process can be genuinely transformative, where a plurality of views and approaches is captured. These issues and the local board perspectives on diversity and representation are further explored in the findings of this research.

3.4.2 Individual effects

There is also a personal dimension to how individuals engage with the issues of their own and others’ difference. Weedon (1987) points out that individuals have plural and fragmented identities. Liff and Wajcman, (1996) suggest that people have “mobile subjectivities” which include multiple differences and similarities. As Kirton and Greene (2004, p. 132) note they:

May want to be treated the same for recruitment purposes regardless of their ethnicity or gender but may want their rights recognized to have more flexible arrangements to look after a dependent or to have specific arrangements for religious worship without this detrimentally affecting their long-term prospects.

Similar to the above these individual effects are pursued more in the findings chapters. In particular, how local board members experience working with differences that exist across local boards, how they navigate their majority and minority identities to achieve successful outcomes and how far these identities and choices affect their ability to be successful or to align with other local board members.

In terms of creating a transformative agenda and taking actions to accommodate difference more successfully, a framework developed in the United Kingdom (Liff, 1997) continues to be useful (Storey, 2014). Difference is approached in four different ways with the first three focused on social membership, whereas the last one considers the individual's engagement with structural processes:

1. Valuing difference: This reflects the view that some differences are culturally embedded, and care must be taken for all members of an organisation to feel valued and comfortable. Strategies here include training for underrepresented groups but could include cultural competence training for everyone.
2. Accommodating difference: This stresses the importance of creating the conditions for all talent to be recognised, for example, reaching out to minority groups to stand for election or designing an advertising recruitment campaign for local elections which appeals to younger candidates.
3. Utilization difference: This recognises that different people may have different needs that need to be addressed, for example and as noted previously, having meetings earlier in the day to allow those, particularly women with childcare responsibilities, to attend.
4. Dissolving difference: This is focused on recognising individual differences between people so they can achieve their potential. The aim is not for equality in terms of social grouping but the "opportunity to be acknowledged as the person one is and to be helped in making the most of one's talents and reach one's own goals" (Liff, 1997, p.13) hence reflecting the agentive behaviour of individuals.

This model, while focused on policy approaches, provides a useful framework to understand how participants in this study frame their own and others' differences as well as suggesting actions which could be taken to transform workplaces to welcome difference. It also allows for an awareness of structural issues, as well as individual behaviours and a consideration of how these interact. The aim should be for a healthy society where resources are shared equitably and there is equity of outcome where differences while recognisable, become irrelevant in terms of access and participation.

3.4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted a number of conceptual and theoretical frameworks and debates that play a role in the experience of success felt by local board members in their role. This has included an understanding of the nature of representation at local government level and how this relates to responsiveness. The behaviours, including political astuteness and the knowledge which may contribute to local board member success have also been identified. The discussion of success has revealed there may be tensions in achieving successful outcomes arising from the sharing of the governance role with councillors who make regional decisions. At the same time, the decision-making is influenced by working with employed bureaucrats who develop the Auckland Council's policies and deliver the projects for local boards and the interplay of these factors may be important in local board member experience of success.

The first step on the road to success as an elected member is in being elected so there has been a focus in this chapter on the choices people make when standing for election. Success, or lack of success, in Auckland Council is further complicated by an elected member demographic which is becoming increasingly female, younger and more ethnically diverse. Given the uneven representation of certain ethnic demographics, the under-representation of some ethnicities and younger people, and the increasing levels of gender parity in elected representation, this chapter has examined the debates around visible aspects of difference in elected representation which could influence success. Having discussed some of the key theoretical debates, the next chapter focuses on the design, methodology and methods used in the study before exploring the findings in Chapters Five to Nine.

Chapter 4 Conceptual Frameworks

4.1 Introduction

This study seeks to understand how local board members understand success, the factors which affect that success, both personal and organisational, and whether there are differences in how success is experienced by older New Zealand European, predominantly male participants (identified as majority participants in this study) and those who are younger, share other ethnic characteristics and are more likely to be female (identified as minority participants in this study). While focused on the experience of local board members, these reflections provide insights into how Auckland Council and the relevant legislation provides for local government. A relational framework, located within a critical realist approach is used to understand the role of personal experience and individual agency and how these interact with organisational and societal structures in contributing (or not) to the success of local board members in the Auckland region.

The study adopts a mixed methods approach to answer the research questions.

RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards?

RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

A mixed method approach saw the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. First, there was the need to review the diversity profile of local board members. This was done by collating quantitative data on participants and elected members from 2010. This is followed by qualitative data analysis of local board member experience using semi-structured interviews of 21 local board members.

Capturing the voices of participants with visible differences (e.g., age, ethnicity, political orientation and gender) alongside older majority New Zealand European participants, then considering the data through an intersectional lens, provided a way of understanding how success is understood by different participants and the factors which influence this. The intent

was to avoid the assumption that majority voices necessarily capture minority viewpoints, or indeed, that minority experiences are necessarily different in terms of achieving successful outcomes on local boards. This use of majority and minority refers to demographic characteristics of participants (age, gender and ethnicity) and is different from political majority or minority which reflects the ideological orientation of the local board.

Local boards and this iteration of Auckland Council have only been in existence since 2010. Hence this study is located in an evolving context of increasing diversity and a bureaucracy that emerged from seven district councils and a regional council. Significant document research was necessary particularly of Auckland Council documents and local government legislation. These included the Auckland Council Governance Statement (Auckland Council, 2020a) the Auckland Plan (Auckland Council 2012, 2018), and Auckland Council long-term plans. Historical documents relating to the formation of Auckland Council and the Report of the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance (Salmon et al., 2009) were also used. This information was introduced in Chapter Two and establishes the foundation for this study. One of the challenges in locating this information is that the Auckland Council website is continuously updated which makes it difficult to track when any changes in processes, or organisational structures came into effect. Further, finding historic documents, for example relating to election results, or campaign documents prior to the last Auckland Council election can be difficult to find.

Chapter Four opens with a discussion of critical realism, and the relational framework used to understand and categorise local board member experiences of success. There is then a closer look at the methods and how the research path unfolds. As a former local board member myself, elected from 2013 to 2019, there is an autobiographical element to the research. I use this interest (detailed in Section 1.2) to inform the questions initially asked of participants and to inform an understanding of the findings. The final part of this chapter reflects on the trustworthiness of the data and the steps taken with respect to researcher bias.

In Chapter Two there is a personal description of how local board members experience the role in terms of the organisation of work (Section 2.7). This is heavily reliant on my own experience but also provides an example of how a fairly typical work day would unfold for local board members. In Chapter Nine a delineated box is used to highlight the Kafkaesque nature of local board work by detailing a personal experience. Other than that, I have tried to separate personal experience and accounts from the wider, more detached findings of the

thesis. Curiosity about what success means to local board members and whether diversity qualities affect that experience do, nonetheless, reflect my own challenges in the role.

4.2 Critical realism

Critical realism is defined as a “meta-theoretical position: a reflexive philosophical stance concerned with providing a philosophically informed account of science and social science which can in turn inform our empirical investigations” (Archer et al., 2016). This provides for a relativist epistemology combined with a realist ontology. As such, critical realism offers a way to bridge the gap between positivist and constructivist approaches to social research (Fletcher, 2017). This matches the expectations of evidence-based approaches favoured by policy makers, which value the use of identifiable facts that guide actions (Tatian, 2016; Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018). Critical realism recognises the particularities of the social world and posits that, unlike scientific realms which are defined by testable facts and closed systems, social phenomenon exists in open systems where cause and effect are difficult to reconcile and account for (Bhaskar, 1978). This is relevant to this study where participant comments are subjective and reflect their own perspectives, but the findings are used to make wider claims about how Auckland Council processes can be improved, as well as how local government legislation could be changed.

The value of critical realism is that it imbues social structures with a material existence in that they have specific effects (for example the glass ceiling is not visible but is experienced as a reality). Critical realism emphasises the importance of the physical and historical context (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). It also differentiates between individual agency and social structures which constrain or facilitate individual action (Bhaskar, 1979; Carter & New, 2004) and recognises that the world is structured by language and that power is both embedded and reflected in language use (Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough 2005).

4.2.1 Bhasker’s three levels of ontology

Bhasker’s (1975) approach to ontology provides for three levels of existence. At the empirical level, is our experience of what exists. This is distinguishable from two other levels which are described as the “actual” and “real” levels of knowledge. Angus et al. (2006) suggest that the actual level is where events occur independently of our experience of them. For example, in this study younger women were more likely to discuss examples of bullying than any other identifiable group. At the real level there are “generative mechanisms” also called “causal

mechanisms” (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 20). These are theories that describe the structural constraints of experienced phenomena:

[Generative mechanisms] are the inherent properties in an object or structure that act as causal forces to produce events (i.e. Those appearing at the empirical level). It is the primary goal of CR [Critical Realism] to explain social events through reference to these causal mechanisms (Fletcher, 2017, p. 183).

It is useful to have these three layers, as they make a distinction between what is experienced, the underlying phenomenon that result in the experiences, and the causes which enable those events and experiences, thus providing for a distinction between structure and agency. This prevents the temptation to reduce experience to its causes, which is a problem resulting from accepting that the only knowledge we have of the world is through our experience of it. Of note, all social structures are considered to have “potentialities” which are not present under all social conditions (Psillos, 2007). Critical realism seeks tendencies or rough trends in data which are identified as “demi-regularities” and can be identified through qualitative data coding (Danermark et al., 2002; Fletcher, 2017, p. 70).

4.3 Abduction and retroduction

Critical realism relies on two kinds of reasoning. First, the process of retroduction identifies the social conditions under which certain experiences occur as well as the “circumstances without which something cannot exist” (Meyer & Lunnay, 2013, p. 3). Second, abduction is identified as the reasoning a detective uses to solve a problem where knowledge of the system, theories, and observed facts are combined into a plausible account of what occurred. Unlike inference, which relies on probability and is based on seeking patterns in observable events, abduction allows for a link to be made between likely explanations and observations. Abduction “is a means of forming associations that enable the researcher to discern relations and connections that are not otherwise evident or obvious” (Meyer & Lunnay, 2013, p.2), thereby connecting specific instances to an account of the underlying structure. They also point out that social researchers “do in fact use abductive and/or retroductive inference, albeit unconsciously, and investigate data that fall outside the original theoretical frame” (p.1) but may not be aware that this is the reasoning process used.

The challenge of critical realism is to “avoid any commitment to the content of specific theories and to recognise the conditional nature all its results” (Bhaskar, 1979, p.6) and that, based on the existing conditions, a critical realist analysis provides the most plausible account

of the phenomenon. Theories facilitate a deeper analysis of how social structures work which can build a more accurate and perhaps new explanation of reality.

Critical realism can therefore elegantly resolve the ontological and epistemological tensions resulting from understanding findings that emerge in the particular and unique context of local boards in Auckland. It allows for generalisable claims about underlying social mechanisms which underpin aspects of local government and the behaviour of those involved in local government. It does this by suggesting that there are social structures that influence us, independently of us knowing how they operate. Further, it is possible to understand these by combining our experience of these with analysis, to unpick how these causal mechanisms work. Through explanations and interpretation, underlying truths can be identified which have further application and generalisability beyond the particular experiences of individuals. This places a value on personal experience which cannot simply be discounted as subjective but is also seen as providing a window on our understanding of the real.

While critical realism can accommodate a plurality of methods, the perspective detailed above does not define a clear pathway using a specific methodology (Danermark et al., 2019). There is also a recognised paucity of studies which specifically take critical realism beyond a philosophical position into methodological studies (Edwards et al., 2014). Critical realism recognises the subjectivity of research methods and uses those judged best suited by the researcher to an understanding of the phenomenon, thus lending itself to a mixed methods approach (Ackroyd & Karlsson, 2014). This study therefore aims to build on an understanding of how critical realism works in practice to arrive at new understandings of the interplay between social structures and agentic behaviour. Critical realism is used to add to an understanding of the causal mechanisms of negative behaviour and the factors that influence this within a political environment.

4.4 Organisational ethnography

The experience of local board members arises in the specific context of Auckland Council. As such, organisational ethnography offers a useful methodological tool since it is concerned with the study and representation of an organisation's culture (Stake, 2005; Van Maanen, 2011; Yin, 2014). The methodology "seeks to grasp and provide a truthful account of people's experiences" (Ciuk, Koning & Kostera, 2019, p.3), relate these to our theoretical understanding (Schwartz-Shea, 2006) while providing a holistic picture of the site of study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). The ethnographer is expected to immerse themselves in the

everyday occurrences and situations that people find themselves in within the organisation (Van Maanen, 2011).

In this case, I was a local board member so a research insider. This is defined as someone who “possesses a priori [their italics] intimate knowledge of the community and its members” (Greene 2014 describing Merton, 1972). The advantages of this approach include:

1. A focus on context. I am already steeped within the organisational practices and people and can therefore interrogate some of these processes and experiences more easily. I have also developed relationships with and have access to the participants in what is considered a culturally sensitive context due to the political dimension of the work. I can both relate to and have direct experience of the issues raised by others, having noted or struggled with these myself. The value of this organisational ethnographic approach is in the depth of detail that emerges from hearing of the lived experience of participants in a specific context (Ragin, 1992).
2. The methods are consistent with a critical realist paradigm. The approach requires a focus on fieldwork through interviews, headwork, making sense of the material and using documents to understand the processes that inform behaviour and work structures (Van Maanen, 2011). This allows an exploration of issues related to power and politics (Ybema et al., 2009) through an understanding of people’s lived experience. Consistent with Neyland (2008) and Czarniawska (2014) I adopt a strategy where data is collected and understandings that arise are then tested in subsequent interviews in an iterative process that lends itself to exploratory research. Aspects of this include flexibility, being open-minded, and adopting a reflexive position. This is sensitive to shifting meanings and power dynamics and recognises the relationship between findings which might emerge differently when conditions are changed (Ciuk, Koning & Kostera, 2019).

In addition, there is a social mandate focus to the research. Consistent with a critical realist ethos, recommendations are provided which seek to address real world problems (Graeber, 2004; Ciuk, Koning & Kostera, 2019). In this case, by understanding the experience of local board members, recommendations are made in Chapters Nine and Ten which are intended to improve the public’s experience of local democracy, thus answering RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role? The importance of this study lies in understanding concrete examples which can then be used to guide further action. As Flyvbjerg (2011) explains, it is “in the specific cases and examples that people make sense of

human affairs” and that “context-dependent knowledge are [is] at the very heart of expert activity” (pp.303-304).

The ethnographic context specific description (seen in Chapters Two and Three) has focused on how Auckland Council is structured and how its processes operate in relation to local boards, rather than more generally across Auckland Council business. It is multi-sited and considers different local boards, all of which operate from different locations across the Auckland region but fulfil the same function of local board representation within the structure of Auckland Council. Differences arise from the differing combinations of personalities, interests and politics of local board members, their interactions with staff, available resources, geography, as well as differences in the communities that are served.

The study does not consider the whole of the workings of Auckland Council, in terms of its policy arm, regulatory functions, or interactions with central government. While interviews and comments were sought from current and past employees to understand certain processes or their rationale more fully, the formal interviews on which this study is based only captures the perspective of local board members. No formal interviews are done with anyone in the governance and policy teams of Auckland who are responsible for creating the frameworks within which local boards operate.

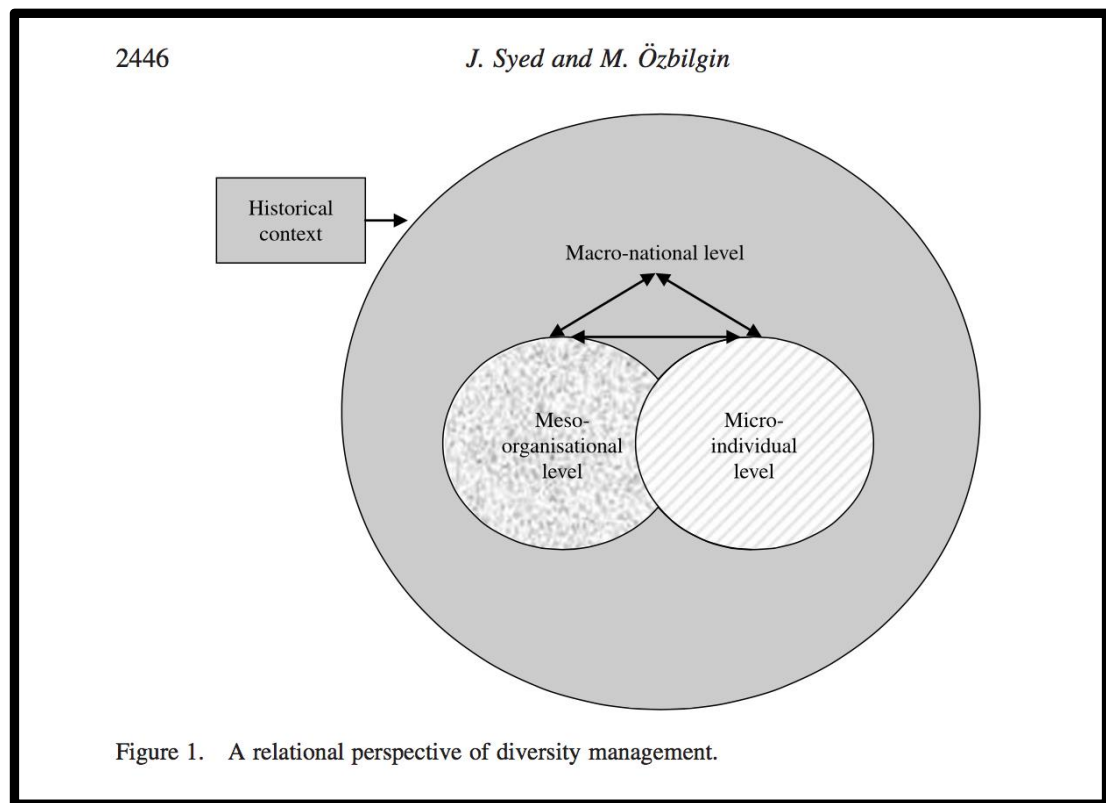
4.5 A relational framework for data collection and analysis

In order to reconcile the lived experience of local board members with the structural processes of Auckland Council, I use Syed and Özbilgin’s (2009, p.2446) relational framework and multilevel approach to the study of diversity in organisations which I then adapt to focus on success. They identify three levels that determine or affect how diversity is practiced:

1. Macro: This describes the context, both physical and historical in which this research takes place.
2. Meso: The focus is on Auckland Council planning documents, reports and manuals to understand how Auckland Council is structured in terms of where decisions are made.
3. Micro: The focus is on the individual behaviours, traits and interpersonal features which affect success.

Figure 4.1

A relational perspective of diversity management



Note. Reprinted from "A relational framework for international transfer diversity management Practices," by J. Syed, and M. Özbilgin, 2009, *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 20(12), p.2446. Copyright 2009 by Taylor & Francis.

At the macro level, the focus is on societal values, socio-political factors and national policy, which are historically embedded and create the context for the meso and micro levels. At the meso level there are institutional structures and rules which influence action. The micro level reflects the agentive behaviour of the individual, their aspirations, as well as the interpersonal features involved when outcomes are negotiated with others.

As a multi-level, relational approach, the three levels are not seen in isolation but affect each other. So for example societal discourse at the macro level, in New Zealand, acknowledges that women have equal rights to work and stand for local boards. However, childcare can be difficult to access or expensive. At an institutional level, day-care is not provided by employers and the workplace may not support working from home or flexible hours. At a personal level, people make choices as to whether it is worth working or more beneficial to stay at home. The micro level choices are influenced by the institutional and societal discourses, which make some choices more desirable or accessible to different individuals.

Figure 4.2

A relational framework for analysing success

Relational Level	Description	Examples of variables	Research areas
Macro-national	Societal and institutional structures.	Legislative framework, socio-political policies, demography, history, Political context.	The extent to which legislation or societal structures affect or determine success and the historical and social context in which decision-making takes place.
Meso-organisational	Organisational policies and hierarchies.	Organisational approaches to achieving outcomes.	The extent to which organisational structures and policies support successful outcomes.
Micro-Individual (including interpersonal features)	Identity, subjective experience and interpersonal features of workplace.	Individual perspectives, and experiences.	The extent to which individual behaviours and interactions affect success.

Note. Adapted from "A relational framework for international transfer diversity management practices," by J. Syed, J & M. Özbilgin, 2009, *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 20 (12), p.2446. Copyright 2009 by J. Syed and M. Özbilgin.

Following Zanoni et al. (2010), I connect what is happening at the micro and meso levels and consider these within their historical and social context to account for how elected local board members frame success and the challenges they face in the role. I articulate how political caucuses, and Auckland Council, could practice inclusivity to encourage a plurality of voices to stand, and be heard, once elected. Figure 4.2 illustrates how the research areas are addressed within this relational framework.

4.6 A critical diversity lens

In foregrounding the diversity of experience of local board members, this study adopts a critical diversity lens in its approach to the data collection and analysis. Critical diversity is conceptualised as a critique of the diversity discourse, whose weaknesses include:

1. The essentialising of identity as different kinds of categories of "other" without considering how these aspects influence each other and what happens at the intersections (Crenshaw, 1991);
2. Measuring this essentialised identity against the norm of "white, heterosexual, western, middle/upper class, abled men" (Zanoni et al., 2010, p.11);

3. The downplaying of organisational and societal contexts, with a greater emphasis on individual psychological processes (Prasad et al., 2006);
4. The effect of power and historically determined inequality in access to resources (Kanter, 1977).

The approach recognises that in order to understand a situation where discrimination may be occurring, it is important to have “empirical studies [which focus on] the experience of individuals belonging to historically disadvantaged groups as well as their “majority” colleagues”(Zanoni et al., 2010, p.17, my italics). While the initial study focused on asking participants directly about their experience of diversity, this seemed to result in formulaic answers where minority participants focused on negative experiences, whereas majority participants talked of how inclusively they performed their role. By changing the question to a focus on success, it was possible to obtain a more nuanced view of the differences experienced by majority and minority participants. This is explained as stemming from Researcher Participation Effects (RPE) or participant bias where interviewees seek to provide the answers expected by the researcher (McCambridge, et al., 2014). This approach emphasises that while experiences are personal, they occur in the context of organisational or societal factors which influence these experiences and form part of how these experiences are understood.

4.7 Intersectionality within this study

The research is intersectionally sensitive (McBride et al., 2015). Attributed to the work of feminist and critical legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality recognises that an individual may hold minority status across multiple categories of difference. In this study the focus is on being female, younger, and coming from a non-New Zealand European background. Intersectionality further recognises that visible minority characteristics are not always a disadvantage and may in fact be deployed for benefit in particular contexts (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw 1989; 1991; Walby et al., 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). According to McBride et al.(2015) an intersectionally sensitive approach acts “as a methodological caution against over-generalisation” (p.5). This is apparent in the care taken with participant selection to reflect as wide a range of experience and demographic qualities as possible.

Crenshaw (1989; 1991) identifies three kinds of intersectionality; representative, structural and political:

1. Representative intersectionality focuses on how people are portrayed, so for example older white men are often portrayed as particularly trustworthy (for example used to

convey confidence in pharmaceutical products) whereas Māori men are depicted as a threat (featuring prominently as criminals in fictional crime narratives).

2. Structural intersectionality describes how people are disadvantaged according to their intersectional qualities. Walby et al. (2012) suggest, that the relationship of categories and inequalities is one of “mutual adaptation, or mutual shaping of these systems of social relations” (p.235). While categories are fluid and influence each other, the specificity of each inequality needs to be identified so it can be analysed systematically. Thus, Pacific women elected members may have challenges in having their advocacy items heard, both in terms of being women and being Pacific. They also tend to be younger which might also influence how well they are able to prevail at the decision-making table.
3. Political intersectionality focuses on the strategic alliances between groups and addresses “the tactics employed by political actors to achieve their political goals and how those tactics may include or exclude groups of people within a movement” (Price, 2018, p.595). This concerns how far younger members are able to align with Pacific members, for example in delivering projects or supporting election prospects. The issues are complex, and Walby et al.,(2012) point out that “shifting coalitions... come together on one issue and may stand in opposition on others” (p.229). Borchorst and Teigen (2010) suggest that socio-political factors and national policies and practices at the macro level impact on meso level coalitions and policies and emphasise that these are affected in turn by agentive behaviours of participants. Political intersectionality addresses how far elected representatives have agendas which are different to the norm, how well they are able to seek alliances to support divergent agendas, and how far their diversity characteristics are seen as a help or a hindrance in championing these agendas and achieving success.

Socio-economic profile, gender other than male or female, and ablebodiedness of elected members initially formed a potential focus for difference. However, questions related to these issues felt intrusive. While some member did identify as non-heterosexual and others as having physical limitations, these were not mentioned as having a material effect on their experience of performing the role. Financial barriers and caregiving responsibilities were, however, both mentioned as impacting local board member experiences and these issues are discussed within the research.

4.8 Method

4.8.1 Quantitative data collection, setting the scene

In order to establish the existing and emerging diversity profile of local boards members, information on age, gender and ethnicity of local board members across the five terms of Auckland Council was collected to understand the actual profile of elected members. There is a recognised paucity of data collected about elected members and different studies have collected slightly different data. I use this data to supplement my own quantitative analysis. Webster and Fa'apoi (2017) collected data for the 2013 elections on age, gender and ethnicity of elected members in the 2013 elections by cross referencing publicly available information to the candidates. They aligned their data to the census age brackets. In 2016, for the first time, elected member data was collected from candidates by Auckland Council in the form of two surveys – one that was handed in with the nomination forms, the other as a post-election electronic survey of candidates. The response rate of 71% was recognised as an estimate rather than a complete analysis of candidate characteristics (Allpress & Osborne, 2017).

My approach was to access the information about elected members by asking them directly or connecting with people who knew them from being in the same political party or local board or who were members of specific caucuses or support groups. I was therefore to collate a relatively complete picture of the ethnicity and gender of elected local board members over the five terms of Auckland Council (2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022). The age information was less reliable prior to the 2019 term. In terms of ethnicity I allocate each participant to one ethnicity. In the case of participants who are New Zealand European and also identify as another ethnicity I assigned them to the relevant non-New Zealand European category to emphasise the diverse characteristics of the local boards. In terms of those identifying as Māori and Pacific I listed them as Māori as this seemed a useful dimension to capture, given the current debates on Māori representation.

As a result of the interviews, the choices people made about how to stand (as an individual, a group or under the banner of a political party) emerged as an important factor in whether local board members were elected. To inform the interviews and the findings, data was then collated on all the different ways people had stood in the 2016 election. This data is provided in Chapter Five.

4.8.2 Qualitative data collection

Interviewing provides the cornerstone of much qualitative research. It “appears to offer the researcher direct access to the point of view”[their emphasis] of participants (Smith & Elger, 2014, p.110) and provide important data in terms of:

1. Insight into the existing organisational structures, the background and existing relationship;
2. Understanding individual and collective agency in relation to issues;
3. Understanding the consequences of past actions.

In their study of organisations, Smith and Elger (2014) also note that interviews:

Had a dual aspect, documenting the spectrum of experiences and viewpoints found in each setting, but also contributing to the iterative development of an analysis of the social relations and processes addressed by our research (p.130).

I follow a similar process. Interviews were undertaken to understand the viewpoints of local board members and provide data to answer the research questions.

Developing the semi-structured interview

The initial questions and how these are answered from my own experience are provided in Appendix G. I answered the questions myself, to see how well they could be answered, to ensure clarity and, thereby making transparent any issues of unconscious bias. After analysing my answers to the questions the following emerged as key themes:

- Frustration at the lack of progress on local board issues
- Reflections on the qualities necessary to be effective (listening, being fair, open-minded)
- Adopting strategies to be effective (meeting participation strategies, developing good relationships with staff, voting strategically).

Structural issues

- The need to negotiate outcomes with others.
- The importance of the chair in mediating relationships and outcomes
- The staff reliance on the local board chair view as representing the local board view.
- The inefficiency of consultation processes which are expensive and capture some voices better than others.

Observations on representations and the role

- The tension between feeling like a community representative and being positioned by the community as a politician.
- The challenge of separating the governance role from the operational role of project delivery.

Difference

- Feeling different from elected members as a migrant, in terms of educational and work background and being a parent
- Noticing differences in approach between younger and older members in terms of confidence and participation.

What Auckland Council's bureaucracy could do better

- Ideas for better preparation of and training of local board members.

Overall the self-interview themes reveal an interrelationship between the organisational (meso) features and personal (micro) features. That there is mention of the lack of progress on issues reflects both the actual lack of progress and the frustration at the lack of progress. Some of the wider debates around the separation of governance and management also emerge as does an awareness of differences in local board member behaviour which may be connected to experiences of difference.

Ethics approval for the project, "Diversity in Local Board Representation: the Experiences of Elected Members" was obtained from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK) on 8 February, 2018 (Ethics Application 18/31) and is available in Appendix A.

Identifying potential participants

In total, twenty elected representatives of the 2016 to 2019 term were interviewed in the period from 9 March, 2018 to 7 September, 2019. These consisted of one member from each local board (apart from the Waiheke Local Board where I was a current elected member). This was to avoid the perception that I was investigating particular local boards, elected members, or challenging the validity of people's comments. I also made it clear that I was focused on patterns and trends in local board member experiences. Local board members on each local board share decision-making roles but have little communication or engagement with other local boards, unless there is a project that crosses local board boundaries or they have personal relationships with local board members from other areas. There was therefore little risk that comments would provide conflicting views on immediate issues relating to local board work.

In addition, in the initial interview stage, one local board member who had been elected in 2013 but did not stand in 2016 was interviewed in March 2018. This was my first interview.

The intention was to use this interview to frame the questions for other participants. Given that the participant provided interesting reflections on the role, this data was included. The final cohort of respondents was 21 local board members, twenty of whom were elected in the 2016-2019 term, and one who had been elected in the 2016 term but did not stand for re-election in 2016. Four people who initially agreed to be interviewed were not interviewed. Two people declined directly. It is curious that five of these six were women and/or non-New Zealand European. It was unclear why participants who had initially agreed, stopped responding. They may have changed their minds about wanting to participate, were too busy, or initially agreed because they felt uncomfortable declining. In all cases it was possible to interview someone else from that particular local board.

As noted above, I was keen to ensure that participants were as balanced as possible across visible dimensions of difference – age, gender, ethnicity, born in New Zealand, being a parent of young children, years of experience including time spent as the local board chair and political orientation. People with visible minority characteristics were unevenly spread across local boards. Majority and minority characteristics were combined differently in individuals so that most participants had a mixture of minority and majority qualities. To illustrate, a younger New Zealand European male was both a visible minority by virtue of his age but was also part of the majority group of New Zealand European men.

The choice of who to approach as a possible participant in the study was made from analysing the candidate profile statements and/or meeting with local board members at Auckland Council functions or by telephone to gauge their interest in taking part. If people expressed an initial interest, they were then sent an information sheet (see Appendix C). A follow up phone call from the researcher to the potential participant established if they were still interested, at which time a plan was made around when and where to meet for the interview. This was confirmed by email accompanied by the consent form (Appendix D) and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E). From this demographic information was collated into the participant diversity profile (see Table 4.1).

[Progressive interview process](#)

A progressive approach was taken in the interview process. Five interviews were done and then transcribed before proceeding to the next set of five interviews. This involved arranging an interview, doing the interview, transcribing and sending the interview transcription back to the participant to be checked and providing an opportunity for them to remove and/or amend

any information from the transcript. Completing this cycle for five participants before beginning recruitment for the next five gave flexibility, helped to maintain the balance of difference characteristics and gave time for reflection. So, for example in one instance when an older non-New Zealand European female declined to be interviewed on a particular local board, I substituted a younger New Zealand European male from the same local board area. I then needed to rebalance both ethnicity and age of the remaining participants and did this by interviewing an older New Zealand European male and a younger Pacific female. The final cohort was generally well-balanced to include a range of diversity characteristics, but I would have ideally liked to include a greater number of Māori voices.

The approach started out as a limitation because of my circumstances as a working parent, with periods of interviewing interrupted by school holidays or needing to work. On reflection, through the initial interviews (see below), I realised that the process above added value to the project. This is because I could explore issues in later interviews that emerged in initial interviews as these earlier interviews had already been transcribed and in some cases analysed and coded.

This aligns with the approach adopted by Smith, Child and Rowlinson (1990) in their study, *Reshaping Work*. Smith and Elger (2014) describe this as an “iterative development” and say that “earlier analyses had to be radically revised in the light of later interviews, while the coexistence of contrasting accounts could itself become a focus of explanation” (p128). To this end, all the interviews provided invaluable insights and extracts from all the twenty-one participants have been used in this study.

The initial interview stage

Five interviews were undertaken in the first stage of the study to test the usefulness and answerability of the questions, to try out different interviewing styles, and to establish the field of interest and how to position myself as a researcher. These took place in early 2018 and included three men and two women, one of the five identifying as non-heterosexual. Three of these identified as New Zealand European, one as Māori and one as being of mixed ethnicity, two were mothers of under 14-year-old children, one was reaching retirement age and two were young, elected members. One identified themselves as politically independent, one had stood with a group that was right-aligned, and the other three had stood on

progressive (left/green dominated) group. In order to protect their privacy, intersectional details which might identify them more specifically are not provided.

The participants have a range of visible diversity qualities (age, gender and ethnicity) and represent different parts of Auckland (one each from a central, south and west suburb and two from the northern suburbs). While the initial focus was on diversity and the experience of local board representatives from minority groups, I became increasingly aware, through the interview process that there were a vast range reasons why participants experience success (or not) as well as different topics that were of interest to them. In the initial set of five interviews for example, two people identified success around representing Māori viewpoints and aspirations, two talked about achieving major infrastructure projects and two talked about navigating Auckland Council processes. Three people talked about their experiences of feeling attacked by fellow local board members in what they described as bullying, an unexpected theme explored in Chapter Nine.

The interviews were then transcribed and coded and notes were made about my experience in doing the interviews and areas that seemed challenging or awkward. I checked if that the content aligned with the micro, meso and macro features which I wanted to use as a framework to organise the responses. As a result of this process and my own responses I realised that there was a greater complexity of issues that affected participant feelings of success. Identity features such as gender, ethnicity and age emerged as topics people reflected on. Parenting was also an important topic for the women interviewed who were both mothers of children under the age of fourteen. Aside from this, how far the local board member was politically aligned with other members of their board, the kinds of projects people were involved with, and features arising from the structure of the bureaucracy emerged as important.

I realised that a direct line of questioning on the experience of difference in local board members in relation to a selection of issues resulted in content that lacked depth. Minority candidates focused on examples of discrimination and majority candidates focused on how inclusive they were. By changing the framing of questions to focus on experiences of success, issues around diversity emerged more naturally if they were salient to the participant. Participants were also able to talk about other things which they felt were more relevant to their perceptions of success.

The initial questions also focused on ethical decision-making and exploring values. These questions seemed difficult to answer with participants providing short answers with frequent hesitations or asking for greater clarification. I felt this was either because it was a challenge to explore these themes without having thought about them before, or because participants were reluctant to expose their own ethical dilemmas.

After the initial five interviews the following changes were made:

1. Questions relating to ethical choices and group dynamics were removed and turned into supplementary questions which were asked only if the issue was raised first by participants.
2. The questions relating to interacting with local board members from a diversity of backgrounds was removed.

Instead, I focused more on the experience of success as a way for participants to reflect on personal differences and interpersonal features which may have affected this. The first few questions of the interview focused on the process of standing as a way of clarifying the political stance of participants and their life experience as well as easing them into the interview. The questions were intended to be exploratory but too much material was collected, which is why the final interviews focused more closely on the experience of success.

The key questions which informed the interview then became:

1. Can you give an example of where you have been particularly successful as a local board member?
SQ: What contributed to the success?
2. Can you give an example where you felt you weren't successful as a local board member?
SQ: What contributed to the lack of success?
SQ: If this issue arises again how will you approach it differently?
3. What has been your biggest challenge in the role?
4. Have you got any ideas for how your work could be made easier?
SQ: This could involve changes to the legislation, Auckland Council or the local board for example.

By framing the interview around the above questions, participants could crystallise their thinking around one or two salient experiences and discuss these in greater detail. The final interview guide is available in Appendix B.

Participant profiles

An analysis of the participant profiles is provided in Table 4.1. Participants included ten young elected members (under 40, as defined by Local Government New Zealand), ten women, twelve NZ Europeans or migrants of European origin, two people that identify as Māori, two that identify as Pacific, four as Asian (Indian or Chinese), with three of the twenty-one born overseas. Twelve participants had some personal bicultural or multicultural experience, having mixed/non-New Zealand European parents or from marrying into a different ethnicity.

Table 4.1

Diversity profile of Participants

	Numbers	Comments
Female/Male	10/11	Other gender characteristics were not provided by participants
Under 40/Over 40	10/11	Under 40 is considered youth by Local Government New Zealand
NZ European or European	12	This follows Statistics New Zealand (2019a) descriptions of categories. Two people identified themselves as mixed race and were assigned to their minority ethnicity, or in the case of Māori and another minority ethnicity to Māori.
Māori	2	
Pacific Peoples	2	
Asian	4	
MELAA	1	
Overseas born/NZ born	3/18	
Bicultural or multicultural background / NZ European	12/9	This could be from being a migrant, being married to a person from a different ethnicity, having parents of different ethnicities, speaking a different language at home. People identifying as NZ European were all second generation or more in New Zealand.
Member/Experience as local board chair	12/9	This could be in the current term or earlier terms of the local board.
First time/more than once elected	10/11	
Left leaning/Right leaning/Green/Not politically aligned or didn't say	8/6/5/4	Participants self-identified as belonging to a party or were in a group that was recognised as being left or right leaning. Some avoided the question or said that politics did not play a role in local governance.
Belongs to a party/Doesn't belong to a party or did not declare affiliation.	13/8	
Stood with a party or party aligned group/stood with a local group/stood as an independent with a slogan/stood as an independent without a slogan	13/3/1/4	This was for candidates standing as City Vision (Labour Party/Green Party values) or Citizens and Ratepayers or Communities and residents (National Party/ACT Party values). Campaign support or electoral information is likely to be supplied by the Parties. Some groups are not politically aligned or it is unclear what the alignment is as they are more like friendship groups or strategic alliance groups e.g. Shore Action, Manurewa Action Team, and they may have members with different political alignment. Some independents stood with a Tagline e.g. Community First, others either stated they were independent or did not identify their affiliation
Only elected to local boards/ Previously elected to a community board or district councillor or central government	13/8	All previously elected had been a list MP or elected to a local government role in the Auckland region
Parenting responsibilities	4	Under 14 year old children living at home

In terms of political orientation, there were six that were left-leaning, six right-leaning, five who identified as having green values and four who said they were not politically aligned. Twelve people belonged to a political party, (The ACT Party, The Green Party, The Labour Party, The National Party or New Zealand First) and six did not, the remainder did not clarify whether they had any political party affiliation. Sixteen stood with a group, as Labour candidates, a politically aligned group or a community group, and five stood by marking their affiliation as “Independent” or as independent candidates without declaring any affiliation. Nine of the twenty-one had experience of being the chair of the local board either in this term or in previous terms, eleven had been elected more than once to the role and eight had been elected to other roles in local or central government (as MPs, district councillor or ward councillor). Four were parents of children under the age of fourteen, while eight were working in other paid employment. As noted previously, it is not possible to provide intersectional characteristics as this would identify who the specific participants are. For example, ‘Young Pacific male might only identify one person across all the local boards who fits that profile. Three people, all female, talked about juggling parenting and the role of local board member. One male referred to having young children but did not talk about how this affected his ability to do the local board work.

Six of the people who were finally interviewed were people known to me. I had met them through the Green Party, The Labour Party, City Vision events, or Auckland Council events prior to the study taking place. Thirteen participants were unknown to me before the study.

As commented on earlier, each participant was sent a participant profile to complete before the interview. A question on home ownership was used to provide insight into the socio-economic profile of participants. Eleven people owned their own home, and one person lived in rented accommodation. The rest declined to answer as the question may have seemed intrusive or irrelevant. In terms of the profile of participants, little data was obtained on their socio-economic profile so this category was dropped as a category of difference even though it is a relevant issue for who stands and is elected to local boards.

[Interview location](#)

The interviews took place either by phone or in person. Eight people preferred to be interviewed in person, five in Central Auckland and three in South Auckland. Interviews were carried out in a variety of Auckland Council premises or cafes chosen by the interviewees. Of the remaining thirteen interviews, one was done through Facebook Messenger, one was done

using Zoom videoconferencing and the rest were done by phone in response to participant preference. Of the phone interviews one person was in their office, one person was interviewed in the car commuting back home and two were cooking dinner. There was the potential that phone interviews would be more difficult to interpret or ambiguous as there were no paralinguistic features to rely on, that participants would be more likely to share personal details or conversely that structural distance would inhibit trust between interviewer and participant (Block and Erskine, 2012; Mann et al., 2000). However, I did not notice any material differences in the quality of the data between phone interviews and face-to-face interviews. My main observation was that the phone interview provided convenience for people who were busy and had other work or family commitments. Had there been too much of a time imposition they might have declined to take part.

Participant consent

Participants signed consent forms after having read the information sheet which made it clear that the research was not connected to local board involvement, there would not be any consequences either good or bad from participation, and that I was interested in patterns of experience shared by local board members across different local boards.

At the interview, participants, read and filled out the participant agreement forms and the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E). For phone interviews they sent the forms through by email and these were signed and returned by email before the interview. I made it clear to all participants that they would be the only person interviewed from their local board area, and that any specific and personal information about them or projects they described would be disguised so they would not be identified through the process of the research. As far as I was aware, only one person told anyone from their local board that they were taking part.

Interview process

The interview guide was followed for the initial questions, and supplementary questions were then used to probe further into the key issues described. The transition from a more scattergun approach in the initial five interviews where a number of topics were covered, to a more restricted set of questions in the remaining interviews worked well. Specifically, participant thinking seemed deeper and provided a detailed description of one event and the factors that had affected that perceived success or lack of success. By providing less direction, local board members were able to direct their focus to issues which were salient to them. For example, some commented on changes in the legislation or the organisation of work under

Auckland Council (macro and meso features) while others focused on personal and interpersonal issues, such as relationships with staff or other local board members (micro features).

Brinkmann (2018) suggests that semi-structured interviews create opportunities for the interviewee to explore their understanding while “the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a pre-set interview guide”(p.579). His comments that semi-structured interviews capture specific descriptions but also allow for more abstract conceptualisation and theorisation and can engage participants in explaining why certain experiences arise. This allows for an interpretation of experiences which are “polyvocal” (p. 580) and provide for multiple readings and interpretations.

I adopted a flexible role within the interviews, which reflected my previous relationship (if any) with participants, the desire to put them at ease and their willingness to reflect on their own experience. This resulted in some interviews which were more formal, with questions and responses following a clear turn-taking pattern, through to interviews which were more relaxed and there were more digressions and sharing of stories. Where possible, I asked questions about issues that participants commented in later interviews which had been raised by participants in earlier interviews. With participants who appeared to engage more with the ideas there was a sense of co-constructing our understandings through discussion. For participants who were less willing, the data was rich enough for me to theorise using the data provided.

Interviews typically lasted about an hour, the shortest was 48 minutes long and the longest lasted for two hours. My observation is that the tone and style of the interviews was determined by:

1. Any rapport and connection I already had with participants. Participants who were more familiar to me seemed more relaxed.
2. Participant age and experience in the role. Older, and/or more experienced participants were more likely to have stronger expectations around the interviewer questioning and the participant responding. They asked fewer questions and seemed less interested in my views or exploring ideas together and often adopted a mentor role. Younger and/or less experienced participants were keen to discuss and share viewpoints.
3. Personalities. Some people felt more comfortable leading and telling, while others felt more comfortable with a more collegial discussion.

Participants appeared to enjoy sharing success stories, articulating frustrations and suggesting solutions about their experiences and often thanked me at the end of the interview for the opportunity to discuss these.

Recording the interviews

All the interviews were audio recorded using Audacity software version 2.0.6, which was downloaded onto a laptop. The interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word software version 15.31. A transcript of the interview was then sent to the participants to make any comments or exclusions and the transcript was saved using a pseudonym for each participant.

Transcribing the interviews

The interviews were all transcribed in full. While not specifically looking for pragmatic features of utterances, I did indicate short pauses through the use of dots and longer pauses by writing “[Pause]” where these seemed to carry significant non-verbal meanings. I also tried to show where interviewer and participant had talked over each other, or laughed. In the face to face and visually recorded interviews I also noted non-verbal cues such as raised eyebrows or eyerolls, or stress on particular words. All identifying participant characteristics were removed in reporting the data and the files were stored using their given pseudonyms.

4.8.3 Interview data analysis

Coding process

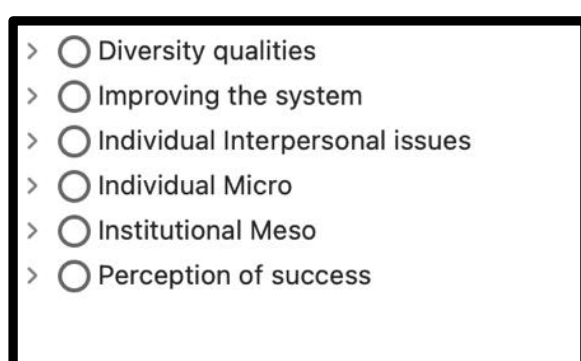
The first five transcripts were printed and read a number of times. Initial codes were then identified based on identifying recurring ideas. Following Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.194) three types of coding categories are used.

1. Expected codes: These reflect topics, ideas and themes one would expect to find, such as references to successful infrastructure projects as a marker of success.
2. Surprising codes: These are codes that are not anticipated, for example striving to change the legislation and the parameters of decision-making as a measure of success.
3. Codes of conceptual interest: This included challenges and criticisms local board members faced when overstepping the governance role which reflects the practical tensions in separating the governance and management roles in local government.

There was also a mixture of pre-determined codes which reflect the research question (for example experience of success) and emerging codes which arise from the content of the interviews (for example the chair's role in board members experiencing negative behaviour). The interviews were coded to nodes using NVivo version 11 software released in March 2015. The following initial codes were created as expected codes to help organise the data in relation to the research questions. A full list of NVivo codes with the subcodes generated by the interview themes are in Appendix H, the initial codes are identified below with a sample of subcodes (which relate to the meso features affecting success).

Figure 4.3

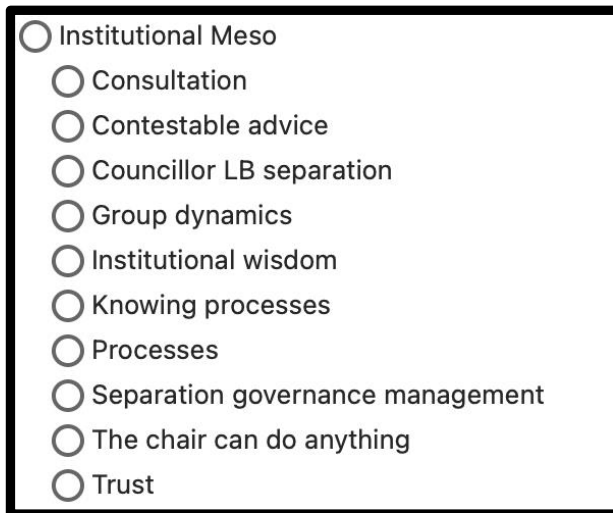
Initial codes created in NVivo software



Additional codes were created under these main headings. Diversity qualities had a code for each of the visible minority qualities (age/gender/ethnicity) and one for majority qualities. Under “improving the system” there were again three categories with ideas provided by local board members that related to macro, meso and micro improvements that they felt would help them to be more successful. Issues arising under each of the other codes also had subcodes. For example the institutional code had subcodes, which were generated in response to the interviews (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4

Sample subcodes created in NVivo software



Sometimes topics were double or even triple coded if they related to different topics or aspects of the same topic from different angles. For example a description of how a chair was complicit in fostering a negative culture was coded as:

- A legislative issue (the selection of the chair by the local board members is provided for in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act, 2009),
- Under diversity, if there was a gendered component to the behaviour,
- Improving the system, if it came with suggestions of how the chair's behaviour could improve.

In addition, some codes appeared twice. Trust for example was described as both an institutional issue affecting relationships with staff and reflecting the culture of the organisation, as well as an interpersonal issue between local board members.

Thematic analysis

The coding was followed by thematic analysis of the data, which involved refining the codes in light of the issues that arose from the interviews. Nowell et al. (2017) describe how thematic analysis is useful for “examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights”(p.2). DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) define a theme as an “abstract entity [which] captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (p.362). This offers a structured approach to handling data and allows for key features of large data sets to emerge (King, 2004). These themes were written up as memos and emerged after reading the findings from the coding process. For example a number of participants referred to the challenge of

understanding the separation between governance and management, and the difficulty of staying out of what was perceived as operational matters. Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2018) suggest that an informal process of reading and rereading and identifying emergent themes may provide the best approach to method “where the qualitative text analysis is not at the core of the research but instead is in a subsidiary or complementary role ... no more sophisticated text analytical methods may be needed” (p.669).

As a consequence of the thematic analysis, codes were turned into themes as illustrated by the following. Initial subcodes which were created under the main code “Conceptualising Success”:

- Achieving a positive outcome
- Being a good advocate
- Changing an aspect of the system
- Improving relationships
- Leveraging benefits beyond the scope of the project
- Self-benefit
- Being a spanner in the works.

The utterances under each code were re-read and themes were identified and the above categories were reassigned to themes in the light of the memo work. Thus, success in the role was identified as:

- Achieving a new outcome (including infrastructure, a plan or park for example)
- Stopping or challenging a process or outcome (stopping an asset sale or questioning facility usage)
- Challenging the system (Increasing the remit of local board activity beyond the legislative scope or using local board funds in a different way to the norm)
- Civic leadership (Solving community tensions or disputes)
- Personal achievement (Using the role to further one’s career or personal satisfaction)
- Embodying difference (Providing a different and essential perspective)

This strategy also enabled an understanding of how macro, meso and micro features all have a role to play in successful outcomes and how these interrelate. For example, the value placed on the independence of elected members within a democracy (macro level societal observation), influenced the organisational perspective that elected member behaviour is not an organisational responsibility in terms of workplace safety. Instead, desired behaviour is

encouraged by listing skills in the Elected Members Handbook (Auckland Council, 2016b) and managed through a code of conduct process (Auckland Council, 2013; 2021a). This is designated at a macro-level (The Local Government Act 2002 states that local government councils must have one) but the particulars are developed by each Council (meso level). The complexity of the process at the institutional level results in significant unintended effects on the individual (micro level) which cause stress and make the code of conduct process ineffective. At the same time, individuals demonstrate a sense of agency to address the negative behaviour (micro level).

The organisation also addresses the problem by employing staff who are more effective at dealing with the behaviours (meso level). Categorising issues in terms of a relational framework therefore provides a better understanding of actions that can be taken by the individual or the organisation to address these issues. For example, a failure in the code of conduct process, creates opportunities to change the process (meso level). Recognising the agentic behaviour of individuals within this process can suggest coping strategies or strategies for individuals to challenge negative behaviour. These micro level features can also then be used to develop elected member training for example.

The above analysis illustrates how findings emerge from the data in what is described as a “goal-free” approach to data analysis (Scriven, 1991, p.56). In this approach, the focus is on evaluation outcomes, so participant comments are assessed in terms of their usefulness in guiding future action rather than their inherent truth value. The aim is to develop insights about what participants think is working well and what can be improved in the practice of being a local board member. According to Thomas (2006, p.242) the “evaluator’s view captures the key aspects of the themes identified in the raw data and are assessed to be the most important themes given the evaluation objectives.” Different evaluators might also produce findings that are not identical but should provide findings that are useful in that they could guide changes to institutions, processes or legislation, and also empower individuals.

Reporting the data

In terms of representing the data, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that extracts of raw data should be embedded within the analytic narrative to illustrate the complexity of what is being observed. To address this, I provide quite lengthy quotations or “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) to reflect the intricacies of the data as well as providing a preferred understanding to

explain what might be happening. The following example shows how the quotations are tidied up from the transcript.

Original dialogue from transcript as entered into the NVivo Software.

Participant: I guess, I don't really feel it's down to Council to support local board members as well. I feel its SERVICES need to improve so it indirectly helps local board members, i.e. The call centre. If we're advocating for the community to call and log issues that they see within their own communities, council has not made it EASY or accessible for people to do this. Unless you know how things roll, you can confidently call council and press zero and the support is vague. And it annoys me because in my eyes, even though I'm an elected member, we do this on purpose to limit people's complaints.

Interviewer: Because if you're going to hold for 40 minutes, you may as well go and do something else?

Participant: Or go and drag the tree yourself, which is not meant to happen, right?

This becomes the following segment within this PhD:

*I feel its **services** need to improve so it indirectly helps local board members, i.e. The call centre. If we're advocating for the community to call and log issues that they see within their own communities, [Auckland] Council has not made it **easy** or accessible for people to do this. ... And it annoys me because in my eyes, even though I'm an elected member, we do this on purpose to limit people's complaints [because if you're going to hold for 40 minutes you may as well] go and drag the tree yourself, which is not meant to happen, right?*

Within the PhD, participant quotations are italicised. Shorter quotations are integrated into the text while longer quotations are indented. In some cases, I have rationalised the quotations so that they are clearer to follow, as illustrated above. In situations where the quotation has been repetitive, I have removed the repetitions and represent this with ellipsis "...". In some cases where I feel more detail is required, I add detail to clarify the context or the wording by using square brackets "[...]" with the information between the brackets non-italicised. Emphasised words in the NVivo coded work is represented through capitalisation as NVivo does not recognise different fonts or italics. This is changed to bold italics in the quotations provided in the final thesis.

4.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a key factor in qualitative research (Guba, 1981). In this study trustworthiness is established by talking to several participants and balancing the sample to establish as broad a spectrum of experience as possible which recognises a wide variety of visible difference. Local board members described comparable examples and experiences

which are reported in the findings. They also had the opportunity to read their own transcripts and were asked for further clarification if there were any points of inconsistency noted by the researcher. In addition, later interview participants provided additional insight into issues raised in earlier interviews in an approach that is consistent with Côté and Turgeon (2005). This all adds to the credibility of the study and ensures a connection between participant comments and how these are represented by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The issues raised have also increasingly emerged in the media (Campbell, 2021; Forbes, 2019b; Neilson 25 November, 2020) which provides another angle on the credibility of participant comments.

Guba (1981) identifies four aspects of trustworthiness in relation to qualitative research. These include (a) truth value, (b) applicability, (c) consistency, and (d) neutrality.

In terms of truth value, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the most important criteria is the credibility of the informants. Sandelowski (1986) says that credibility arises when descriptions are recognisable by others as an accurate description of the situation. Where local board members have raised issues, questions about this are asked in subsequent interviews with other local board members to see if they are affected in a comparable way. I make it clear in the findings whether an issue has been raised by one participant or a number of participants. However, also taking into account the point made by Flyvbjerg (2011, p.305), particular cases can inform new conceptualisations, and “knowledge may be transferable even where it is not formally generalizable” and that, aside from the number of reported instances, “the force of example” is an important factor in considering transferability.

Guba (1981) suggests that applicability relates to the transferability of findings for a qualitative study and how far these results can be replicated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that transferability is achieved when the researcher provides sufficient descriptive data for comparisons to be made by anyone else. I provide examples from the data which illustrate the phenomenon being described, provide a preferred meaning for the data, as well as providing detail on the process of interviews so they can be replicated.

Consistency is explained as the dependability of the results and how far the variability can be attributed to defined sources. Again, I try and probe participant comments as deeply as possible, particularly when the comments are ambiguous. This involved asking participants for more information to clarify a participant’s point of view or asking them to choose a preferred

meaning from one I provide. The consistency involved interrogating all transcripts and interviewees with as much scrutiny as possible.

The last criterion of neutrality refers to freedom from bias which is established through truth value and applicability as well as clarifying sources of researcher bias, particularly when the researcher is also an insider, and a person who shares the same role as the participants. Consistent with critical realism, a preferred meaning for the data is provided based on the data and theorisation that was possible. However, this might change given greater data or a change in conceptualisation of the issues (Ciuk, Koning & Kostera, 2019).

4.10 Conflicts of interest, research bias and the research insider

There are two conflicts of interest which could affect the research. The first arises from being an insider researcher, who has professional relationships with workplace colleagues and needs to maintain and manage professional boundaries. The second is the potential bias resulting from a lack of distance or the ability to think critically about the research context.

The work/research conflict of interest resulted from being an elected local board member and this gave me insider knowledge of the context and access to potential participants. Some participants may have felt uncomfortable at being asked to participate in a study led by a person who was a local board member and perhaps saw this as crossing a professional boundary. Participants may also have felt uncomfortable in sharing personal information.

This potential conflict-of-interest issue was not raised directly with me by any of the potential participants or actual participants. As noted earlier, six people who were approached initially either declined to take part or withdrew before doing the interviews. Their specific reasons for this are unknown. That there was an opportunity for potential participants to decline to take part, and some declined, reflects that there was a robust process for local board members to opt out and some chose to do so.

Local board members from different local boards are colleagues working in parallel, rather than people whose work had any direct influence on each other. To give an analogy from a corporate environment, the role is more akin to colleagues in the same organisation working in different departments, rather than working within the same department. Each board is supported by distinct local board staff, and department support is provided by different people within departments across Auckland Council. This meant that it was possible to create

a collegial environment during interviews where we were able to discuss the shared experience of being local board members within Auckland Council without referencing situations that would have affected our professional relationship or shared responsibilities.

I did not interview anyone from my own local board, and made this clear in the ethics application, as this may have created significantly more issues in terms of reliability of the data, or could have interfered with existing local board relationships. Participants were also free to withdraw from the research after the interviews took place or after being sent their transcript to review. None chose to do so.

Researcher bias in the choice of people to interview, the management of data and the conclusions drawn may also reflect a conflict of interest. While I acknowledge that the issues and the way they are addressed reflect my own biases, I have attempted to be as transparent as possible in how the data is gathered, analysed and interpreted to address any conflict and researcher bias.

To ensure a high level of trust and transparency in the process I adopted the following steps:

- The cohort of participants was balanced as carefully as possible to reflect a wide variety of age, backgrounds, experience and political orientation. This was done independently of whether I knew the participants socially or professionally. Each of the 139 local board members (144 board members less the members of the Waiheke Local Board) was categorised according to ethnicity, gender and approximate age, and the selection of potential participants chosen from this. Given that there were fewer younger, ethnically non-New Zealand European elected members, potential participants in this category were chosen first. Thereafter other participants were invited to take part. As noted previously, identifying participants in batches of five meant that if anyone was unable to participate, the remaining candidates could be rebalanced for the same visible qualities of difference to ensure as great a diversity as possible in the participants. As a consequence, only six of the final interviews were done with people I had met prior to selecting them to be interviewed.
- In the initial contact with the participants, and again at the start of interviews I made it clear that: I had been a member of the Green Party but was interviewing people of all political orientations; my interest was in the local board experience from people across the political spectrum; I was only interviewing one member from each local

board; there was no obligation to participate; participant details were protected and information about them would not be shared in a way that this could identify them.

- I used open-ended questions for local board members to talk about their successes and was careful to explore the issues they raised as fully as possible without pre-determining the issues that might be salient to them.
- When a point of view was expressed in one interview, I raised this issue in the latter part of subsequent interviews (if this issue was raised by the participant in the subsequent interview) in a way that did not identify the source participant but provided some insight into how issues were shared by board members.
- When analysing the data I gave more weight to comments that were made by a number of participants. When reflecting a comment that was only made by one participant I make this clear in the findings.
- I engaged in self-reflection, both in terms of providing my own answers to the questions and identifying areas of potential bias.

Insider researcher is increasingly recognised as providing important insights into the world that is studied and is also considered to be more likely to be responsive to participants based on shared understandings of any sensitivities (Bishop, 1998; Heath et al., 2009). This, in turn, leads to a greater richness of the data (LaSala, 2003). My observation was that, being intimately connected to the site of research as a researcher participant brought benefit to the process and greater depth was achievable as a “mutual knowledge” (Giddens, 1982, p.15) was shared by observer and participants.

Insider research can be challenged by the view that it is less objective than research which is carried out by a researcher who is detached from the object of research. Scholte (1974), disagrees with the view that personal views create researcher bias. Instead he suggests that all researchers should be self-reflective to identify how they construct knowledge about the object to be investigated. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.11) identify reflexivity as a way of ensuring that researchers think about their own role within the research so that they report on their observations of the social world with “objectivity, clarity and precision”, thereby minimising researcher bias. Reflexivity allows this notion of what counts as legitimate knowledge to be problematised by bringing different perspectives to how this is defined and understood (Smith, 1999; Alvesson et al., 2008). Two autobiographical vignettes are provided to describe my experiences with the phenomena also identified by participants (Stanley, 1993). This approach of informing participant comments with autobiographical insights is consistent with Smith (1987), who identifies the gap between women’s actual experience and

the way this is framed through the discourses present in documentation as a rich area for research. I preferred to use my own experience as I felt the detail was important to understand the issues, but it would have been difficult to protect the identity of other participants had I described their specific experience.

Reflexivity and transparency ensure distance is maintained from the data and avoids issues of over-identification and over-rapport with the participants (Glesne, 2016). The importance of the insider is particularly emphasised within indigenous research. Smith (1999) identifies trust, the importance of existing relationships and a shared understanding of the community as essential to accessing and interpreting social data.

There was some concern expressed during the formal acceptance to the PhD that participants would either try and hide information from me or be unwilling to be open because I was an elected member. One can never know what information participants chose to withhold or overstate, influenced both by the fact that the researcher was a colleague in a political role and they were sharing personal information about their behaviour and experiences as politicians. It is possible that participants may have emphasised their involvement in successful projects and distanced themselves from situations in which their behaviour was questionable or from projects which had been unsuccessfully delivered by their local board.

As I have previously mentioned my insider status I had through my role as a local board member helped frame the semi-structured interview questions. The insider perspective was particularly valuable in that it allowed an exploration of local board processes which were undocumented but had significant effects on how local board members work. For example, the change from portfolio meetings to workshops was described as having repercussions on the delivery of the work programme and on the relationships between staff and local board member and was described in several interviews. This way of working was, however, never enshrined or directed by the legislation, so it would have been more difficult for an outsider researcher to be aware of the change, frame questions about this or understand the repercussions this had.

I am confident that while a professional conflict of interest is apparent, in the sense my dual roles both as a local board member and a researcher interviewing fellow board members. This was managed in the most sensitive way possible. The benefit of being an insider outweigh the potential concerns of bias. Moreover, the protocols on voluntary consent and disclosure were

followed in accordance with the ethical protocols for research of the Auckland University of Technology (n.d.) Summary of design and methods.

Critical realism is used as an approach which provides for both ontological realism and epistemic relativism in understanding the experience of success for local board members. It is well-suited to this study which uses a relational framework to accommodate both the effects of structural features within New Zealand legislation and the organisation of Auckland Council, and how these affect, or are affected by, the individual choices and interpersonal behaviour of individuals. The study occurs within Auckland Council and has elements of an organisational ethnography which focuses on the experience of local board members within the Auckland Council bureaucracy. Some quantitative data is also collected to support an understanding of the diversity profile of elected local board members.

The focus on critical diversity is important in terms of guiding the sampling of participants to include local board members with as wide a range of visible difference as possible while also ensuring that having a minority profile (female, younger or ethnically non-New Zealand European) is not subsumed but is tracked alongside that of majority (older, New Zealand European) participants. Interview data is collected and analysed using thematic analysis within a relational framework to understand the potential for, and interaction between, structural, personal and interpersonal effects on success.

Chapter Five now turns to an analysis of the diversity profile of Auckland Council across the five terms of Auckland Council and the changing profile of difference that was apparent in the 2016-2019 term, thus setting the qualitative data in context. Chapter Six focuses on the local board member experience and how twenty-one local board members from across the Auckland area articulate their challenges and experiences of success in the 2016-2019 term of Auckland Council and the factors that influence this from a personal, organisational and legislative perspective. The data from one interview of an elected member who had stood down in 2016 is also included making a total of 21 interviews. The focus on the individual factors and organisational/statutory processes which promote success are discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight respectively. Chapter Nine, then addresses negative behaviour which emerged, unexpectedly, as a significant issue, as well as the causal mechanisms which give rise to negative behaviour and prevent local board members from fulfilling their role. Chapter Ten concludes the thesis and explores whether this iteration of Auckland Council provides effectively for political responsiveness.

Chapter 5 The diversity profile of elected members (2010-2022)

5.1 Introduction

This comparatively short chapter provides a quantitative analysis of the demographic profile of elected members. The focus is primarily on providing as much detail as possible in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age of elected representatives across the four, three-year terms (2010-2013, 2013-2016, 2016-2019 and 2019-2022) of Auckland Council while recognizing that there is a paucity of data in some areas. This provides insight into the profile of a selection of the diversity characteristics of local boards and establishes the context for answering RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? And RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role? These questions are addressed in Chapter Six.

The data presented both complements and relies on the findings of several quantitative studies which have provided a snapshot of diversity in elected representation in Auckland (Allpress & Osborne, 2017; Casey, 2018; Webster & Crothers, 2022; Webster & Fa'apoi, 2018). The data used in this study was collated by identifying the characteristics of elected representatives and cross-checking these by asking elected members directly, checking online sources, or confirming details with people from the same local board. Nerissa Henry, elected to the Maungakiekie Local Board since 2013, and involved with Young Elected Members, the Māori caucus and the Pacific caucuses within Auckland Council has been of invaluable help in identifying people in the above groups. The focus is primarily on elected representatives rather than candidates. Data for the former group could be captured more accurately because it was easier to cross-reference the data for elected candidates. In contrast, it was difficult to obtain contact details or any information for unelected candidates as many did not have any online profile and were also unknown to elected members from that local board area. This meant that the data about unelected candidates lacked reliability. I use the data on elected candidates to provide an overview of the trends in visible diversity characteristics (gender, ethnicity and age) in elected representation on local boards, before focusing on the situation existing in the 2016-2019 term when the interviews were carried out.

5.2 Gender

Although the strength of female representation across New Zealand has been uneven (Casey, 2021), representation of women as local board members on Auckland Council has increased substantially over the four terms of the Auckland Council. Gender parity on local boards was achieved in 2016 as illustrated in Table 3 (Webster & Crothers, 2022).

Table 5.1

Auckland Council candidates and elected members by gender 2013-2019

Table 3: Auckland Council candidates and elected members by gender

		All positions			Governing body		Local board	
		Number	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women
2013	Candidates	453	64	36	71	29	63	37
	Elected	170	58	42	65	35	58	42
2016	Candidates	468	60	40	70	30	49	51
	Elected	170	53	47	65	35	49	51
2019	Candidates	423	58	42	65	35	57	43
	Elected	170	49	51	55	45	48	52

Note. Reprinted from "Women, ethnic minorities and local electoral success,"
By K. Webster, and C. Crothers, 2022, *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 27, p.67,
<https://doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.vi27.8277>. Copyright 2019 by University of Technology Sydney.

The period 2013 to 2019 represents a marked increase in both the number of women standing and being elected to local boards. The jump was particularly noticeable in the 2016 election. In 2013, 37% of the local board candidates were women and women represented 42% of those elected. However, in 2016, this jumped by 14 percentage points, to 51% of women standing and 51% of those elected. In 2019, fewer women candidates stood (43%) but they were still significantly more electable, taking 52% of the positions. This compares to the census figures of women as 50.6% of the Auckland population in 2013 and 50.1% of the population in 2018 (Statistics New Zealand, n.d. -a). Female representation on local boards is significantly higher than across New Zealand where the national average for election to local government was 38% in 2016, and 39% in 2019 (Department of Internal Affairs, 2019). How far this affects the political agenda or work practices favourable to women, will be explored later in this study.

Casey (2018) points out that in the 2016 term, 12 (57%) of the appointed local board chairs were women. In the first half of the 2019 term this dropped to 8 women but rose again in April 2021 to 13 women as a number of local boards had a split chair role, changing the chair halfway through the term (Webster & Crothers, 2022). More significant decisions are made in

the first half than the second half of the term (such as the establishment of the local board plan) and may create greater competition to hold the role for the first half. One participant also noted that she wanted to take the chair role in the second half of the term to give her more time to organise day care arrangements and end her other professional role.

Table 5.2

Governing body member roles prior to election as Auckland Councillor 2010-2022

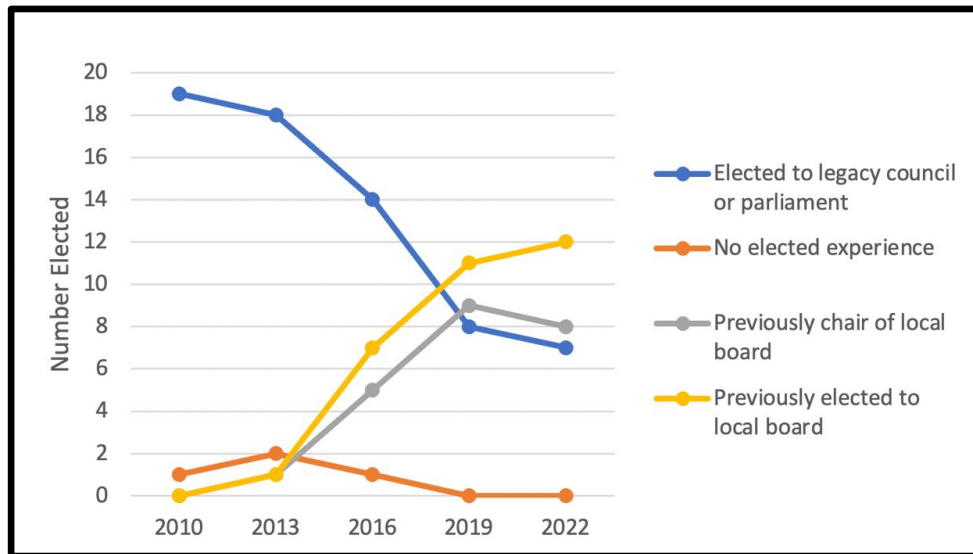
	2010	2013	2016	2019	2022
Elected to legacy council or parliament	19	18	14	8	7
No elected experience	1	2	1	0	0
Previously chair of local board	0	1	5	9	8
Previously elected to local board	0	1	7	11	12

Note. Data collected through document research. Own work.

Of note is the changing profile of Auckland Council councillors on the governing body. The first Auckland Council (2010-2013) was made up almost entirely of representatives from legacy councils in the Auckland area. Over time this has decreased and the pathway into the councillor role has increasingly been from being elected to local boards. Since 2019, over half of all ward councillors have been elected to a local board, and at least 40% have previously been the chair of the local board (Figure 5.1). Of the remaining board members in 2022, four have been ward councillors since 2010, and one was elected without previous local board experience. This suggests that for electability, being elected to a local board is a credible pathway to the role of ward councillor.

Figure 5.1

Background of Auckland Councillors 2010-2022



Note. Data collected by document research. Own work.

Since the creation of Auckland Council in 2010, the turnover of councillors has been around 20% per election, a mixture of people stepping down or losing the election. The turnover in candidates has resulted in a governing body which has become progressively younger, with greater female representation and some ethnic diversity. For example, 2022 saw the election of the first woman identifying as Māori to the role of ward councillor.

5.3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity, as classified within the New Zealand census, includes European, Māori, Pacific, Asian and MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African) as the main classifications. Ethnicity is defined by Statistics New Zealand as:

The ethnic group or groups a person identifies with or has a sense of belonging to. It is a measure of cultural affiliation (in contrast to race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship). Ethnicity is self-perceived and a person can belong to more than one ethnic group.

An ethnic group is made up of people who have some or all of the following characteristics:

- A common proper name
- One or more elements of common culture that need not be specified, but may include religion, customs, or language
- A unique community of interests, feelings, and actions
- A shared sense of common origins or ancestry
- A common geographic origin (Statistics New Zealand, 2019b).

Within this definition, European includes first generation migrants from the British Isles and Europe as well as New Zealand Europeans who are predominantly migrants from the British Isles and have lived here for more than one generation as well as other migrants including North Americans and Africans, for example, who identify as European. Māori include anyone identifying as Māori. Pacific Peoples are migrants from Pacific Islands, either in this or previous generations. Asian includes anyone from Afghanistan through to China and Japan. MELAA is a group which picks up people who are ethnically unrelated but can be aggregated for statistical purposes including Middle Eastern, Latin American and African. Other ethnicity predominantly captures those who did not answer or left the form blank (Statistics New Zealand, 2019b).

The ethnicity data in this thesis is built on census data (2013 and 2018), findings from Webster and Crothers (2022), Webster and Fa’aoi (2018), Allpress and Osborne (2017) and some of my own findings. Table 5.3 shows the census data available for the last three censuses:

Table 5.3

Major ethnic groups in New Zealand compared to Auckland in the 2006, 2013
And 2018 Censuses

	2006 (%)		2013 (%)		2018 (%)	
	New Zealand	Auckland	New Zealand	Auckland	New Zealand	Auckland
European	67.6	56.5	74	59.3	70.2	53.5
Māori	14.6	11.1	14.9	10.7	16.5	11.5
Pacific Peoples	6.9	14.4	7.4	14.6	8.1	15.5
Asian	9.2	18.9	11.8	23.1	15.1	28.2
MELAA	0.9	1.5	1.2	1.9	1.5	2.3
Other Ethnicity	11.2	8.1	1.7	1.2	1.2	1.1

Note. Adapted from “The six major ethnic groups in New Zealand 2006, 2013, and 2018 Censuses,” Statistics New Zealand, 2022b, and “Ethnic groups for people in Auckland Region, 2006-2018 Censuses,” Statistics New Zealand n.d. -a. Copyright 2023 by Statistics New Zealand.

Table 5.3 from the 2006-2018 census shows how the Auckland demographic is significantly more diverse than the rest of the country with 17% fewer Europeans, almost twice as many Pacific Peoples, 5% fewer Māori and almost twice as many Asians who represent 28% percent of the Auckland demographic. There are also twice as many people who identify as MELAA, although the number is less than 3% percent of the population.

Figures across different studies which provide data on ethnicity may vary. This arises because the term represents a social category reflecting a person’s self-identification which may not be stable or may be understood differently by researchers and participants. In contrast to the census data, for the purpose of this study, each person has been allocated a dominant ethnicity based on their advocacy interests, how they present themselves in the media and by asking them directly. So, for example, elected members with multiple ethnicities, one of which is Māori, have been identified as Māori. In addition, there was no “Other Ethnicity” category as all the participants were allocated to an ethnic category based on the criteria identified above. The data illustrates that local boards are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. Whereas in 2013, twelve of the twenty-one local boards were 100% European, by 2019, this number had dropped to seven local boards in 2013 and six local boards in 2019 (Webster & Crothers, 2022).

Table 5.4

Percentage of elected members by ethnicity to Auckland Council 2010-2022

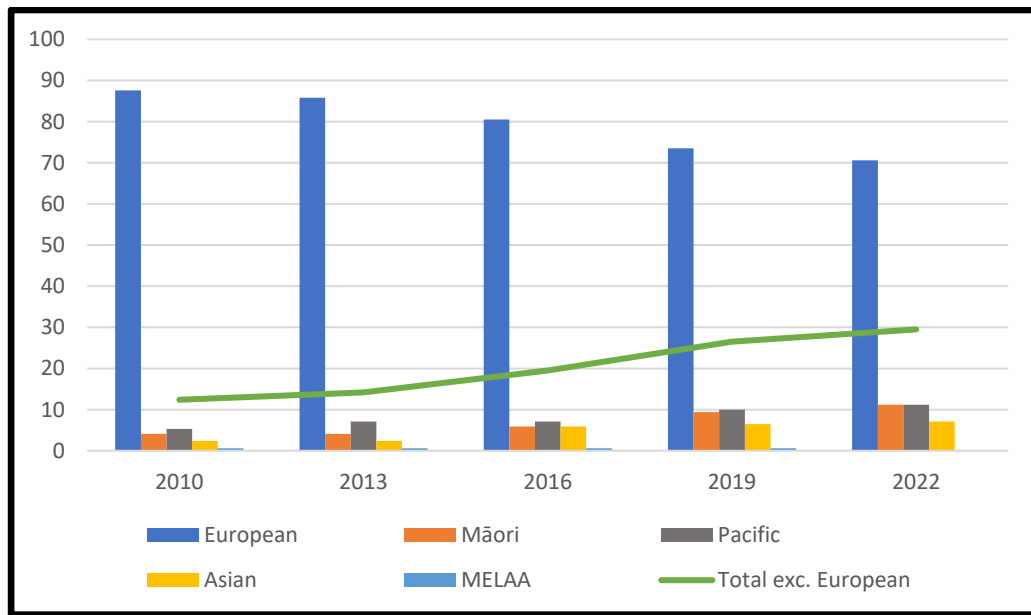
	2010	2013	2016	2019	2022
European	87.6	85.8	80.5	73.5	70.6
Māori	4.1	4.1	5.9	9.4	11.2
Pacific	5.3	7.1	7.1	10	11.2
Asian	2.4	2.4	5.9	6.5	7.1
MELAA	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0
Total exc. European	12.4	14.2	19.5	26.5	29.5

Note. Data collected from document research. Own work.

Table 5.5 illustrates, as has been noted previously (Allpress & Osborne, 2017), that Europeans have heavily dominated the candidate pool in Auckland Council elections since the formation of Auckland Council. However, there have been steady and persistent gains from non-Europeans. Māori and Pacific Peoples have both seen substantial gains which now more closely reflect the demographics in the Auckland population. Asian-elected candidates have also made significant gains, the percentage more than doubling in the 2016 local government elections over the previous two elections.

Figure 5.2

Percentage of elected members by ethnicity to Auckland Council 2010-2022

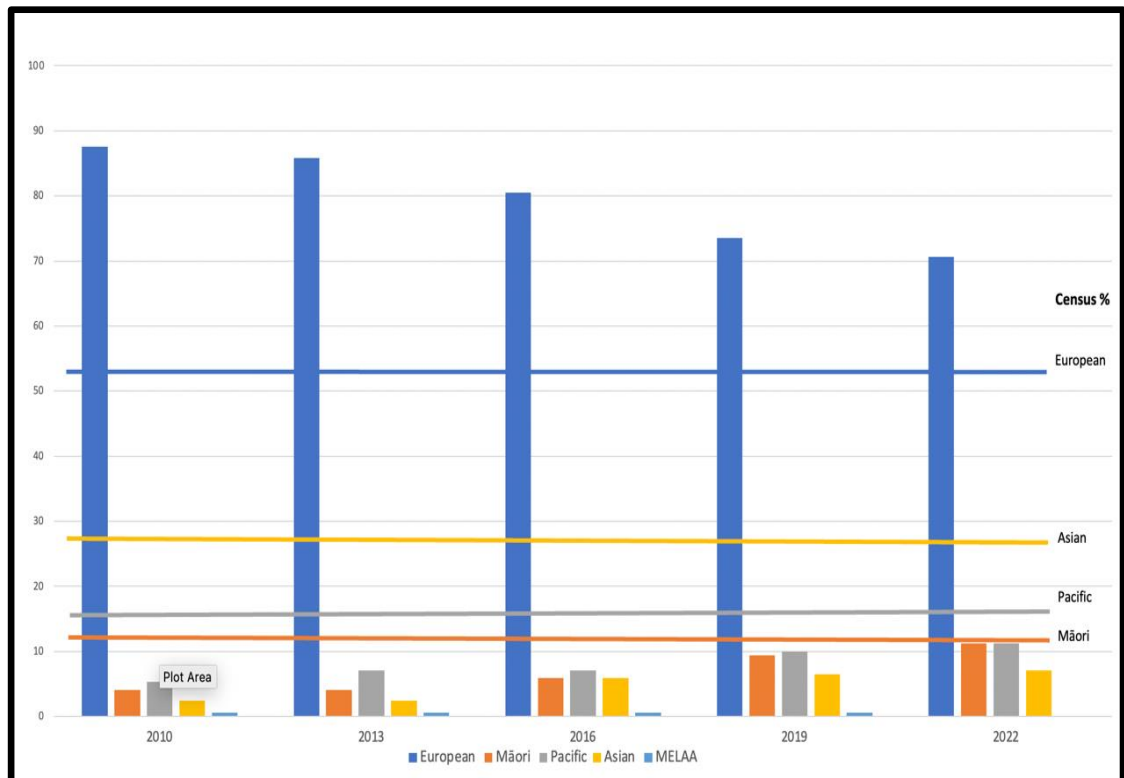


Note. Data collected from document research. Own work.

While there is a steady rise, the number of non-European candidates continues to lag in terms of numbers in the Auckland population where non-Europeans made up 57.5% of the population according to the 2018 census, but only 29.5% of elected non-European members. The following graph shows how well different ethnic groups are represented, in relation to their numbers in the Auckland population, for Māori, Pacific, Asian and MELAA.

Figure 5.3

Percentage of elected members to Auckland Council by ethnicity compared to the 2018 Census



Note. Data collected from document research. Own work.

While the numbers of Asian elected members have tripled since 2010, the total now hovers at the 7% mark. This is still far from reaching descriptive representation which would mean 48 people who are Asian-identifying would be elected across the governing body and local boards – four times the 12 people that were elected from Asian backgrounds. Furthermore, Paul Young, the only Asian elected member on the governing body, who was elected in a byelection in 2018, and re-elected in 2019, failed to be re-elected in 2022, despite having an incumbent advantage. This means that in twelve years of Auckland Council only one Asian-identifying councillor was elected for a period spanning four years.

Pacific Peoples, while mainly concentrated in specific geographic parts of Auckland (as noted by Webster & Crothers, 2022), have shown substantial representational gains and are increasingly spreading into other local board areas beyond the Southern local board strongholds where they have shown the highest electability. In 2022 Pacific Peoples were elected to Auckland Council in slightly fewer numbers than their numbers in the population. It should be noted that in the 2022 election term, Efeso Collins stood for mayor (not elected) having been ward Councillor for the Manukau Ward. Neru Leavasa was elected to the

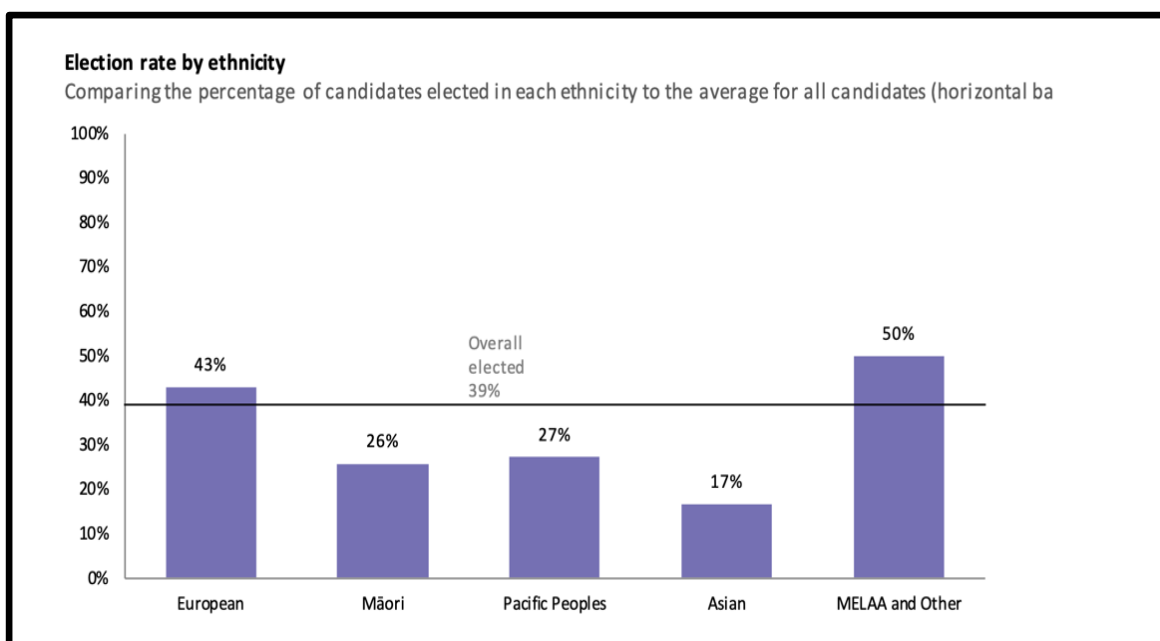
Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board in the 2019 elections and then entered the New Zealand parliament in the 2019 general election. Lydia Sosone, elected to the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board in 2010, became chair of the local board in 2013, and entered parliament as the next person on the Labour Party list following the resignation of Louisa Wall in 2022. Had they all remained in Auckland local government, the figures for Pacific Peoples in local government in Auckland would be higher.

Māori have also made huge gains on local boards (Bargh, 2016; Godfrey; 2016; Webster & Fa’apoi,2018). In 2022, Māori reached the descriptive representation threshold forward and local board elections, taking 11.2% of the seats which is comparable to the 11.5% of Māori people recorded as living in Auckland during the 2018 census.

For the 2016 election, Allpress and Osborne (2017) point out that the election rate (numbers elected in each ethnicity, compared to numbers standing for each ethnicity) is, however, low for Māori, Pacific Peoples and Asians (see Figure 5.5). Aside from standing in fewer numbers than Europeans in 2016, they were also less likely to be elected thus contributing to continued dominance of European elected members.

Figure 5.4

Election rate by ethnicity in the 2016 election

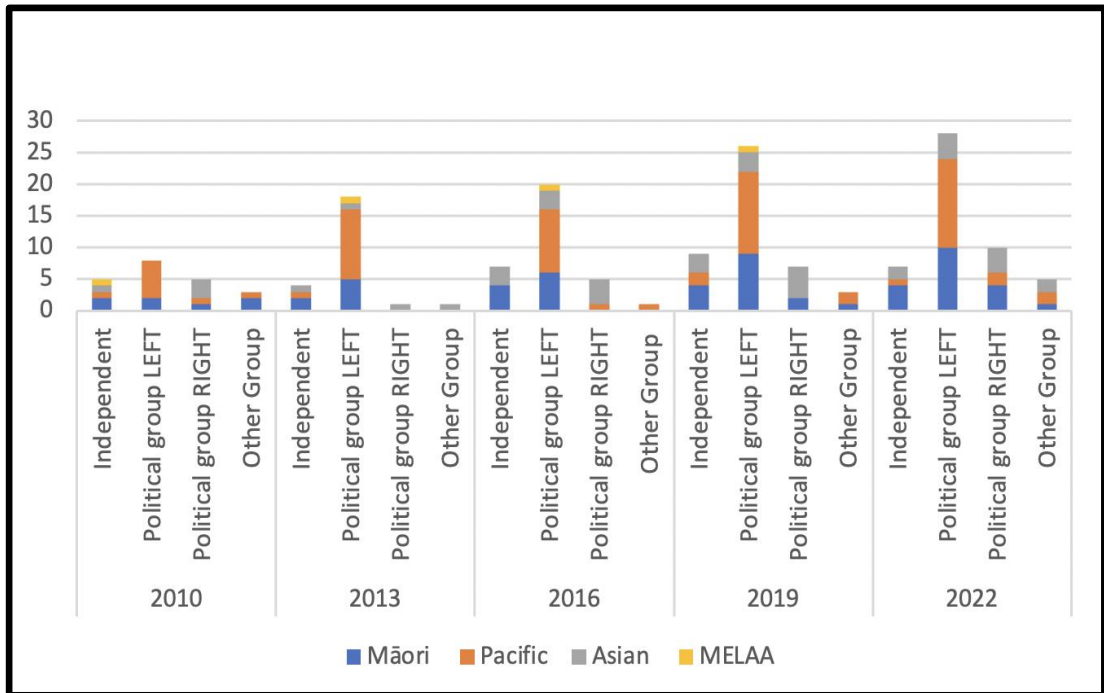


Note. Reprinted from The Demographic characteristics of Auckland Council candidates and elected members (TR2017/017, p.11), by J. Allpress, and B. Osborne, 2017, Auckland Council, <https://knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/the-demographic-characteristics-of-auckland-council-candidates-and-elected-members/> Copyright 2017 by Auckland Council.

Figure 5.5 shows how political affiliation has aligned for non-European elected members over the five terms of Auckland Council.

Figure 5.5

Elected member affiliation choices for non-New Zealand European ethnicity by election term 2010-2022



Note. Data collected from document research. Own work.

Non-New Zealand born Europeans have had the most success in being elected within political groups of the left of the political spectrum, increasing in each election term. This includes politically affiliated groups with localised representation that align with left or right values. These groups are supported to varying degrees by political parties which contest the general elections that includes campaigns run with political party branding. While generally more successful in left-leaning groups, these non-New Zealand European candidates are also increasingly successful in standing for right-leaning political groups. The 2022 election has shown that elected members are also being elected in non-politically affiliated groups captured by the “Other Group” category. This identifies non-politically aligned community groups, or those groups for which it has not been possible to identify their affiliation from their social media, leaflets, billboards or candidate statements.

In collating the data, it seems such groups often consist of local people standing in areas where there is already representation from recognised groups on the political left or right. It is

possible that people who fail to be selected for this kind of established political group, form their own group to contest the election. Alternatively, they may not want to align with a political party, or as noted earlier, they have coalesced around an issue, a friendship group, or someone who has previously been elected and wishes to build support around themselves going into the next election. Non-New Zealand European candidates are showing an increased tendency to run and be successfully elected as part of a group which may illustrate growing sophistication in their understanding of how to be successfully elected within this electoral system.

Table 5.5

Total non-New Zealand European elected candidates by political affiliation 2010-2022

	Numbers	Percentage
Independent	32	18.5
Political Group LEFT	100	57.8
Political Group RIGHT	28	16.2
Other Group	13	7.5
Total	173	100

Note. Data collected by document research. Own work.

Table 5.5 shows the total numbers and percentages of non-European candidates elected in each category across the five elections of Auckland Council. Standing as a group has been a particularly successful strategy for non-Europeans with 81.5% of non-Europeans elected in this way. In comparison, Webster et al., (2019) mention that 71% of all candidates stood as a group across the five local board elections from 2010 to 2019.

Table 5.6

Total non-New Zealand European elected candidates ethnicity and political affiliation 2010-2022

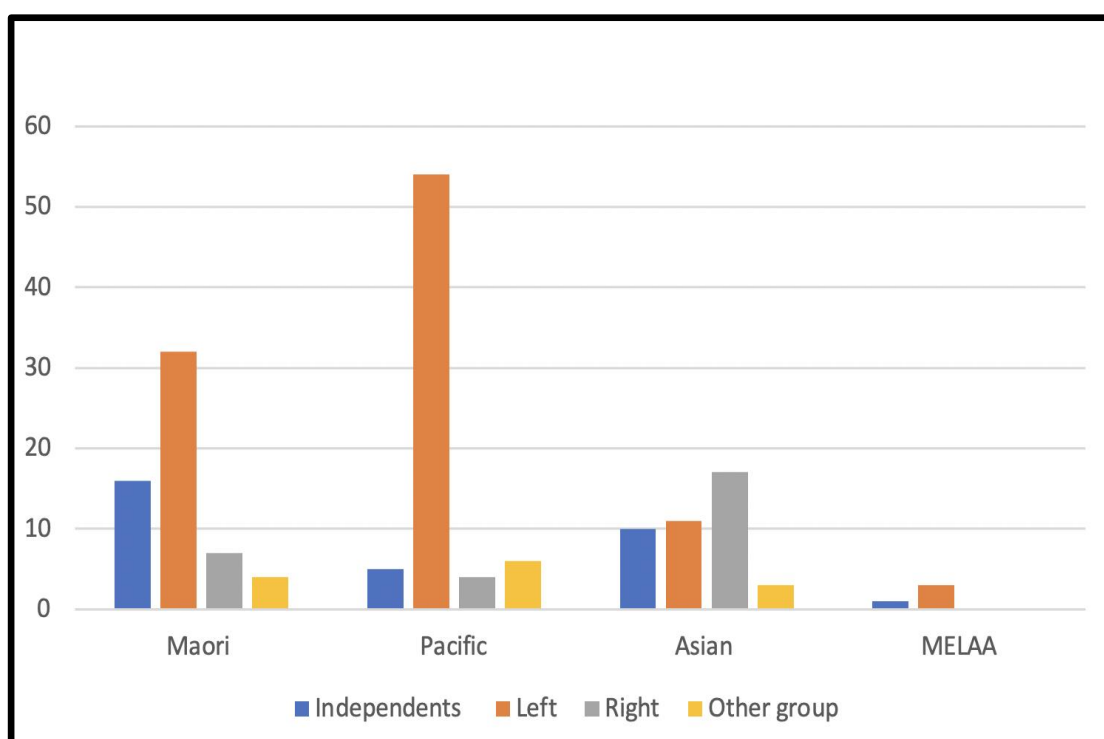
	Independents	Left	Right	Other group
Maori	16	32	7	4
Pacific	5	54	4	6
Asian	10	11	17	3
MELAA	1	3	0	0

Note. Data collected from document research. Own work.

The data in Table 5.6 and illustrated in Figure 5.6 show that Pacific elected members have had a high rate of success in political groups of the left, with Māori also successful in this approach. Māori have also, however, been successful as independents. The difference could reflect the high success rate of Pacific candidates in local board and ward areas with high concentrations of Pacific Peoples, which are also Labour Party strongholds in the general election. Māori have been competing across Auckland Council geographic areas where they form a lower percentage of the population (Webster & Crothers, 2022). The higher success of Māori candidates standing as independents could reflect their greater visibility within their geographic communities, as these candidates seem to be well-known in business or in their work roles and have lived within the communities for a number of years.

Figure 5.6

Political affiliation choices for elected members by non-New Zealand European ethnicity 2010-2022



Note. Data collected from document research. Own work.

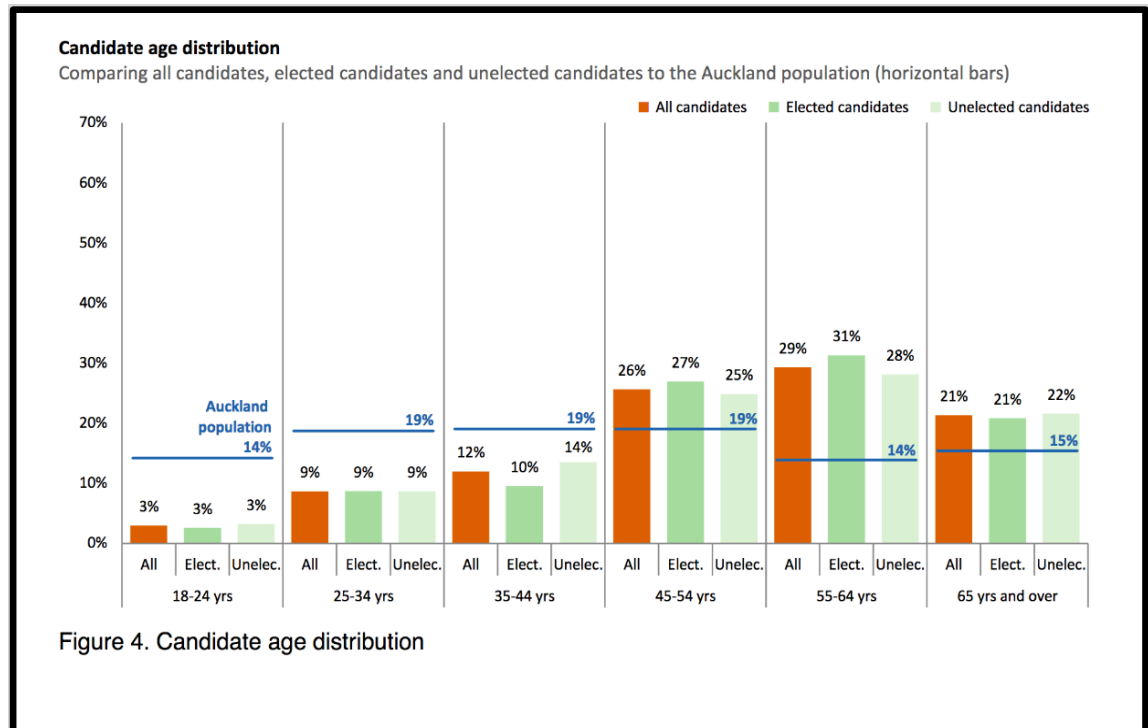
Asian candidates show a more even spread in how they stood but have shown more success than other ethnicities when standing in political groups on the right. There could be some intersection here between age, ethnicity, and socio-economic profile. It may be that wealthier candidates are more successfully elected as independents or on the right of the political spectrum where people need to take more responsibility in funding their own campaign.

5.4 Age

Information on the age of candidates has been more difficult to collect for three reasons. Firstly, it is an unreliable visible characteristic as people may look older or younger than they actually are. Secondly, not all candidates have responded to survey requests about age and the data is not collected systematically through the election process. Thirdly, there is variability in how age is classified. Allpress and Osborne (2017), for example, use the New Zealand census categories (with 18-24, 25-34, 35-44 age bands) whereas Local Government New Zealand, identifies young members as those under 40. From their analysis of an Auckland Council candidate survey for the 2016 local election with a seventy percent response rate, Allpress and Osborne (2017) provide the following breakdown of candidate ages.

Figure 5.7

Candidate age distribution 2016-2019



Note. Reprinted from The Demographic characteristics of Auckland Council candidates and elected members (TR2017/017, p.8), by J. Allpress, and B. Osborne, 2017, Auckland Council, <https://knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/the-demographic-characteristics-of-auckland-council-candidates-and-elected-members/>. Copyright 2017 by Auckland Council.

Their results show that in 2016, the majority of elected members were aged between fifty-five and sixty-four years of age, while this represented only 14% percent of the demographic. In addition, 79% percent of elected members were over the age of forty-five, while only making up 48% of the general population.

Information is not collected systematically through Auckland Council (A. Reid, personal communication, April 21, 2023) or Local Government New Zealand (Naftel, personal communication, April 24, 2023). Using information obtained from Nerissa Henry who is a young member, elected to the Maungakiekie Local board (personal communication, 26 August, 2022) and supplied to Local Government New Zealand who collect information about elected candidates to councils around the country, the over forty-year-olds in the Auckland Council area made up 84.6% of elected members in 2019 and 83.4% of elected members in 2022 (Table 5.7). The 2018 census data identify the under forty-year-old members as consisting of 42.5% of the population showing that young, elected members (YEMs) are under-represented in terms of their numbers in the population.

Table 5.7

Percentage of Young Elected Members compared with over forty-year-old Elected members by ethnicity in 2019 and 2022

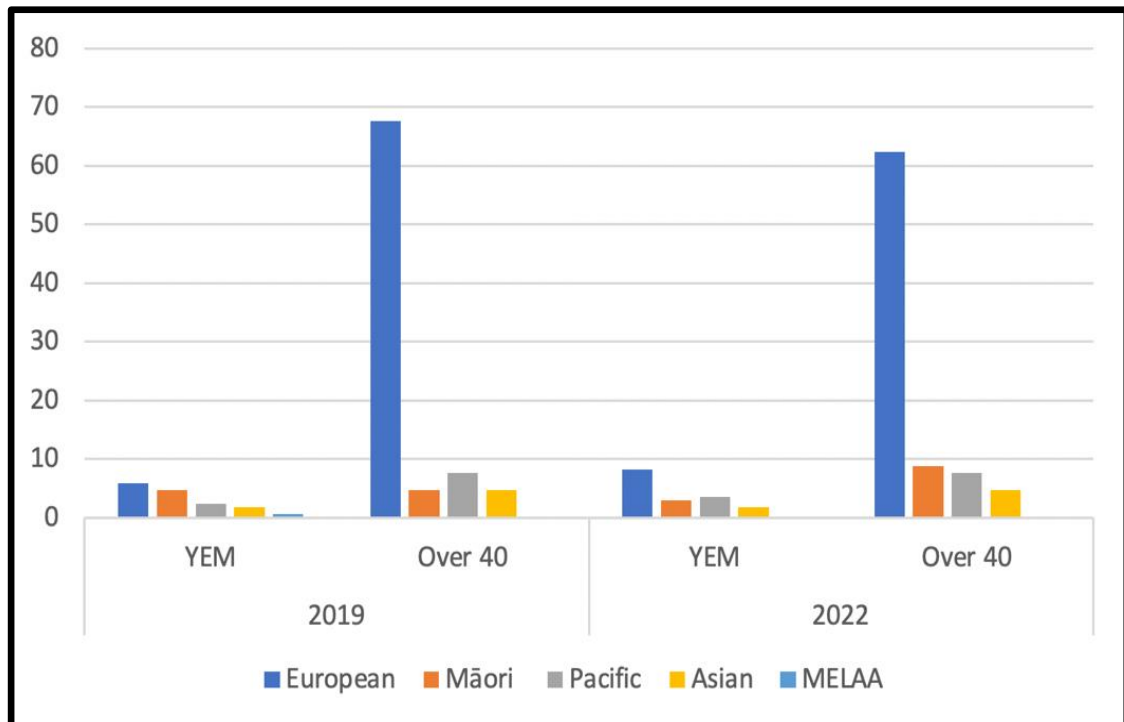
	2019		2022	
	YEM	Over 40	YEM	Over 40
European	5.9	67.6	8.2	62.4
Māori	4.7	4.7	2.9	8.8
Pacific	2.4	7.6	3.5	7.6
Asian	1.8	4.7	1.8	4.7
MELAA	0.6	0	0	0
Total Non- European	9.5	17.1	8.2	21.1

Note. Data collected through interviews and document research and cross-checked against data Obtained from N. Henry (personal communication, 26 August, 2022).

Figure 5.8 illustrates the continued dominance of over forty-year-old European elected members compared to younger elected members.

Figure 5.8

Percentage of Young Elected Members to over 40-year-old elected members by ethnicity
In 2019 and 2022

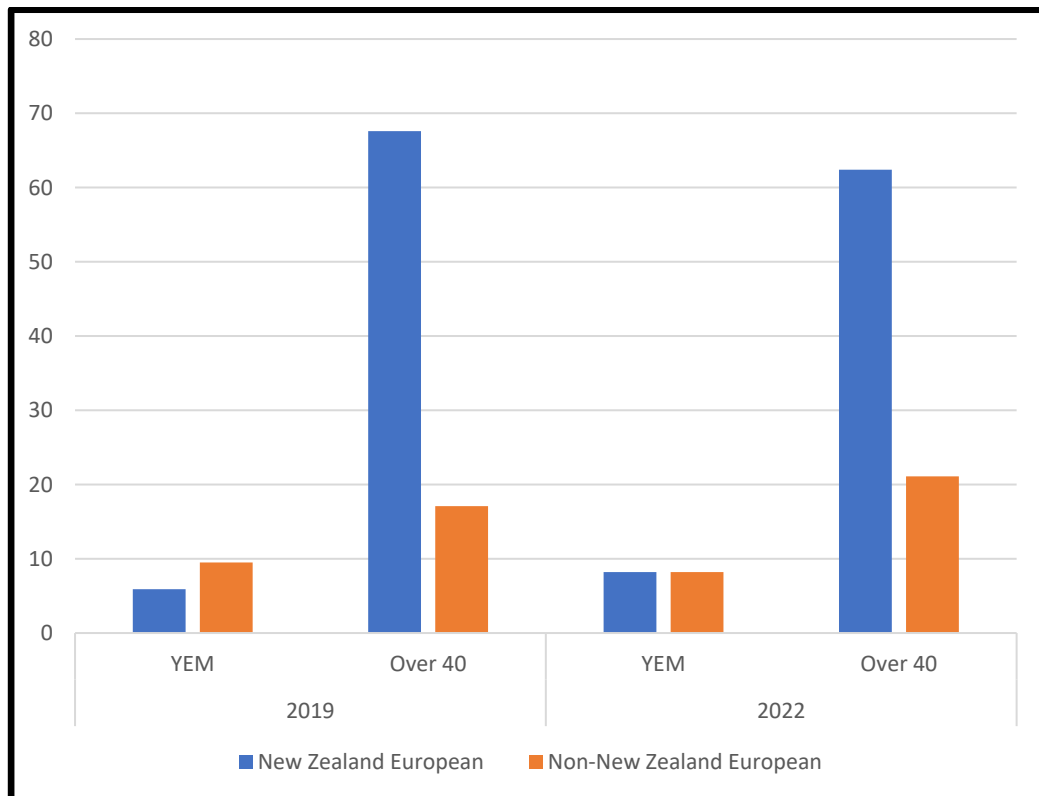


Note. Data collected through interviews and document research and cross-checked against data Obtained from N. Henry (personal communication, 26 August, 2022).

In contrast, figure 5.9 shows that there is a more even spread of ethnicity in the under forty-year-old elected members than those over forty. In 2019 there were in fact more non-New Zealand European YEMs than New Zealand European YEMs elected and the majority (63%) of these were women which is higher than for elected members generally (51%). In the 2022 election, there was a decrease in the proportion of over forty-year-old elected members overall. Non-Europeans show an increase in over forty-year-olds elected members in the 2022 term. This could result from non-New Zealand European young members turning forty in the 2019-2022 election term and re-elected in 2022. This suggests that for the under forty-year-olds, who are also increasingly second-generation migrants, there is a stronger likelihood of being elected than for older migrants. Over time, this may change, as greater numbers of elected members stay in the role as they age.

Figure 5.9

Percentage of New Zealand European compared to non-New Zealand European
Young Elected Members in 2019 and 2022



Note. Data collected through interviews and document research and cross-checked against data Obtained from N. Henry (personal communication, 26 August, 2022).

The intersection of younger elected members with greater ethnic diversity (with women taking just over 50% of the seats for the first time), could also explain why these members seemed to experience greater negative behaviour directed at them and were also more vocal about needing support. The above provides the context for the qualitative data obtained from elected member interviews in the 2016-2019 term. The mayoral role continues to be elusive for women as well as people with other visible minority qualities. All three Auckland Council mayors elected to Auckland Council since its 2010 formation have been older New Zealand European men, with only three women ever elected as a mayor in the previous legacy councils in the Auckland area.

5.5 Summary of quantitative findings

In 2010 only 12.4% of elected members were non-European. By 2016, this had increased to just under 20% of elected members and to almost 30% percent of elected members in 2022. This does however, mask the lack of Asian-elected members to Auckland Council. Ethnically, non-Europeans were predominantly elected in political groups of the left in 2016. In 2019 it

emerged that non-Europeans dominated the pool of young members. The paucity of data for previous elections means that it is difficult to see if this trend was apparent in 2016. There may be an intersectional dimension to their successful selection within a group, whereby the team seeking election has both a young person and an ethnically non-European person in the same candidate and can therefore happily tick the “diversity” box. Younger non-New Zealand European candidates are also more likely to have been born or grown up in New Zealand and have acculturated to New Zealand (Ward, 2007) and therefore be more appealing to the voter. Gender parity was achieved on local boards in 2016 and in 2019 for the governing body. The 2016 term therefore reflects the changing face of elected representation with greater numbers of visible minority candidates elected.

Chapter Six focuses on the experience of success of elected members and how this may be experienced differently for candidates who are younger, female or non-New Zealand European. The focus is on data obtained from participant interviews.

Chapter 6 The nature of success

This chapter reflects the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with participants in response to RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? And RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

As noted in Chapter Three, the “common-sense” dictionary definitions of success generally conceptualise this as achieving an outcome or as a mark of personal achievement. My expectation was that participants would focus primarily on outcomes achieved and speak about concrete projects that had reached fruition as a result of their own or their local board intervention. Participants in this study envisioned and talked about success in a greater range of ways. Within these reflections there was an interplay of their values and personality, the political dynamics of the local board and the processes of Auckland Council which emerge from Auckland Council’s interpretation of local government legislation. Thus, the determinants of success stemmed from micro (personal and interpersonal), meso (institutional) and the macro (legislative) levels. The findings reflect the content of the participant interviews with personal examples provided in some instances to illustrate the point more clearly. Participant quotations are provided in italics and provide an example of the issue described.

6.1 Achieving a new outcome

Several participants did indeed associate success with achievement and were striving to develop new projects, initiatives, or facilities in their area. One participant, for example talks about extending an existing building to increase the range of services offered: *“We did quite a bit of work on the [Arts facility] and they built a new educational wing.”* More successful local board members spoke of ensuring that projects were broken down into an achievable process which would facilitate the outcome. This involved a range of actions including identifying the project in the Long-term Plan, consulting the public on the merits of the project, ensuring it was added to the local board plan, funding a gap analysis or a feasibility study to establish the merits of the project, and then advocating with relevant departments of Auckland Council or the governing body to ensure that funding and resource was allocated to achieve the objective. Depending on the size of the project this could involve actions over several local

board terms. For this to be successful, local board members needed to understand the political climate at the time of decision-making, and how this affected budget availability as well as having a smorgasbord of projects at different stages of development that could be progressed as this elected member points out:

When the new Auckland Council was set up, I had three or four projects that were ready to go. As it turned out, we got [NZD] 20 million. Would we get [NZD] 20 million today to get any of those? I knew that the other areas weren't as well organised and here was Auckland wanting to show that they were doing something. So we got them ... But that's also reading the situation, seeing which way the wind's blowing as to see where there's an opportunity in the weakest part of the whole system of how you can move your way through to get the best possible outcomes in your area.

Achieving an outcome could also involve setting a new direction for the local board, as this participant explains: *"One thing I'm pleased about is I managed to get, with [another local board member], at a cost of 20,000 dollars, a report on our marine environment."* Local board member advocacy was emphasised as a key parameter of success. Allies, people on the local board who could be counted on to support an idea, were important in persuading other members that a specific project represented a useful allocation of resources. This is consistent with the view of Eulau and Karps (1977) of political responsiveness and allocation responsiveness where elected members advocate for positive outcomes for the community. The importance of political astuteness in navigating positive outcomes also emerges.

6.2 Stopping or challenging a process

Achieving an outcome could also mean questioning or reversing decisions that were made within the Auckland Council bureaucracy. This often involved adopting an advocacy position and challenging the decisions of Auckland Council or demanding greater accountability:

*Saving two big trees, and the mobile library was going to be discontinued ... My successes are... because I'm **there** and I'm saying we can do this in another way. So I suppose that's a success of some kind. And constituents have said, "What if you weren't there?"*

This advocacy was particularly apparent in planning decisions where local board members withheld landowner consent, requested mitigation in granting consents, challenged the developer's conceptualisation of the effects of a development or blocked the return of encumbrance money (money held by Auckland Council to ensure certain conditions of a particular development are met). If the majority of local board members were of the same view, the advocacy was supported by the local board and resulted in a local board position which could be sent to other parts of the organisation as a formal local board resolution

requiring action from the organisation. In some cases this could result in changes to Auckland Council processes as will be illustrated in section 6.3.

Advocacy could also result in substantial risk for the individual. If a decision was likely to go against powerful or vocal interests in the community, local board members could find themselves voted out at the next election. In addition, if the advocacy went against an Auckland Council direction, or questioned Auckland Council processes, this could cost local board members the organisational support required in other areas. This situation was even more challenging for local board members who held a different position from their fellow local board members as they had no allies to support their position. I identify this advocacy, which was done in response to a perceived community need or request, but which did not have the support of other local board members, as “oppositional advocacy”. Adopting an oppositional advocacy position had a number of effects and caused significant stress for local board members:

1. The workload of the local board member increased as they could not rely on other local board member or staff support to solve, advocate for or inform the public about an issue.
2. Out-group effects (Ashcroft & Treadwell, 2008; Linville, Fischer & Salovey, 1989) including being ostracised or criticised by other local board members who accused them of being uncooperative or seeking media attention. Some members reported verbal attacks, or their knowledge of the issues was questioned.
3. Difficulties in rallying support for other outcomes they were trying to achieve.
4. Where an elected member was part of a political party or group, a challenge to future electability if the group they had previously been elected alongside withdrew their support.
Alienation of particular community interests, including those with power to affect election outcomes through campaigning and lobbying.

This kind of success, which often led to the local board member’s rise in popularity with the community but put the local board member in opposition to a local board position, often came at significant cost on many levels and was not captured at all within the literature. And yet, the choice to pursue oppositional advocacy, or from a community perspective “standing up for community” is a skill that is valued by the public and forms a key tenet of public expectations of community representation, as noted in Drage (2008). This kind of success was a reflection of the service responsiveness role (Eulau & Karps, 1977), that is resolving a

community or individual issue. The experience and consequence of adopting an oppositional advocacy position will be explored further in Chapter Nine.

It is important to note that the same issue could also result in different effects depending on the political orientation of the local board. Approaches to alcohol licencing of local premises illustrates the differences between local boards. On some boards (particularly in South Auckland), board members were united in challenging alcohol licences. The Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board for example, supported and funded a community group to challenge alcohol licences and were involved in organising protests against particular premises. Local board members on other local boards tried to advocate for the board to challenge licence applications but failed to obtain board support. In these cases, the reasoning was that the request to licence premises was a commercial decision rather than a wider community issue, there was little documented evidence of alcohol harm, or there was a reluctance to go against business interests. As a consequence the issue was relegated to being the personal advocacy issue for a particular board member. Thus, although local board members were there to take a broad view of community aspirations, and address community need, in practice, the political orientation of the local board, the desire not to alienate certain interests, as well as the personal values of local board members, influenced the quality of the decision-making.

6.3 Changing the system

Success was also associated with making changes to the processes of Auckland Council. This involved changing the parameters of decision-making so a greater range of initiatives and perspectives could be accommodated within local board work. These aspects were driven by local board members who had personal insight into the benefits of the change, an awareness of the negative effect of not doing anything and were often representing a voice that had previously not been on the local board. In situations where the whole of the local board supported the advocacy position, it was possible to lobby for change with the benefit of a clear local board position. This could then be actioned by Auckland Council staff by way of a resolution from the local board. Building on the alcohol licencing example above, the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu local board advocated for, and successfully changed the process for alcohol licencing hearings so that the local board view could be represented at the licencing hearings. This was a significant change to the process as this local board member describes, while also providing an example of how a local board supports community aspirations:

Local Boards didn't have the ability to appear as objectors, but now we can. It was a matter of changing our status. Having the ability to rally up the rest of the community,

empower people to put in an objection, find ways we could assist the community by speaking to people with legal expertise, supporting them at the hearings, being able to speak for a start, because there was a bit of legal chat around who could speak, whether or not they lived in the area, a whole range of things, and things were being kicked out in favour of the applicant, without proper process or reasoning.

In another example, a local board member (who was the mother of school-aged children) advocated for shade sails to be delivered as an integral part of a playground procurement rather than “a nice to have” which might occur as the result of a community fundraising initiative.

These advocacy items reflect aspects of the lived experience of local board members. In the first example, awareness of high incidences of alcohol harm in the community pushes the local board to lobby for the local board voice in alcohol licencing hearings. In the second, the local board member sees the opportunity to operationalise messages on sun safety in the provision of new play equipment. The first item is contentious as it goes against potentially well-resourced business owners or lobby groups and required the advocacy from a united local board to effect change. The second is an example of how a person who is affected by the issue, notices the inconsistency between project parameters and public health advisory information for sun protection and then advocates for a change to what is funded through Auckland Council.

6.4 Civic leadership

Civic leadership was an important element in how local board members described success. This involved bringing parties together so that they could resolve issues between different people or communities, or to resolve issues between the public and Auckland Council. In one example, the local board member was able to mediate and lead a process between the police and shopkeepers that led to increased safety measures in the area. The local board chose to get involved in resolving the issues, a role that is not specifically provided for in the legislation. In another example, the local board member worked with the community to get a pedestrian crossing in an area with fast traffic. In the following example the chair talks about organising a meeting to respond to the tensions between various age groups and ethnicities over the use of a wharf:

*A young guy who jumped off the wharf **came** with his sister and mother down to talk to the predominant fishing group. Because people were fishing off the end that was meant to be a dedicated area for people jumping, so there were fishhooks and all sorts of problems that he had to combat. It was an interesting discussion we had about how we could resolve the issues. But he was able to actually say what he felt in a comfortable*

environment. And they were too. One lady said how upsetting it was in the fishing areas, some of the kids were jumping off the actual supports of the wharf, to gain height and she felt they shouldn't be able to jump in the area they were fishing. That seemed fair. We had a great discussion with our community facilities staff who were present and we talked about what sort of signage was appropriate and what sort of signage was needed.

Local board members also helped to build knowledge about Auckland Council within outside organisations and people within the community thus increasing community engagement between the local community and Auckland Council. Strategies to do this included identifying groups to consult with, directing grants towards capacity building within the community and empowering community groups to take a leadership role in solving community issues:

I think that's one of the things our [local] board has been really proud of – it's actually for our community to identify what their needs are and for us to enable the community outcomes through our advocacy, mentoring, governance training.

The importance of civic leadership in local government was described in the thinking for the proposed Auckland Council (Richardson, 2008). While it has been noted (in sections 2.4.5 and 3.3 of this thesis) that the legislation to support the civic role for locally elected members is vague, a view shared by Rao (1998), local board member participants described the importance of providing civic leadership as part of their role. They also reflected that complying with organisational and statutory processes took more of their time than responding to constituent issues. The lack of clear legislative provision means that this aspect of the role, particularly when it involves supporting the community in the absence of broader local board support, can fail to occur. Local board members need to navigate this space carefully as lack of civic leadership on issues that are perceived as important, could carry significant consequences for the elected member (Davison, 2019; Waitstripes, 2013) including being ridiculed or losing voter support at a subsequent election.

6.5 Personal dimension of success

A number of participants reflected strong personal motivation and sense of achievement in being a local board member. Many linked this sense of personal satisfaction to being able to improve their communities with one participant stating: *"I'm only in local government because I feel I can make a difference."* For the first time elected younger members, success was described in feeling satisfaction at simply understanding one's community better or the complexities of Auckland Council: *"I think the biggest success is figuring out stuff as I go. I can't point to one thing that is a gamechanger."* More experienced members linked success to identifying a vision and working to achieve this through successive terms of the local board.

Once this vision had been achieved, they often felt ready to step down. In contrast, , participants also recognised that some members made little effort in the role but had sufficient community visibility to be continuously re-elected. While for eleven participants being elected to the local board reflected the pinnacle of their ambition, with three of these previously elected as councillor on a district board or to parliament, ten participants saw local boards as a steppingstone to political roles on the governing body or in central government, in business or as a policy advisor as this participant illustrates: *“Yup. I want to be in Parliament. So one day ... hopefully”*.

Personal success was also linked to successful outcomes. This was evident when local board members stood for re-election and were questioned on their achievements. Being associated with particular projects could affect the election results as this participant reflects using an example from social media:

“The first politician who brings in traffic lights, it’ll be the last thing they do as a politician. We’ll never see them again, rah rah rah”. So it was, “Vote out these muppets”. ... To their credit Auckland Transport came to me and said “Do you want me to put this off until after the election coz we know it’s pretty contentious?” And I said “No. We need them. It’s not about me, if I get unelected, chucked out because of traffic lights, I’ll go do something else with me life. But no, let’s open them now because we’ve been through a good process”.

This also illustrates how bureaucrats within the organisation, could, if they so choose, manage the timing of projects to support or impede local board members in their role. It also describes the challenge of providing civic leadership when decisions had mixed support across the local board area.

6.6 Embodying difference

Linked to a feeling of personal satisfaction, for some elected local board members who were younger or ethnically visible, the sense of success stemmed from being the first person of that minority background to be in the role. This participant reflects sense of responsibility they felt in creating a path for others to follow:

So I guess what we’re trying to do is say, “Hey! Auckland is multi-cultural, Auckland is multi-ethnicity, this is the way we are”. And if we, as representatives, can fit that role model for the next generation, hopefully there will be a lot more elected representatives of different cultures.

The shared and differing experiences of elected board members and how this relates to their ethnicity, age, sex is explored further in the section below on the experience of difference in success.

6.7 The importance of context

Success was shown to be multi-faceted and contingent on the support of other local board members as well as the support of the staff within the bureaucracy. As noted previously, the same advocacy position could result in considerably different outcomes depending on the political orientation of the local board and how well the local board member aligns with this. The following example, from an experienced local board member, shows how different each local board term could be, and how this had significant effects on their perception of the role. While they struggled being in the political minority, this changed through the process of re-election:

I was nearly ready to retire some boards [local board terms] ago because I hate... My drive is to be positive, achieve outcomes in a positive fashion, how do we make our board a better place to live work and play, more friendly, more vibrant, more caring. I hate being against things, and I hate being pushed into a corner, where I have to be against things. That's not really respecting my contribution.

The above also reveals a tension between the behaviours that are prevalent in different kinds of local board work. Those local board members focused on achieving positive outcomes and working with the administration can be at odds with those who are seeking accountability. Alternatively, the administrative staff can feel attacked in situations where accountability is requested and therefore drag their feet in supporting project delivery. The following comment, although framed as an individual difference, reflects the tensions existing in the local board role between seeking accountability and developing projects:

There are local board members who like being negative, because then they can be the battler. But if you look at the record, they've never done anything positive or constructive.

Seen from another perspective, the comments reflect the personal toll the role can have on individuals if they do not align with other local board members and how this can change across local board terms.

6.8 Understanding the nature of success

The above illustrates that success for local board members is more nuanced than simply achieving concrete outcomes such as the development of new infrastructure. Key components involve civic leadership involving advocacy to change Auckland Council processes as well. Additionally, feeling successful was linked to personal satisfaction. Success was also context dependent, the same advocacy item in an unsupportive local board could result in the local board member making the choice to either ignore the issue or engage in oppositional

advocacy. Engaging with the issue in this case could lead to the board member feeling undermined, excluded, or bullied by fellow local board members and was a challenging space in which to work. While there are indicators of success, success cannot be guaranteed. Success occurs when there is an alignment of features that are both within and beyond an individual board members control. Alignment of the budget, people within the bureaucracy and elected members working together and a sprinkling of luck contribute to the sense of alchemy which results in successful outcomes. What we see is a wider conceptualisation of success in local government elected representatives at this lowest tier of government than might at first be expected.

6.9 The Experience of difference in success

We now turn to the discussion of visible difference in board members and how these affected perceptions of success in response to RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

The discussion of difference has two aspects. Local board members talked off their success in engaging different communities that had previously been unrepresented or under-represented, as well as their success in working with fellow board members who had different visible characteristics in the local board context.

6.9.1 Success in working with different communities

All participants shared a strong view that it was important for local boards to engage with different communities within their local board area and to encourage participation from as wide a demographic as possible. Communities that were specifically identified in participant comments were Māori, youth, ethnic minorities, the rainbow community, and the disability community.

There were some patterns of differences between the views of majority participants (older and European who had often been elected on multiple terms in various roles) and minority participants (younger, non-European, who tended to have been elected for one or two terms). In terms of engaging with ethnic communities, New Zealand European participants tended to emphasise the challenges they experienced in talking to different communities about community aspirations in order to better represent them. They also expressed a willingness to engage positively with these communities by encouraging them to apply for grants and access the resources available from Auckland Council. Knowing people from the community who

could act as mediators was identified as a way of bridging the communication gap for communities which did not engage with the local board:

We can use other people with credibility in the community to boost our message. We do it by making sure we work with our local Chinese association, with our newcomer's network, with our various restoration groups. If I go up to a Chinese resident's house and knock on the door, they don't know me from an insurance salesman but if they've built some relationship with someone who has some issues of commonality with them, they are more likely to trust and listen to what they have to say.

One New Zealand European participant expressed the need to think consciously about being inclusive: "I always make it a point to **think** about our community and the different ethnicities represented within it and then do my best in my voting to be fair." Hence, the general position of majority participants is that they were keen to provide for the needs and aspirations of ethnic minority groups and were keen to seek their feedback for local board initiatives.

Older New Zealand European members tended to assume that people understood the political system and knew what services and opportunities the local board and Auckland Council could provide. Younger participants and those who were not New Zealand European, tended to feel they had a role in educating their communities so that the people within them could benefit and/or participate. They also tended to emphasise their role as representing a group that had previously been invisible or unheard, as this migrant participant explains:

So I came in there, I said look, let's look at what we do for our people ... And it wasn't a lot. So I said, "Why don't we start a diverse festival?" Actually before that I said I want to start an ethnic forum where we bring in these people and discuss with them, what are their issues?

These participants tended to reflect a more collaborative view of engagement with different cultures. They spoke of developing a shared cultural understanding. This was in contrast to some New Zealand European participants who spoke more from an , assimilationist perspective and the desire to include others into the dominant cultural paradigm. . To illustrate this participant of non-New Zealand European origin talked about recognising the bicultural nature of governance and respecting the rights of Iwi in Auckland:

It's about keeping the collaboration and communication networks open and both parties need to be proactive about that. At various openings we always have a pōwhiri [Māori blessing/welcome ceremony] ... we have a good dialogue making sure that we're culturally sensitive and we step through the process with them and understand their process and respect that.

The above comment demonstrates a sensitivity to the duality of a relationship which is both a partnership based on evenly balanced collaboration, and recognition that there are elements which are not shared by both parties but need to be valued. This view of difference is

consistent with Simon-Kumar's (2014) position that social structures should be challenged to be more accommodating to all, rather than expecting conformity of minorities as a prerequisite to integration.

Younger members and those from non-NZ European backgrounds spoke more about different faces on the board creating opportunities for other groups, as well as their own community, to participate meaningfully in society. This was a feature identified by Minta (2012) who describes how the presence of one minority person creates the space for others to make similar demands. This New Zealand Samoan comments on the election of the first Tongan to their local board:

[With more Tongans elected] there's more response from the Pacifika community in applying for grants and I know that hasn't been done in the past, the promotion of those things haven't reached into those communities enough, and there hasn't been enough canvassing of those groups, not just around funding, but mortgage rebates, assistance around insulating homes.

The above participant also shows a more nuanced view of Pacific communities, making a more granular distinction between Pacific Peoples, rather than identifying this as one homogenous group, which is more likely when the local board member is not from the Pacific. This desire to see increased ethnic minority representation also crossed ethnic groups. In another example a Māori-identifying participant spoke of their desire for a Pacific candidate to stand at the next election to represent an important sector of their community that did not have descriptive representation.

First time elected board member participants (who were also often younger) spoke much more positively about the importance of engaging with different communities. More experienced members could be quite defeatist about the value of consultation as this younger, first term elected member points out:

One of the things I would say about my board is it's very old and conservative and a lot of them have been around for far too long and have become quite jaded. So, on things like consultation Member X [Non-New Zealand European] and I [younger member] are the champions. We will always say that we need to be out in our communities, we need to engage with our communities, we need to be out there listening. We don't care if only five people turn up. We've made the effort, we've made ourselves available, and if those five people have something to say, they're the most important people in our community. Whereas the rest of the board say it's a waste of money. If someone realises this is their opportunity and we don't give it to them, we're not doing our job.

This leadership from minority participants in engaging with communities went beyond local government initiatives and also included telling constituents about other kinds of community

and government resources such as grants for home insulation available through central government. This grass roots participation created a dilemma. While community groups were supported to write a credible grant, the local board member then had to recuse themselves from the decision-making process to avoid a perception of bias. This local board member support could then negatively affect whether the grant was awarded and therefore whether minority communities actually benefited from Auckland Council resources.

6.9.2 Success in working with local board differences

The experience of diversity was also important when local board members worked with each other in the decision-making process. New Zealand European participants did not raise any issues in this area. Older New Zealand European elected members were more likely to be incumbent candidates, and to be knowledgeable about Auckland Council processes. They tended to talk about using these processes, the role descriptions, and the legislation to achieve the outcomes they sought: *“You have to have that ability to just...do it. What are they [the organisation] going to do? Shoot you?”* They were also more confident about holding Auckland Council to account and ignoring staff input. The need to change Auckland Council processes or to “do things differently” was, however, a more prevalent viewpoint expressed by minority voice candidates than majority candidates. One younger elected member was championing the use of technology in online voting. Here they talk about how to increase engagement of communities:

*I feel we could do more YouTube videos on how the Auckland Plan works, the local board plan works, on specific suburbs. I feel if we make more videos, and make it more **digital**, people will make more of an effort to inform themselves.*

In general, the minority participants interviewed were effective at influencing the decision-making in relation to a minority agenda and were able to engage in micro-actions to effect change (Garboni, 2015). This included organising youth spaces or ethnic festivals for example.

Younger candidates also seemed more willing to learn and reach out across political differences and commented that they felt there was just as likely to be an age difference as a political difference in their approach to issues, compared with other elected members. One young local board member commented: *“We’re all generally agreed [referring to younger local board members] that we must increase intensification, we’re pro-double deckers [buses]. The older people are much more: ‘We have to think about parking’.”* Younger members felt they were more likely to champion higher density housing, public transport and cycling infrastructure providing an example of “mobile subjectivities” where local board members

aligned or differed depending on their values and the issues they were dealing with (Liff & Wajcman, 1996). Given the fact, there was greater ethnic diversity in younger members, this may also reflect their direct knowledge of how these issues have worked overseas, as well as the pressures of being from a generation which struggles to access affordable transport and housing options. Younger members were more likely to be working in another role as well as working on the local board, and to be more conscious of the costs involved in standing or being elected to the local board.

Being female did not seem to bring out significantly different descriptions of success. However, working mothers felt they struggled to have their needs acknowledged or addressed. Local board members tended to see childcare as a personal issue which the individual was expected to manage, rather than the board needing to provide for later start times or earlier finishing times to make it easier to accommodate parental responsibilities. They described frustration at fellow board member disregarded their childcare needs when meeting times were set or changed at short notice. Some mothers also felt that there was an assumption that they were more flexible and would attend daytime meetings that no-one else could attend. Thus, there was still a gendered response to participation where childcare was considered to be a less important responsibility, whereas participants felt that greater flexibility was provided to members working full-time in paid employment as well as doing the local board role. Mothers also spoke of the challenge of funding childcare. While board members could apply to get parking fees paid, it was not until the 2019 term that board members became eligible to claim a childcare subsidy for local board work. However, the parameters around what can be claimed (a limit to claimable hours, not being able to pay family members to look after children, as well as the difficulty of finding day care to suit roles that are often outside the 9 to 5 working day) continues to be a challenge (Preston, 2021). Participants who were mothers also described mixed support from fellow board members on issues which prioritised children such as safe cycleways around schools.

Local board member behaviour and the political orientation of the local board was revealed to be an important factor in whether members felt successful in expressing their views. More collaborative local board environments were much more enjoyable. Some local boards had a more hierarchical, less collaborative structure where participants, particularly those who were younger and female, felt it was harder to express their views:

It's still an intimidating decision to be able to speak up in a business meeting or in front of staff because if you're not one hundred percent confident of the questions you're asking and the information you want to get from staff or other members, you can literally be laughed at, or you can feel ill informed. It's a daunting situation.

If this occurred participants spoke of taking extra care to prepare their response for meetings, for example, by checking the suitability of their comments with a staff member or local board member before the meeting. If local board members were in a political minority on the local board, participants were more likely to report feeling that the group was unreceptive or tried to limit their ability to participate equitably – for example by interrupting them as they spoke off or giving others more speaking turns or the right of reply.

In some cases younger and female local board members reported the use of inappropriate ageist or gendered comments by other members of the local board to undermine their opinions. This younger member describes the issues they had with an older member of their local board:

It's just that sort of dismissive attitude that belittles other people's ideas or cultures, or language that comes out of his mouth is just rude [their emphasis]. And you know he's called me "Young Fella", one of the insults he cast at me, really early in the term.

Women reported being told their input was "silly" or "hysterical". Local board members who had greater political support from the caucus were more likely to respond to these comments:

He told me not to have a hissy fit so I turned around and walked back and stuck my fingers right in his face and I said: "Fuck you." (Participant laughs). And then we had a big long talk about gender stuff and he said, "I'm not calling you a little girl". ... Who has hissy fits [name of board member]? How dare you.

As the above example illustrates, minority local board members also found that they were involved in supporting and educating majority local board members. Whether this was in telling them that certain comments were racist or sexist, there was an element in which minority board members helped other local board members to be "minimally presumptuous" (Goodin, 2004) so they were more aware of how issues affected groups to which they did not belong. One younger local board member talked about how they were quite strategic in how they responded. One person was in a political minority on the board and avoided responding unless they anticipated the opportunity for political gain:

It's very cynical political manoeuvring. Ultimately it's about face. Is the audience friendly? If he makes me lose face ... If there's nobody else there, I'm not going to waste my time but if there's other's there

While participants reported the use of ageist and sexist comments, Asian participants did not report ethnic slurs or racist comments against groups to which they belonged. However, participants did report ethnically targeted comments in situations where there was no perceived representation from that group:

We were at a subregional workshop and he goes, "We really need a rural urban boundary because I want to be on the other side from the Asians" ... So I looked at him. And he goes, "Oh nothing to do with that". I'm not sure what "that" was supposed to be. [So then he says] "It's because they're terrible drivers". So I said, "Oh yes. Because all Asian drivers drive the same". I wasn't sure what to do. Do you go up to someone and say, "That's really racist and unacceptable?"

This may reflect that it is socially acceptable to make sexist or ageist comments, this is not the case for ethnically targeted comments. One participant discussed how their attitude changed after the 2019 Christchurch Mosque attacks (Young & Caine, 2020) which killed fifty-one people:

Who cares if people look at you and say, "Oh relax it's just a joke". Well it's not because you make that sort of stuff acceptable and you alienate people and you alienate cultures and diversity in different communities because you make generalisations. If there's a couple of positives that can come out of [The Christchurch Attacks], one of those is going to be people who would have settled or done a chuckle along at certain racist jokes or generalisations now go, "Actually, we've directly seen the effect of taking that backseat approach or not standing up ... You don't know in the conversations you're having with people that when you sit back and say nothing, they basically sit back and take from that "Oh, nothing wrong with this behaviour, nothing wrong at all."

The feeling was that these comments were made as a joke, but that the events in Christchurch brought home how dangerous these comments were and the feeling that they should be challenged as they arose.

6.9.3 Focus on Māori

The participants I interviewed were all comfortable with the importance of engaging with Māori and recognising Treaty of Waitangi Principles in their decision-making, but Māori participants were often better at articulating the issues as this participant explains:

*The Treaty of Waitangi guarantees a partnership between Māori and the Crown. When you genuinely want a working relationship, side by side, still Māori are being left out. I believe that Māori should be represented at the decision-making table across **all** levels of governance. That's not happening. I think they should play a role because when you don't have Māori elected onto a decision-making table you're missing out a key focal voice that is important. You're missing out the tangata whenua voice.*

While the participants were keen to support Māori initiatives, consistent with Bennet (2016), they also reported variability in how far local board members understood or put effort into understanding bicultural issues. These participants felt that some elected members were resistant to recognising responsibilities or opportunities that arose in addressing equity for Māori within the local board sphere of influence. This involved avoiding allocating resources

specifically for Māori initiatives or avoiding consultation on issues which would predominantly affect Māori. One local board chair explained how strong advocacy with their New Zealand European dominated local board had been necessary in terms of supporting a marae project:

We had a marae group who had been thrown out or were about to be thrown out by the ministry at a site they'd been occupying. And for some of our members [speaking in support of the group] was a step too far because they challenged us. They gave us a hard time. (Participant laughs). But when I read through the history ... they'd been basically fobbed off.

One New Zealand European participant who had championed a Māori project talked of Māori as a community of interest (such as a sports club or cultural group) rather than as a Treaty Partner. While at one level this reflects the challenges identified by Bargh (2016) in addressing Māori as Treaty partners or citizens, the discourse used suggests that it was a strategy to support a community within the local board area, while avoiding engagement in specific issues around Treaty responsibilities. This could be because there was a lack of a dedicated Māori funding stream, and the project was competing with other community projects. It could, however, also have been because the local board member was avoiding a potential backlash from fellow local board members or parts of the public in a local board area suggesting that Māori were receiving preferential treatment over and above other eligible community projects:

It's not so much about being Māori, it's about being part of our community. So, there is a real appreciation of what the group is trying to achieve but very much from a community-centric perspective ... I think it's about place-making.

Success in relation to Māori initiatives therefore required an additional level of diplomacy and was more likely to be challenged by fellow board members or members of the public. As an aside, the comment also illustrates the changing dynamics within local government. In 2023, as I submit this thesis, there is more specific funding available to fund Māori initiatives and it is likely that participants interviewed now would be more likely to identify Māori as Treaty Partners and mention local board responsibility in providing specific consideration of Māori interests while also having the funds to do so.

At the time of the interviews (between 2018 and 2019), participants reported feeling under-resourced to deal with the range of tensions affecting Māori which spilled over into local board decision-making. These included conflicts between different hapū [sub-tribes], tensions between Iwi [Tribal] organisations resulting from which entities would receive post Treaty settlement funding, as well as being able to recognise the difference between pan-Māori organisations that worked for the benefit of all Māori, and institutions that were connected to particular Iwi. There was also significant discussion on the value, resourcing and structure of

joint governance entities which was complicated by the fact some Iwi have not settled treaty claims, continue to lack nominated governance representatives, or lack the time or resource to engage with Auckland Council or the local boards.

This Māori participant had championed the use of Māori names in a new precinct. They refer to the importance of having a seat at the decision-making table, and reflect a personal sense of achievement. At the same time, they are still very conscious of speaking from a culturally “othered” (Canales, 2000) position:

*We can finally recognise Māori. Māori names are beautiful, and we have our **own** pre-European history and these stories are not being recognised ... what we have to do is reclaim that space back by recognising ancestral Māori names... And for me to argue the point why all the streets should have Māori names given by [name of Iwi], and for me to go to the Dawn Ceremony of [name of place] and see the ancestral names of the streets around the square, that for me was a significant victory that you would never have seen on the previous local board.*

Beyond the need for equity, what shines through in the above is the aroha [love] for Māori culture while also reflecting the sense of privilege in speaking for tangata whenua. At the same time there is a call to recognise the inherent value of cultural artefacts rather than positioning Māori in relation to a New Zealand European world view.

Participants also reported some local board members making comments that were indirectly ethnically targeted. These centred on Māori having undue influence and trying to gain undue advantage in the electoral process by having a voice as citizens but also as Iwi. Comments were also made to undermine a Māori cultural presence, for example saying that place names should not be used in a new subdivision “Aw ... *It’s a joke them proposing that name. It’s too long and hard to pronounce.*”

While participants recognised the importance of Te Tiriti principles in local government, this was not a view shared universally across local board members. The lack of knowledge and lack of resource, both for the local board and Māori political entities who engaged with the local boards contributed to the difficulties of addressing tensions which arose with respect to Te Tiriti issues. These issues were most likely to result in tensions when Iwi input was sought to make changes to a reserve or in developing co-governance arrangements for Auckland Council properties which were the subject of a Treaty of Waitangi claim.

6.9.4 The power of elected representation

Younger and non-New Zealand European elected members spoke of the power conferred by elected representation as expressed by this younger elected member:

*I care about so many things at a micro level, I want to be making some sort of positive change, the **easiest** way and having the **biggest** influence is getting as high as you can at the top....For me it was get to the top and make decisions that are inclusive of a lot more people rather than benefitting the few.*

Thus there is a strong emphasis on the importance of descriptive representation and resemblance from visible minority participants (Rao, 1998). However, minority board members resisted being given all the responsibility for issues arising in the sphere they were identified with, regardless of whether they had the interest or the skills to deal with the issues. For example, the person identifying as Māori on a local board was often given the responsibility for reflecting Māori protocols, even when they had little knowledge of what was required. Younger participants tended to be given the responsibility to deal with playgrounds or youth issues. However, they sometimes struggled with a lack of historic knowledge, or knowledge of communities and were not always the best placed on the local board to deal with the issues. This was resolved, to a degree, by having strategic brokers (people employed to facilitate community engagement), who were increasingly hired from minority ethnic backgrounds, or by having youth forums or ethnic forums that could inform local board activity.

Non-New Zealand European and younger participants also felt compelled to clarify that they were elected to represent all of the community (not just the ones who are not European or young). They were also critical of being essentialised particularly when they themselves were third culture (for example, ethnically from one part of the world, but growing up in a different part of the world before coming to New Zealand) or fourth generation non-New Zealand European. In these cases, participants did not necessarily feel they shared the culture of the visible minority with which they were identified: *"I definitely don't, I want ... I'm at pains to point out that there are seven other people who are just as good. The only difference is that I speak bad Chinese."* The identification of people with their "original culture" may not be particularly meaningful for them if they did not grow up within that culture. These participants also questioned why they were continuously identified as ethnically different after their family had been in New Zealand for a number of generations when this issue did not arise for migrants coming from predominantly Anglo cultures.

While emphasising that they brought diversity by having different lived experiences, visible minority local board members were keen for difference to be accepted while recognising us all as New Zealanders. In condemnation of the Christchurch Mosque attacks which were seen as ethnically motivated, and to identify New Zealand as an inclusive society, Jacinda Ardern, the New Zealand Prime Minister, referred to the victims by saying “They are Us” (Ardern, 2019). A non-New Zealand European participant had the following to say:

But I don't want to be Others. Like this issue happened in Christchurch. Somebody said They are us. I personally take exception to that term. Who are they? Am I they? I'm not they. I'm us. So don't call me 'They are us'. We are us. My life, I want to spend my life bring [sic.] People together, make New Zealand a beautiful place, have harmonious relationships with our Tangata Whenua, Pacifika People, our European people. We want to be truly one.

Two participant local board members, both non-European migrants, identified local board diversity as a key element in promoting social cohesiveness. They emphasised the importance of the representation of difference at the table of power as a key element in safeguarding democracy. One minority participant emphasised the importance of diversity of thought and a varied lived experience in local board decision-making:

*For me what's important is diversity of thought. If there's an old white guy who grew up on a marae and went to Kohanga Reo, I don't care what colour you are because you understand the needs of a particular community that's underrepresented. So it's not what one happens to be but are these people considering these different groups. And of course naturally in most cases one considers **People Like Us**. Capital PLU.*

Accordingly, there was a view of diversity, emphasised by non-New Zealand Europeans and younger elected members, that everyone is different. They embraced “the sheer fact of diversity” (Goodin, 2004, p.63) rather than needing to be identified with a particular group and appreciated that there was an increasing range of voices represented on local boards. The importance of having a broad life experience which went beyond descriptive representation and different physical appearance was seen as invaluable in anticipating and recognise the needs of as great a range of people as possible.

6.10 Conclusion

Using extracts from the semi-structured interviews with participants, this chapter has addressed RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? And RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (gender, ethnicity, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

Success for local board members has been identified as encompassing a number of aspects that are more nuanced than the dictionary definitions. While it included notions of personal success and the achievement of outcomes like the building of a community hall, it could also involve making decisions to stop something from happening (the granting of public access or consent to chop down trees) for example. In some cases, the sense of achievement came from successfully changing Auckland Council processes to create the conditions for better participation (for example allowing local boards to participate in alcohol licencing hearings). Providing civic leadership, although poorly defined in local government legislation was an important area of local board member work, although it was acknowledged that this was often poorly supported. Lastly, those local board members who were visibly different, mentioned the importance of embodying difference and bringing new concerns or solutions to the table, as part of the reason they felt successful.

While all participant local board members were keen to engage perceived minority groups as much as possible, New Zealand European members were more likely to speak of the importance of speaking on behalf of other groups. Younger, non-New Zealand European elected members were more likely to speak about improving the descriptive representation of local board members so that there was a greater range of voices at the decision-making table. These elected members expressed pride and a strong sense of responsibility about the role in being able to represent their communities. At the same time, they were also more conscious of promoting and representing the voices of other unrepresented groups. There was also a tendency for younger and non-New Zealand European members to be allocated responsibilities to deal with their perceived community of interest. While they were generally happy to fulfil this role, these local board members were also clear that they were there to deal with all issues arising in the local board areas of responsibility, and were resistant to only being offered responsibilities in relation to issues affecting perceived minorities.

There were specific opportunities and challenges posed by addressing Te Tiriti issues. On the one hand there were clear attempts by local board members to recognise Māori as Treaty partners, on the other hand the complexities, lack of resource and lack of political interest from some local board members meant that it could be challenging to address the issues.

Local board members also reported gendered and ageist comments made to younger participants and to women. Some board members were reported as making disparaging remarks about “Asians” but this did not occur on local boards where non-New Zealand Europeans were elected. Ethnically targeted comments towards Māori were also reported

and seemed more prevalent in contexts where there were no Māori board members. Thus, it may be more socially acceptable to joke in ways that undermine women and younger people, but that local board members were more covert about making ethnically targeted comments, only making these in spaces where those ethnicities were not present. This lends weight to the importance of diversity on local boards.

An intersection emerges between the local board members who are older and more experienced and generally New Zealand European, which contrasts with those who are younger, more ethnically diverse, and often female. The study also illustrates that the diversity of life experience brought by younger and newer members is balanced by the greater experience of local board members who have been in the role longer and are generally more skilled at navigating Auckland Council processes.

In the three chapters that follow the factors which affect success from perspective of the local board participants in this study will be outlined. The micro features of success include those personal and interpersonal features of local board members and their interactions with others. These issues are explored in Chapter Seven which also explores political astuteness. The legislative and organisational issues which impact on success will be addressed in Chapter Eight. The prevalence of negative behaviour (identified as a range of behaviours including bullying and harassment) emerge as a key finding and are discussed in Chapter Nine.

Chapter 7 Micro features of success

This chapter focuses on micro features, the personal (individual skills and personality traits of elected members) and interpersonal (features arising out of the interaction between people) which affect local board member success. As such the chapter responds to RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? There is some overlap and interaction between these features and the meso or organisational features of Auckland Council which affect success. However, for the purpose of this study, the meso features which are primarily addressed in Chapter Eight.

Success was shown to demand a range of interpersonal skills, political astuteness and knowledge of the organisation and community to ensure that prioritised projects remained at the forefront of work programmes and budget allocations. The findings from this chapter are developed into a framework of Skills and Knowledge for Elected Members in Local Government (SKEMLG). As will be described, local board members varied in how successful they felt in their role. This depended in a large part on the shared aspirations of the mix of people who were elected to their local board, as well as the ability of the elected members to work together and with the staff.

7.1 The ability to develop trust and build relationships

Developing trust was a necessary feature for successful outcomes across the functions of the local board, revealing itself as the glue which allowed other actions to take place.

This was apparent in relations between local board members, staff, and people in the community. Trust reflected the ability to have “*free and frank discussions*” which allowed the exploration of issues. In a public situation, this involved framing disagreements with the staff in a way that was not hostile or abusive of them. For example, in describing meetings that were open to the public, one participant said “*The Council staff would speak, and we’d always protect the Council staff. It wasn’t meant to be an ambush.*” High levels of trust led to strong relationships which were particularly important because employees were relied upon to advance local board priorities in the dual decision-making that occurs on local boards, with local board members making strategic decisions and staff members delivering these. Several local board members emphasised the value of trust and strong relationships as this example shows:

I probably have the confidence of some of the officers, so ... I can arrange different meetings with people and ensure that I have the right people around the room to help

them and support them. That's a definite advantage [of electing me] I should imagine for people.

Often the relationships had developed outside the Auckland Council through being in the same club, political party, friendship circle, or having worked or contracted for Council in the past “*I've talked to X [the officer] about a few things outside his project. The more that I've been to things, and I've seen him, the more comfortable I feel talking to him.*” Particularly with officers and local board members who had worked together for a long time, there was also a lot of loyalty which meant that participants could have “*off the record*” conversations. These were useful in finding out which policies were being worked on internally (this means by employed Auckland Council staff, as opposed to elected members) and to influence ideas before they were crystallised into projects, to find out why projects were delayed or to identify key influencers or blockers within the system. Lack of trust resulted in poor working relationships within the local board and with the employees of Auckland Council and could result in the side-lining of projects through lack of prioritisation.

The chair had a pivotal role in determining the culture of the local board. A good chair provided opportunities for participation or mentorship and worked collaboratively with other members and the staff. Here a newer member describes how they were actively supported by the chair:

I was really encouraged to have my say in the beginning. I'm one of those where I'll just sit back and observe you all until I feel comfortable ... but [the Chair] would always say, “Do you have something to say?” Or she'd say, “Remember we had a chat about this, this is the time to bring it up.”

If, however, the chair was divisive or unsupported by members, there was confusing leadership which had a negative effect on the ability of the local board to mobilise staff and community enthusiasm.

7.2 Advocacy skills

The ability to “*champion projects*”, a term typically used to advocate strongly for the community, was seen as an essential feature of success. Advocacy items came from a variety of sources. Stronger advocacy positions often reflected personal friendships, local board member interests, or the aspirations of a community within the local board area, often one connected to the local board member(s):

I've been a bit of a broken record with playgrounds, that the community has reached out to me. So I've made sure that there's a line item [budget allocated] for these

things. I don't want to take credit for them because it's always been a collective group. So I've offered ideas, but we've supported each other.

The above provides an example of advocacy supported by the local board. Conversely, in some cases local board members could find themselves advocating for community aspirations without broader local board support. Chapter Nine further elaborates on how bullying emerged as a key challenge to board member feelings of success and describes how oppositional advocacy (see Section 9.3.3) could exacerbate bullying experienced by participants.

Advocacy could also involve making connections with external stakeholders. Successful local board members use their expertise to forge links with groups or agencies outside the organisation:

I've learnt too, a lot about funding, and the importance of leveraging funding. And having the faith and the confidence of major funders [public funding organisations]... So a lot of our projects have actually happened ... I write letters of advocacy to each of them. But because our board is prepared to, I suppose, put our money where our mouth is, that's a crude analogy, we have been successful.

In the above example the local board chair discussed the project with external funders, organised a financial commitment for the project from the local board which was then matched by a funding organisation.

7.3 Curiosity and empathy

These skills were seen as important in identifying community aspirations and needs. Curiosity was reflected in striving for opportunities for community engagement and then linking resources to the development of projects which reflected these aspirations as the following example illustrates:

So we're walking across the school grounds ... I think I must have asked, "What's all that stuff over there?" It turned out that's the only native bush in the whole of the area. There was one person ... and she started talking about it with a degree of enthusiasm. We thought "we could actually do something here." We quickly organised a meeting at the school to see if there was a degree of interest in restoring, renewing this whole area. The schools were really keen to engage, the scouts were engaged, the community, the resident association, everyone's enthused about this thing.

So, as a local board, I think I was still chair, we gave them 10,000 dollars to do a scoping report. From there it developed and now I think we've put in a quarter of a million to develop better paths so the walking school bus could go through there, the school was looking at it for environmental projects. So one Saturday a month, they have a working bee to take out the weeds or plant. What's interesting is it's not unexpected that you might have 50 Chinese people come along. And they've said to me, "[Participant name], I know my language isn't very good ...but here's a way that

*we can connect in the sense we are contributing, pulling out weeds, cutting down branches, planting and feeling connected to **our** community.”*

In this example the local board member listens to the community and recognises the value of the project, then builds on community leadership, helps to resource engagement from the wider community and then finds a way to direct additional funds to the project. This provides a really strong example of a local board member playing an instrumental role in enhancing and supporting community-led initiatives while also building social cohesion.

7.4 Self-confidence and integrity

A number of local board members felt that confidence in one’s abilities and judgement, as well as standing by decisions, even in the face of opposition, were key qualities of political leadership:

If they [the public] feel we’re not doing the right thing, they certainly tell us. You have to be a certain kind of person to want to be an elected member. Have pretty tough skin, you have to be pretty sure of who and what you are, and you have to conduct yourself with quite a high level of personal integrity and respect for others at all times. Because you’re constantly being seen as a community leader.

It could be hard, particularly in small communities to front decisions that were unpopular, or went against the interests of a board member’s friends or communities of interest:

I’ll have people who cross the road to avoid me. People I got on reasonably well with and sometimes I know what that’s about and sometimes it’s that I didn’t support a grant application, or I said the wrong thing on some issue they think they understand, or they don’t think I understand.

Local board members also spoke of the importance of the chair’s confidence in leading the board: “I think how much confidence, or the insecurity of the chair can make a huge difference.” This confidence was expressed as asking for more information from officers, and in understanding how to use the system to get the most informed answers. This could involve, rejecting reports and deferring decisions, rather than taking officer recommendations at face value. The confidence of the chair was also mentioned in relation to leading collaboratively rather than working at the expense of other local board members: “He doesn’t actually have to speak on everything. He should be allowing others to speak on areas where they have more knowledge on, so the community is seeing more than one face.”

The ability to speak out was often seen as a challenge, particularly if this was a lone view in the political arena, and required high levels of self-belief and integrity in representing the view of constituents as this example illustrates:

When these things were raised in workshops they [the local board members] would basically say, "Well, you're the only one who thinks this." (Participant laughs). And there was absolutely no willingness to engage with any of the issues I was bringing up. What I found really stressful was that our role under the local government act is to listen to our people and we had all that hard core evidence.

Local board members reported feeling highly stressed when they had to defend a position to other local board members who were unsupportive, made personal attacks on them or used the different view as an opportunity to exclude them from the caucus or the political group at subsequent elections. Participants also noted that some local board members failed to declare any interests but there did not seem to be a mechanism to address this. In the following example, the board member, who had disagreed with a board decision, found out that fellow members of the board had met secretly with a community group prior to a decision being made:

The board voted to revoke the reserve status. Then through a LGOIMA [Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act] enquiry I found out that three of our board members met with the ... club, who had the most to gain by the revocation, to discuss what benefit it was to them to have the reserve status revoked.

7.5 Impartiality and self-reflection

A number of participants expressed that it was "important not to jump in at the deep end" and "not take sides" when approached about issues. Being fair was expressed as an intention which required effort and was linked to gathering as much information as possible about the situation before commenting:

So I've been saying right from the start, we need to get all the facts. Whose got decision-making [authority]? What other decisions have been made, so we know what the rights and responsibilities are of the local residents and the environment group, sit down the two parties ... mediation, broker a deal, resolve the dispute. Don't take sides. You're there to follow the rules and try and bring peace and harmony to the community.

Impartiality was also seen as creating the conditions for different points of view to be heard, and for people to resolve points of community tension with the local board acting as a mediator. This participant felt that if you were impartial, the best decision naturally fell out of the situation which was then the obvious decision to support:

*No I've never **really** felt torn on a vote. Maybe I'm not, on some things as driven as people might think. Sometimes I can see the other side as well as the side I'm supporting.*

Other participants spoke of the importance of being able to explain one's decisions if asked. The perception of impartiality also went hand in hand with being transparent and understanding the nature of the decision-making responsibility. Participants were unimpressed when the chair, or local board members used the role to further an agenda that may not have been agreed by the local board.

7.6 Hard work, preparation, and self-motivation

Participants spoke of working hard to understand the issues. Some elected members spoke of the importance of being prepared and doing considerable work outside of the formal local board meetings which required a huge time commitment, particularly for the chair of the local board. Hardworking participants were busy throughout the day, weekends, and evenings: attending Auckland Council workshops and meetings, attending events organised by community groups, reading, and researching topics prior to local board meetings. This involved consulting with affected parties to understand any possible effects on the community before voting on an issue. In addition local board members were also answering calls from constituents or following up on issues with staff. This member describes a typical week:

I try and take every opportunity to attend as many community activities as possible. And ... I will actually try and go and sit in on the AGMs [of community organisations], read the financial statements, speak to the chair, speak to the managers, observe how the community is engaging with that particular group and form my own opinion. So it means reading every report [from Council] and providing comment to it well before the meeting or in written form, sometimes I have my own notes. So every report I get through I'm asking for more information or clarification, "When will this be added in? When will the officers be coming to talk to us on this? My thoughts on this are" So really getting a high level of feedback that comes to the local board.

Consistent with the findings of Florczak et al. (2020) participant comments reflected high levels of conscientiousness in describing their role. There was, however, some variability in how local board members felt about the efforts of other members. The role has few formal requirements, apart from attending the local board business meetings which are held once a month. This participant explains the importance of preparation, as well as the fact some local board members seemed disengaged and were able to get by without doing much:

Be as well prepared for board meetings [as you can be], always, always. I think it's easy to not be. And nobody is going to slap you over the knuckles and tell you to do

your job better. You have to have really high personal standards; a really high work ethic and you have to be pretty passionate about what you're doing to deliver the best possible outcomes for the community.

The above illustrates the range of skills required to perform the role of local board member effectively as well as the fact there was considerable variation in the way local board members performed the role, or in their understanding of what they were expected to do.

7.7 Resilience

The importance of resilience, although not spoken of directly, was apparent in the local board members whose fortunes had varied over successive terms of the local board where they had been in political majorities or minorities. These incumbent members were very aware that board dynamics could change and had become adept at using the system to get the outcomes they wanted. Part of this resilience involved strategising to ensure their own re-election and to influence who was elected as chair. Signs of resilience in performing the role included the ability to develop shared interests with a range of stakeholders, deflect negativity, and connect with other local board members by communicating how fellow local board members would benefit from supporting their initiative. This was manifest even when there were clear differences in approach, politics or personality and promises had been broken or allegiances had changed.

7.8 Knowledge areas

Four knowledge areas were identified as instrumental to local board member success in the role. These included an understanding technical and subject knowledge, knowledge of Auckland Council and its processes, knowledge of the community and stakeholders, as well as governance and technological skills to navigate the practicalities of the role. Local board members varied in their skill level in these different areas but talked about the importance of developing these attributes to be effective in the role.

7.8.1 Technical and subject knowledge

These are skills that local board members brought to the role and reflected their previous experience or learning. Amongst the participants this involved an awareness of social enterprise and small business, digital literacy, civil defence, conservation, advertising, insurance, city planning or being a parent. It was reflected in the kinds of projects they wanted to achieve, for example advocating for high-speed broadband within their community,

supporting playground development, or requesting a study on the existing birdlife in the local area.

7.8.2 Knowledge of Auckland Council processes

Local board members were more successful when they understood how to use specific aspects of the Auckland Council organisation and key stakeholders within and outside the organisation. Those who had studied politics, or had contracted to or been employed by Auckland Council before being elected, had a stronger understanding of how to navigate through the system and statutory processes:

I got a gap analysis of our play provision into the work programme, which has been completed and we have now identified all the places where playgrounds have not been developed within a ten-minute walk of local residents. As a result of that we have a playground to be built in the work programme coming.

One local board chair adopted a strategy to pursue outcomes that could realistically be achieved within the election term to ensure that these would be delivered. This elected member reflects on both the importance of and the challenges in navigating the Auckland Council bureaucracy:

Trying to understand the Council machinery, which is a nightmare for any person coming new into the family because ultimately we have so many departments, some I'm learning of now. Who knew there was an intercity relationship people, that council employs, like our foreign affairs department, they come out at flag waving events and take a lead in those sorts of things?

7.8.3 Knowledge of community and stakeholders

Newer members felt that the lack of knowledge of systems, processes and historical knowledge made it more difficult for them to contribute and add value to local board decisions. Several elected members lamented the fact that it was often difficult to understand the reasons behind some of the activities that were undertaken:

For me it was historic knowledge. Members come on for three years and leave so sometimes that historic knowledge gets lost. So for example in the youth space, the previous youth portfolio was held by someone who didn't get re-elected so the knowledge that he would have had in that area would get lost when he left. It wasn't passed on or well-documented enough. That would be the biggest [challenge], because when you're coming into Council you're taking the lead, you want to read what has worked and hasn't before you can contribute.

7.8.4 Governance and technological skills

High levels of literacy were seen as necessary in order to understand and keep up with the volume of documentation that local board members were expected to read. As one

participant pointed out: *“You certainly have to be a very good reader. To have the patience to trawl through things line by line.”* This was accompanied by the need for analytical and critical thinking skills and *“evaluating the presentations, being open minded.”* Computer literacy was also seen as important. People who were not computer literate, struggled to deal with technical glitches or use the laptops provided, and some felt these elected members were therefore unable to participate meaningfully. One participant pointed out: *“Like everything else, if you can’t access [Auckland Council resources through the internet] you get onto something else that you can access or do. I wonder how many members feel incompetent or unable and just keep it to themselves?”*

Time management and the ability to prioritise tasks were also described as essential: *“You’ve got to manage your own diaries, and time. There’s a very high level of self-management that goes on.”* Local board members who came from professional or academic roles found it easier to manage their time, use and understand the idiosyncratic behaviour of the governance software, and ensure that they were informed.

Understanding how to behave in a local board meeting was also seen as important: *“I’m an active listener, so when I do speak at the local board, it has to be meaningful.”* Under strict observance of standing orders (necessary when issues were contentious, local board members were combative or there was a lot to go through), there was one opportunity for elected members to ask questions of officers, followed by one speaking turn to express a view in relation to the item. This elected member articulates the challenge of contributing in a way that is different from being a conversation and identifies skills which could be taught to local board members so that they could contribute more effectively:

So to be a really good, elected member, writing down the key points you want to speak about when you enter a debate, or if you’re asking questions of officers, write them down, make a list. When you start to speak, say you have four points. These are: “Boom, boom, boom, boom”. Elaborate on the point or ask questions but get to the point. Don’t repeat yourself two or three or four times on the same issue just because you’re waiting for someone to respond. Because often when you’re in debate, or it’s your speaking turn, you don’t get those interpersonal feedback loops that say “Yes, we’ve heard you. Yes, we’ve got that”. So what you find is you get some elected members keep talking and talking and talking to make the same point. So it can be a good chair that can say, “Thank you, I think you’re saying, ‘da de da de da’.” But often elected members won’t want to be paraphrased and members have the right speak. So I think it’s a personal level of responsibility to do that in a timely manner and to use “I” statements.

The chair also needed strong meeting management skills, including the ability to keep people on topic and to make sure all voices were heard. It was also essential for them to ensure that

the staff left meetings with the necessary direction and their questions answered. This chair explains how they actively managed the role:

Actually being quite clear. So if I open an item, I'd look to set the scene. If officers have come in or have a particular purpose for the presentation, I'd clarify to the best of my understanding what we'd be trying to achieve. If I didn't have that knowledge I'd be making sure the officer was setting the scene. And then either holding questions back until the presentation had happened or being very clear about giving all elected members the opportunity to speak.

This section has identified a number of microfeatures as important to local board members in Delivering their role. These micro skills combine in different ways to achieve success.

7.9 Skills and Knowledge for Elected Members in Local Government framework

The Skills and Knowledge for Elected Member in Local Government (SKEMLG) framework, (Figure 5.10) combines the Framework for Political Astuteness for government managers within central government administration (Hartley, et al., 2013, p.572) reprinted as figure 3.1 of this thesis, other capabilities identified by Hartley and Manzie (2020), the local board role characteristics identified by Auckland Council (2016b) as well as the characteristics identified by local board members in this study. Overall this provides a comprehensive view of the skills and knowledge areas required of local board members to perform their role. In order to emphasise their relevance while at the same time convey the realities of the local board role as described by the participants, Figure 7.1 uses the headings from the models noted above while the interpretation and explanations reflect the voices and imperatives of the participants in this research. Bicultural commitment represents an emergent category which is separate to cultural awareness and reflects the particularities of the New Zealand post-colonial context.

Figure 7.1

Skills and knowledge for Elected Members in Local Government

Skills and Knowledge for Elected Members in Local Government (SKEMLG)			
Strategic Direction and Scanning (Hartley et al., 2013)	Having/Creating a vision for what you want to achieve as an individual or the board, thinking through the steps to achieve this and understanding the systemic constraints. Having an eye on longer term outcomes or anticipating future infrastructure needs.		
Building alignment and alliances (Hartley et al., 2013)	Building relationships and trust internally within the organization, externally with NGOs, government departments and key stakeholders in the community. This involves strong communication and connecting skills and involves high trust.		
Reading people and situations (Hartley et al., 2013)	A strong understanding of how to make projects attractive to other elected members and staff and knowing how to seed ideas into the decision-making process.		
Interpersonal skills (Hartley et al., 2013)	Political influence, advocacy and negotiation skills, particularly knowing when to act and what levers to use to change people’s minds.		
Personal skills (Hartley et al., 2013)	Personal values, and capabilities including self-control, self-awareness and self-confidence to pursue a course of action. Listening and critical thinking skills, being hardworking, as well as empathy and curiosity and the desire to solve problems and make a difference.		
Personal integrity (Hartley & Manzie, 2020)	Connected to being in the service of others, representing and advocating for community aspirations, even if it is at personal cost.		
Bicultural commitment (Emerging category)	Understanding the changing and evolving demands of governance in a bicultural framework.		
Cultural Awareness (Auckland Council, 2016)	Understanding the importance of and being sensitive to engaging with different communities including ethnic, disability, LGBT and youth.		
Resilience (Auckland Council, 2016)	The ability to cope and participate in activities with stakeholders who are different from you, deflect negativity, connect with board members on issues of shared interest, and take a broad and longer term view of alliances to increase political voice.		
Desirable knowledge base and skills areas			
Technical and subject knowledge	Knowledge of Auckland Council and governance	Knowledge of community and stakeholders	Governance and decision-making skills
Professional (e.g. planning, social enterprise, waste management) and/or community advocacy experience (working in social services or NGOs).	Understanding processes of decision-making in the system, how plans fit together, how to get things into the work programme. Understanding of standing orders and knowledge of key people and departments within Council.	Knowledge of key players, established and emerging community groups, the history of a situation, where to find information, the history of actions taken and outcomes.	Computer literacy, time management, clear articulation of ideas, participation in meetings, standing orders, dealing with media. For the chair this also involves collaborative leadership skills.

Note. Adapted from Hartley, et al. (2013) reprinted in “‘It’s every breath we take here’: Political astuteness and ethics in civil service leadership development,” by J. Hartley and S. Manzie, 2020, *Public Money & Management*, 40(8), p.572. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2020.1777704>. Copyright 2013, by Taylor & Francis.

In terms of building strategic direction, the participants as local board members were focused on a local vision, but were also conscious of the three-year election cycle, the challenge of delivering tangible outcomes within this period and the need to break more complex projects into achievable chunks which could be delivered within a local board term. So, for example, a skateboard park plan could be developed in one election cycle with budget allocated for the delivery of the skateboard park in the subsequent term. Wider strategic discussions, for example how to address climate change mitigation locally, or develop a local housing strategy tended to be absent or driven by individual local board member interests or area of expertise.

These issues also needed significantly more advocacy as they sit outside the perceived statutory responsibilities of the local board. This kind of broader thinking occurred in response to plans developed for the wider Auckland Council, such as input into a seniors (people over the retirement age of 65) strategy or because the issue is particularly salient, for example a housing strategy for an area with an acute housing shortage.

The ability to build alignment and alliances is identified by participants as an important component of being successful. Trust, confidence, personal integrity and knowing the system are key features of developing strong relationships and getting support from within Auckland Council and the community. Successful local board members also go beyond aligning with existing stakeholders and actively try to bring people together to develop new projects, or to address existing problems.

The ability to read people and situations has an additional nuance which differs from working with central government politicians as reported by Manzie and Hartley (2020). Participants spoke of local board members challenging staff in order to further the interests of community. This involved lobbying fellow board members and getting input from the public at strategic moments in the process. Self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility in speaking one's mind in the interests of community were identified as important skills to achieve this.

Interpersonal skills, both the soft skills of persuasion and the hard skills of negotiation help local board members to work effectively with fellow board members and with other stakeholders, particularly in an advocacy role. Local boards functioned better when the chair had strong leadership and collaborative skills, held a majority on the board and where the members accepted that leadership.

The knowledge base of local board members is also important and was identified by participants as dividing into four main areas:

1. Technical and subject knowledge which could also include life experience.
2. Knowledge of Auckland Council processes and how to navigate these as well as knowledge of the planning and regulatory framework.
3. Knowledge of the community including the history of a situation and key stakeholders.
4. Governance and decision-making skills including an understanding of meeting protocols, technological skills as well as critical thinking skills. The ability to communicate with media or engage with communities using key messages is also

important. Auckland Council (2016b) covers some of these skills under different categories but these could usefully be put together as governance skills which are necessary to perform the local board role.

Additionally, the Auckland Council (2016b) descriptors focus on cultural awareness and talk of young people, seniors, people with disabilities and ethnic peoples as different cultures for whom different approaches may be necessary. This illustrates an awareness of different communities that goes beyond ethnicity and beyond empathy for individuals, which is identified as important by Hartley and Manzie (2020). While cultural awareness is discussed as engaging with communities (Auckland Council, 2016b), comments from the participants in this study suggest that this should also be directed at improving the behaviour of local board members so that they interact respectfully with each other and towards staff in local board environments which are increasingly visibly diverse.

Cultural awareness is also focused on “understanding tikanga Māori, the Māori Responsiveness Framework and the council’s responsibilities under the Treaty of Waitangi” ((Auckland Council, 2016b, p.120). In practice, this involves building cross-cultural relationships and implementing co-governance arrangements at local board level, or looking for opportunities to partner or consult with Māori as Iwi, Hapū within community organisations or as individuals. The issue of respect for difference is, however, different from responsibilities under Te Tiriti and should be recognised as a separate capability in the New Zealand context. As noted above, bicultural competence is therefore identified as an important skill which needs to be specifically addressed. Doing this would ensure that local board members are better prepared, educated and resourced to interact with Māori as Treaty partners, and to provide for Māori cultural practices in local government. This awareness would help to avoid recurring tensions over whether saying a karakia [Māori invocation], which is increasingly used to open public meetings, is a mark of cultural respect [tikanga] or an inappropriate religious activity (Maxwell, 2023; Perry, 2022).

Resilience involves being flexible and forming the alliances necessary to achieve success and to be re-elected over subsequent elections while maintaining the respect of the community. It is a difficult skill to develop in practice, as it involves compromise and the formation of temporary alliances to achieve objectives. Striking the wrong balance can lead to questions about a board member’s integrity as they may change their position across seemingly similar issues over time.

The above reflects the current range of skills identified by participants as essential to the role of elected local board member. The framework could be used as a basis for individuals or the Auckland Council administration to identify which skills are lacking across the cohort of elected members, or for individuals to identify their own skills and knowledge gaps. This could then guide further education and training opportunities, either facilitated by Auckland Council or outside Auckland Council, to help elected members perform their roles more effectively. The model could also be applied and adapted to other local government contexts by identifying which micro-skills and knowledge areas are important for elected members within a dual decision-making arena.

7.10 The nature of political astuteness for local board members

Hartley and Manzie (2020) identify a matrix to understand political astuteness from the perspective of central government bureaucrats. They are described as needing to balance loyalty to the politician versus loyalty to the organisation (represented on the vertical axis). This is matched by technical knowledge versus strategic knowledge (represented on the horizontal axis). Both knowledge and the ability to develop relationships constitute political astuteness.

Figure 7.2

The effective local board member’s political astuteness



Note. Adapted from “‘It’s every breath we take here’: Political astuteness and ethics in civil service leadership development,” by J. Hartley and S. Manzie, 2020, *Public Money & Management*, 40(8), p.576. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2020.1777704>. Copyright 2013, by Taylor & Francis.

Figure 7.1 adapts this Hartley and Manzie (2020) matrix for local board members. Participants discussed the challenge of working at the crossroads of community needs and the Auckland Council bureaucracy. They described the importance of balancing their knowledge of community and their knowledge of the organisation (illustrated on the horizontal axis). Having a knowledge of community needs, without the skills to negotiate outcomes with fellow board members and with the Auckland Council administration, made them ineffective. Too politically invested in Auckland Council processes and what is perceived possible, while failing to understand or advocate sufficiently for community needs made them unpopular with communities. This could be seen as a responsiveness continuum.

The vertical axis reflects the focus of responsiveness. To be effective, local board members described needing strong working relationships within Auckland Council. However, as well as this, they needed to maintain the ability to question information provided and hold the organisation to account. They also needed to maintain strong relationships with community, without allowing parts of the community to exert undue influence. This could be described as the accountability continuum.

Participants were clear that good ideas, without strategic organisational support, and without good relationships, were unlikely to be actioned. The above diagram identifies the dimensions of political astuteness for local board members. Using this could help elected members to navigate more easily between the behaviours of different kinds of representative roles. This would help them to achieve a balance between advocacy and accountability and to locate themselves between organisational constraints and community aspirations. This builds on Rao's (1998) view of representational responsiveness where local board members have the dual role of "engaging themselves in both the management of service provision and representing local views and interests" (p.35).

The above illustrates how political astuteness manifests itself slightly differently for local board members and employed bureaucrats. There is a balancing act between inward (to Auckland Council) and outward (to community members, and NGOs) which is different from central government bureaucrats who primarily navigate between the minister and government agencies but may have less direct contact with communities.

7.11 Conclusion

Chapter Seven has addressed RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? Several personal and interpersonal skills and attributes have been identified as important for local board members in performing their role. Trust, integrity and empathy emerge as key features in building strong relationships which can withstand the tensions of the political environment. Four clear knowledge areas are also identified. Of note is the importance of cultural competence in navigating the needs of increasingly diverse populations. At the same time local board member participants in this study valued a commitment to biculturalism and were also conscious of developing relationships with Iwi and Māori community organisations, within their role. This is particularly important at local government level where the allocation of resources within communities is decided by the local boards and consultation with local Iwi is required through the Resource Management Act, 1991.

The above qualities and skills for effective local leadership have been combined into the SKEMLG framework, developed to show the skills, and personal and interpersonal competence which contribute to local board member success. This can be used as a framework for self-development or by institutions seeking to upskill elected members in key competencies. Political astuteness is also described for local board members in navigating the demands of the community and Auckland Council (adapted from Hartley and Manzie, 2020). This can help local board members navigate the challenges of balancing community interests within constraints placed by Auckland Council. The focus now turns to answering RQ3 by describing the organisational and legislative features which affect the experience of local board members.

Chapter 8 Meso features of success

In Chapter 8, the focus of this study shifts from the personal and interpersonal features to the organisational and legislative features which local board member participants see as impacting on how successfully they perform their role. Four main areas which affect local board decision-making will be considered in response to RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? These are winning elections; Auckland Council processes and provisions to support local boards; shared decision-making and dual decision-making. While there is some overlap between micro features (personal choice) and the meso (organisational) and macro (legislative) features, the emphasis is on the how the personal choices, discussed in Chapter Seven, are mitigated by the political context.

8.1 Winning elections

8.1.1 Candidate alignment to win the election

Local board members are elected in local board areas which can be larger than parliamentary electorates. The challenge of communicating with large populations, over what can be wide geographic areas with varying demographic profiles, affects how people choose to stand and their electability. In Chapter Three the affiliation choices made by candidates standing for Auckland Council were identified and described.

The main reasons participants gave for their decision to stand in a group or for a political party included:

1. The sharing of costs (shared billboards, printing leaflets, paying for a venue).
2. The sharing of resources (potentially a campaign manager, support from the group to distribute leaflets, and access to political party databases).
3. Support in navigating election processes such as filling out the nomination form.
4. Brand recognition for voters.

At the 2016 election, the cost of standing for people who were elected at local board level, was between NZD 500 and NZD 3,000 in a group; independent local board candidates varied in their expenses from spending nothing to NZD 6,700 (Auckland Council, 2022b). Several participants who stood within a group commented on the fact they had not considered

standing as an independent as the financial and resource barrier to standing successfully would be too great:

*It's too expensive ... And just being able to distribute to 90,000 people, trying to deliver that much into every mailbox, you just can't do it by yourself. So unless you've got **really** extensive groups of volunteers who want to help, it's just too hard to do it as an independent.*

When standing for a political party or a group, participants, particularly those who were elected for the first time in 2016, also appreciated the expertise provided by an organisational structure that had a campaign manager and someone you could go to for support:

I gained a lot of professional campaign advice, I now feel ... My eyes were quite opened. I was quite naive when I first said I wanted to stand. I didn't know all the ins and outs ... I knew I'd need some signs and some brochures, but I didn't know how to run a proper professional campaign. So, I think I gained a lot of advice and experience which has obviously helped me get elected in the first place.

Politically aligned tickets have a mixture of political party members and community independents who share similar ideological perspectives. For example, there were Labour Party and Green Party members and community independents in City Vision, and National Party or ACT Party members and community independents in C & R. These political party-aligned groups had a contestable process with a selection panel to choose the candidates. While political party volunteers were mobilised to varying degrees across parliamentary electorates to help get the vote out by door knocking and phone banking, this did not, however, translate into direct financial backing: *"We had somebody who was a campaign manager who had various oversight of things and that's all, basically out of the goodness of their heart or political passion or whatever it is."* Party-aligned groups also created their own localised messaging which could be different from party branded messages: *"I came up with my own statement, we only ever did collective advertising, so we came up with our campaigning platform and then that was worked through by the team."*

Thus, the emphasis was on using political party support to get out the vote rather than having direct financial or central political management of campaigns. The exception to this was Auckland Future in the 2016 campaign, which reflected the desire of the National Party to work through the local body framework to elect National Party members across the isthmus and therefore funded the group directly. However there was some scepticism from a participant who had been involved: *"I don't think the model worked. In fact it didn't work."* The reason given was that the vast majority of candidates elected were already incumbents and it was a challenge to organise the campaign across different local board and ward areas. This strategy was discontinued in the 2019 and 2022 election. This situation differs from Rao

(1998) who describes political parties running centralised campaigns for local elections in the United Kingdom.

Thus a distinction is made between formal political party representative candidates who belong to a party, and are supported to a degree by party structures, and party-aligned structures like City Vision which might have support from the Labour Party and Green Party members, and where a party member might act as a campaign manager with a selection process but fewer constraints and less direct support and management from the political party. These distinctions can be important to candidates. For example someone who would not join the Labour Party or stand as a Labour candidate might stand as a community independent with City Vision. The same applies for candidates standing as Citizens and Ratepayers on the right of the political spectrum. This choice reflects a distinction which is not present in Webster et al., (2019) which identify both of these as a “Political Party.”

Community-based groups had a similar appeal and functioned in a similar way to politically aligned groups. The main difference was that these groups tended to be localised within certain local board areas or adjacent areas under the same ward councillor, were based on friendship circles, lacked a contestable process for selection and did not have access to party voter lists or party campaign strategists. They were also less stable over different election terms, running a selection of these same candidates, changing their name or disappearing after one election. These groups came together for the purpose of being elected and showing connection on the ballot paper. In some cases, they were more opaque about their politics, so it was less clear what their core values were.

The community groups sometimes coalesced around a particular person (for example, Team George Wood), often because that person was vying for the chair role, or an issue (for example, People and Penlink First). They sometimes formed around a person who was not selected to a political party-affiliated group and who still wanted to seek election. These groups differed in how far the candidates shared costs evenly, appeared on the same billboard, shared the same politics, or were intended to support each other once elected. This participant illustrates the difference between a looser community group and a more formal politically aligned group:

He just picked the people he thought was good. I think we all got along OK, but it wasn't sort of ... it was people he thought would do well in an election, either because they were already on the local board, or they were good campaigners that he knew of. So we weren't all initially friends, but we became friends when we were on a team together ... It's not like aligned because they don't do, this is the National team or

whatever, but it was run by a National person and so it was seen as the National branded thing. Although ... We just came up with the brand as a group, and there were people in there that weren't National [Party members]. There were some Labour people there too. It was just a like-minded group of people ... It was always [their] ticket that [they] brought together, like-minded group and we worked together to formulate the name, how we would go about campaigning.

Independent candidates also stood in several ways – without a slogan (not stating their affiliation on the ballot paper), putting the word “Independent” in the tagline, or using a tagline which said something about the candidate’s values or an issue they felt strongly about, for example, “Community Before Council.” They also stood in categories like “Papatoetoe Independents” thus signalling a loose alignment and the ability to work together, while also emphasising their ability to make independent decisions. This also allowed candidates to benefit from the name recognition effect and to reduce costs. For example, by appearing together on billboards or campaigning alongside each other at a local Saturday market.

In some cases, people who belonged to political parties made a choice to stand as independents rather than for the political party because they did not want to be associated with party policies or a political orientation which might affect their electability. This was particularly apparent in Labour Party members standing in blue areas (geographic areas dominated by the political right), Green Party members (standing in all areas) and ACT and National Party members (standing in all areas). It was also more apparent in the Auckland Council ward and mayoral elections where candidates leveraged political party support mechanisms but wanted to appeal to the wider electorate. This allowed candidates to connect with voters who would know of them through their business or work in the community but who might not share the political values of the party they belonged to.

This clarifies the difference between those that do not declare their political affiliation and those that stand in the independent category (Webster et al., 2019). The choices made in how to stand had a significant effect on electability. In 2016, first time independent candidates were only successful in the larger, non-city centre local boards of Rodney, Franklin, Upper Harbour and the island local boards of Waiheke and Aotea/Great Barrier. These candidates were generally well-supported by extended family and friends, were self-funded and had strong name recognition from having worked in roles with high community visibility such as teachers, midwives, real estate agents or in the police force.

Public perception of the candidate and the ticket, views on how legacy tickets operated, and the perceived demographic of the area affected the affiliation choices of candidates. With the

creation of ward boundaries resulting from the formation of Auckland Council, the challenge was in ensuring that electors were familiar with the people and values of the ticket. Lack of familiarity with the change in ticket name affected electability as this example demonstrates:

So we ran as [a new group] in 2010 and that was a Labour Green morph, with a new label, because City Vision going [into this area] wouldn't sound good ... Nobody knew that it was a Labour Green Independent coalition. Even though we all campaigned hard out, I was the only one who got elected, because I lived here, and they ticked my name. All the names were new apart from mine, and the ticket name was new.

With greater distance from the central city, and in more rural areas, both candidates and the electorate tended to feel more strongly that party politics should not be reflected in local election choices:

After the first election we dropped C & R as a team ... We didn't like being answerable to a regionally determined policy because that doesn't reflect our community or our community's needs and so we just decided, and we don't ask, but most of the team are probably centre right in their political views ... C & R is obviously National Party aligned and we just didn't feel it was appropriate. We should be answerable to the community and not some party machine ... They'd always been prominent in [the legacy] Auckland City [Council areas] and had never run a ticket anywhere else. And ... That's why they're struggling to find their identity still. It's the same with City Vision in town, they don't go too far out of the old Auckland City boundaries. It used to be City Vision against C & R on the tickets. That's how it was.

There was a strong awareness amongst people who had stood before of the importance of name recognition in electability. This involved standing with a recognised brand or candidate to improve one's chances of being elected. In this case, a popular local board chair lends their weight to helping others get elected, including supporting the ward councillor:

I did notice that one who had only marginally got on the previous time [onto the local board], did do better. ... And they did a lot better than the other Councillor in our ward. I don't know. Maybe I'm making a huge assumption and I'm reading a lot more into it than it is. But ... When you are ... In local government ... And you do develop some confidence within the community ... You do tend to get re-elected. But it's not even that. It's just the name recognition.

Name recognition interacted with brand recognition and brand familiarity, so that established brands had a stronger effect on electability than simply name recognition. This incumbent stood as an independent as they fell out with the group they had run with before but was still elected: "I came in at no 6 out of six that time round. It was because of my name recognition that I was able to make it in as six." In other examples from the 2016 election, two people who had left the branded group stood as independents. One came in seventh with only six candidates elected; the other came in eighth of seven elected suggesting brand recognition plays a stronger role than name recognition. As we see above, however, the brand needed to be known to voters and a new ticket could present considerable risk, particularly when

standing against an established group with better brand recognition. Experienced candidates also tended to use the election process to stand in more than one role, or in different local board areas to increase their chances of being elected and to increase their visibility within the community:

So when I stood [for a legacy city council in the Auckland area] ... I stood as the mayor to get profile with the hope of actually getting onto the Council. That was successful. [For the Local Board election] I then formed a group with like-minded people, and we were then successful at getting onto the local board [in 2010].

The selection of the local board chair was also an important driver for those organising people into a group for election purposes. As noted before, the chair of the local board is chosen by all the local board members. However, in practice, if a group dominates the board membership and is united, they can determine who fills the chair role without consulting other elected members. It is a full-time position, unlike the other roles which are part-time, and carries with it significantly more power, responsibility, and remuneration. These factors combine to turn the election of the chair into a competitive process and influences the way people choose to run for election as groups and also align themselves post-election.

Elected members were also strategic in aligning with a group with different political values if they felt this would help their election prospects. In some cases the results could be disastrous for the ticket as it was undermined from the inside as this example shows:

He [knew he] couldn't get elected as an independent, so he sweet-talked some people [in the group] to say, "I'll run on your ticket." Which he did. And once he got elected he said, "See you later guys," and ... the next time, he ran his own full ticket [with another name] and again, I was the only one who survived.

Thus, there was considerable variability in candidates' affiliation decisions which reflected the geography, demographics and political orientation of the local board area, the history of the group in that locality and how the preferences of the electorate had been identified. The key driver for how people chose to stand were logistics (costs, resourcing), strategic (electability), and relationships. In the legacy Auckland City Council areas, Citizens & Ratepayers (C & R) and City Vision candidates have been more recognisable and therefore more electable. In the Southern local boards of Māngere-Ōtāhuhu and Eastern suburb of Maungakiekie-Tāmaki, Labour Party candidates have been very successful and are predominantly of Pacific origin. Personal factors also played a role. Aspirations to be the local board chair meant that candidates supported lesser-known candidates for election who would in turn, support their bid for the chair role. Name and brand recognition were also leveraged to increase the likelihood of being elected. There is still some fluidity in local elections in Auckland on how

best to run. People are successfully elected using different approaches to win the election and across election terms.

8.1.2 Political party alignment to win elections

As noted above, while there is some evidence of political party support, this tends to be more in terms of raising the profile of the candidates, supporting the campaign using local party members rather than in direct financial support or influence on candidate voting choices once elected. The support provided reflected the nature of the party. On the right of the political spectrum, candidates received more financial support, usually by party members living locally. This enabled greater advertising in local newspapers and on local radio for example. On the left, candidates were supported by local party members organising fundraisers or getting out the vote by leafleting houses and public places, door-knocking, or phoning people to remind them to vote.

Once elected, there is no apparent influence of political parties on the group and people seemed to vote more in line with their values or experience. The Living Wage debate, for example, which was a Labour Party policy, was supported (or not) in ways which did not align with party political thinking as this example illustrates:

We did have one on our side [Labour/Green aligned] that kept insisting that he needed more information on this. And it was like, "Hang on! We've known about this for ages and Labour have been working alongside the unions for ages." They ended up voting for. It was all the delays and the questioning and so we had to defer it to another month until we had more information and we had the Living Wage [Campaign] come and present to us. Meanwhile [the board member standing with a right-leaning group supported it] ... That was because she wears on another hat. She was sympathetic to workers and knew that they needed more.

Labour Party and Green Party members were also tithed and contributed a percentage of their earnings to the political party, but this did not generally result in these elected members either providing support or promoting specific political party positions. A member who stood in a centre right-leaning group but was not a member of a political party describes the relationship with the group and the political influence on decision-making as follows:

From my perspective, I've had no strong affiliation and touch point into the National Party from a C & R perspective. We do have our Quarterly updates with C & R, there will be a few National Party faces to all intents and purposes we go about our business in a fairly independent and transparent way ... I think at the end of the day, it's what we listen to in terms of our ratepayers and that would be the same for you. Obviously you listen to your constituents and vote according to the feedback you take from your constituents [and these values might vary in different local board areas].

The above illustrates that decision-making reflected individual choices based on the elected member's preferences and values, or their understanding of the community. There was, however, a disparity in election spending with candidates on the right finding it easier to self-fund, funding more expensive campaigns, and, more frequently making the strategic choice to run as independents. Candidates who aligned with the Labour Party or the Green Party were more likely to struggle to raise the finances necessary for an election and were more reliant on mobilising political party volunteers.

8.1.3 Visible minority candidates experience in elections

In the 2013 and 2016 terms there were greater numbers of younger, non-New Zealand European candidates standing on political tickets. These candidates were often the last ones to be selected to run on a ticket, and then the least likely to be elected from that ticket unless the whole slate of candidates was elected. This is illustrated by Manurewa Action Team in the Manurewa Local Board area or the Labour Party in the Ōtara-Papatoetoe Local Board area. It was unclear whether this was because they lacked name recognition, community visibility or because there was a bias operating against them, but all three factors were cited by participants as having an effect on both the selection of the candidate and subsequent electability. One visible minority participant identified the problem as: *"We vote for you, but you don't vote for us."*

Younger candidates on progressive tickets also spoke of the financial barrier to standing and needing to borrow money to pay for election expenses. The stipend was described as insufficient to live on which made it challenging for people who were trying to pay off a student loan or mortgage, or who live only on the local board stipend.

8.2 Legislative and organisational processes once elected

8.2.1 Selection of the chair

Once elected, one of the first tasks of the new local board is to select the chair from the elected members. The legislation provides for the chair to be elected by the members of the board. In some cases, where the dominant group has sufficient support, they are simply nominated by the majority group within the board without reaching consensus with the other elected members. It is a full-time role; the chair receives twice the stipend of a local board member and has significantly more authority and status than fellow board members, exerting

a strong influence on the culture of the local board. The chair attends specific chair briefings, they are the spokesperson for the local board, and the local board representative for external and internal stakeholders. The chair makes day to day decisions as to which items will be addressed in workshops, has some say in how and when issues come to local board meetings, chairs workshop and business meetings, and generally provide leadership to the local board:

So being chair, you're involved in every aspect of the running of the board, down to relationships with different council departments and community groups etc. As a board member your role is generally the community, community groups but perhaps not quite as heavily involved in the Council structure.

This means that the selection of the chair was often highly contested and determined by "having the numbers," that is, having the support from the other elected members to be selected. Ensuring this support was a key influence of how some groups were formed to contest elections. Depending on who was finally elected, there was often intense negotiation between election day (when candidates find out who has been elected) and the inaugural meeting where the chair is formally selected by the local board members by resolution of the board. This is a period of about two weeks. Even if a group had stood together, competition for the chair role could mean that those outside the group were leveraged in support of a particular candidate for chair. For example, an independent candidate participant in the study described aligning with a group of three candidates against another group with which they had previously stood. This negotiation can be acrimonious and leave residual negativity which carries through the election term, affecting both the collegiality of the board and the level of trust between local board members.

Despite the importance of the role, the leadership skills required are poorly defined or understood, leaving the chair to determine how they will fulfil this area of significant responsibility. Personality and goodwill of the chair and dominant group were deciding factors in ensuring that factions on the local board were able to work together effectively, or elected members felt supported. This is explored in the next section.

8.2.2 Political alignment of local board members

On the whole groups where candidates had stood together had positive working relationships which stemmed from sharing a political orientation as this participant comments: "I think our ideals and our values are all very aligned [and] there are some very good understandings of where our needs are." Local boards dominated by one faction, but with members of a different faction could also work together successfully: "We all have that core thing that

community is the most important. Especially that we have kids and stuff, mokos [grandchildren] growing up and you want the best for your community.” There is, however, an awareness that this is a fragile dynamic, dependent on how the majority group chooses to exercise power. In this case, local board members who formed the political majority on the local board allowed the minority group to nominate the deputy chair, even though they could have insisted on taking both the chair and deputy chair roles:

(Speaks slowly and emphatically). [It depends on] how political the majority is because we at any time could have played that game. We at any time, still can. All you had to do was pass a resolution of your board members but when you roll a chair and when you roll other members – I mean it’s been done in other boards – it does not leave a good feeling for you to work the rest of the three years with that person or that group. Wouldn’t you rather be nice and nut it out in our workshop? That’s what it’s for. So that when we do go to our business meetings, “Hey, we all talked about this, and this is what we’re going to do.”

Board members in a minority group on the local boards felt they had to work harder to prove themselves to be accepted, and to establish areas of common ground, without which they were unlikely to get support for any of their projects:

The hardest thing was going to be, “Can you win over the ...ticket [group contesting the election]?” They’ve got the majority, technically it’s 6 to 3 so anything they decide on was going to be the go ... And don’t get me wrong. It took time. ... Personally we couldn’t have been further from each other [politically]. There are some areas we have in common. They wanted to focus on public transportation, connectivity, and greenways which I’m huge about, waterways and care of our rivers and I said, “Fantastic. I care about all of these issues too. Let’s work on ways to tackle some of these issues and have a really positive impact together.”

Thus there are structural constraints (who is selected as chair and the alignment of local board members within a group) which interact with the personality of elected members to determine the smooth working of the local board.

8.3 The allocation of responsibilities and shared governance model

As discussed in Chapter Two, Auckland Council has a shared decision-making model where councillors make regional decisions and local board members are responsible for decisions in the local board area. The governing body also allocates decision-making responsibilities to the local boards. The challenge of subsidiarity, or the making of decisions at the tier closest to where the effects would be felt, was a challenge with ward councillors and local decision-makers often focused on different priorities. Consequently, local board decisions were overruled, became redundant or advocacy positions were ignored by the governing body in the making of regional decisions. The discussion on housing intensification provides an

example of how regional pressures for intensification are supported or rejected by different local board areas (Scott, 2022). A number of local board members expressed dissatisfaction with how decision-making responsibilities were allocated between the governing body and local boards, with insufficient delegations coming to the local boards and the Governing Body making too many decisions on local issues:

It's not following the spirit of the legislation, which was shared governance, and by default, things should be local ... I think the challenge is that they [the Council administration and the governing body] need to go back to what was really intended. That all local issues should be determined and worked through by locals and we shouldn't have the governing body jumping in all the time, and the local boards are appropriately funded to be able to respond to the needs that are in the community. And that's not actually occurring. They feel nervous about it, so they feel they can make much better decisions over on this side of the harbour [Central Auckland] by the governance ranch [building on a Wild West metaphor].

Participants also felt that some of the delegations were trivial (for example, the local board committees to decide on swimming pool fencing), or that there were intractable problems that keep the local boards busy but where any solution would result in ongoing community dissatisfaction. Creating dog bylaws was an example of this:

It's a bylaw and we were given it because who really wants it. It's a challenging one. You go through a submissions process and from that you try and get as fair as possible, but you're never going to please everyone.

Lack of resource was also considered an issue as it was difficult for local boards to obtain independent advice from Auckland Council or elsewhere on how their area would be affected by any decisions on regional priorities. Lack of enforcement of compliance issues was also noted and consistent with Kvigstad (2022a). While this was perceived to be a problem across Auckland Council services, local board members felt this was particularly problematical in relation to their decision-making areas of responsibility. In reviewing the dog bylaws one local board member had this to say:

The biggest frustration with the system, is whatever decision we make, there's no compliance. So everyone gets frustrated because we made a rule, unless you're prepared to back that rule up ... [it] just ruins the whole system. So for us to have credibility it would be better not to have a bylaw at all. Because unless you're prepared to enforce it and put resources for compliance, all you're doing is increasing the level of mistrust in [Auckland] Council. Because "you asked us, we gave an opinion, you accepted it and now no-one does anything about it because there's no compliance." At least if they had a blitz every now and again so over this period it's reported in the papers, everyone got huge fines, then you'd get quiet for the next six months or a year.

Participants also identified the challenges of working together on sub-regional initiatives (for example a swimming pool or arts facility located in one area but funded by and serving the

public in adjacent local board areas). One member described this as the “parochial” thinking of some board members, combined with the lack of process for local boards to allocate funds to a shared project:

We put too much emphasis on the boundary lines between local boards. At the end of the day it’s not a competition, and all the money is coming from the same place, and I just think one of the great challenges is getting over the fact there’s a line on the map and at the end of the day, people who live in our area travel and so it’s how do we work together. We have some royal challenges with neighbouring local boards ... Some worse than others.

Subsidiarity is thwarted by conflicting objectives between local boards and the governing body, and is often undermined by the drive for standardisation across the region. This is perceived as easier to manage (for example standard library opening times) or cheaper (standardised signage). However, there are practical reasons why a local board area might have different opening times (for example late opening for people who commute) or different signage (in keeping with a heritage area).

8.3.1 Role confusion with respect to consultation

In Chapter Two it is noted that through the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, local boards carry the statutory responsibility to consult with communities on their local board plans. In a cost and resource saving measure, consultation for various statutory processes occur at the same time. Local board members therefore found themselves fronting for consultations for the long-term plan and the proposed annual plan for which they have no statutory responsibilities (as these reflect governing body decisions), at the same time as the local board plans (see section 2.4.10 for more detail on Auckland Council plans). This led to frustration as statutory consultation activities dominate the workload of local board staff, particularly in the first year of office as this participant points out:

Also, having to, being expected to go out and play such a key role in the community consultation on the Long-term Plan when we have no. (He laughs). We have no decision-making authority on it. I recognise that our local board annual plan is part of it all, [it] features there very lightly, but it sometimes feels like we’re the infantry for the big machine.

This reveals a tension where local board members felt they were serving wider organisational interests rather than community interests, particularly when they were asked to answer questions on issues they had not supported or were unaware of. This also led to confusion from the public who failed to understand that local boards were not responsible for decisions in the consultation process they were leading. The provisions for local boards to lead statutory

consultations with the lack of ability to prevail on the decision-making led to public perception that board members were ineffective and contributed to board member feelings of being unsuccessful.

8.3.2 Lack of connection between the ward councillor and local board area

One board member participant identified councillors as “out of touch” with local board areas and lamented the loss of the community board system, where the chair of the community board was also a councillor. They felt that local issues had been better represented in the legacy arrangement prior to 2010. This was either because the city and district councils had been smaller, or in cases where there were community boards, the shared councillor/chair of the local board role “gave a point of contact for the [community] boards and assured them, that whatever their decisions were, they were very well-represented around the [councillor] table.” Local board members also felt unsupported by the ward councillors when a decision made at ward level was unpopular within the community. In the following example, a regional decision (and therefore a councillor decision) to fund an artwork in a local area, resulted in vitriolic comments from the community for a spending decision the local board did not make. Moreover, they were upset that the councillor did not make it clear to the public that it had been a governing body decision:

No-one seems to understand that [the artwork was paid for from Regional Arts funding, therefore funded through a decision of the governing body] and the councillor is being an egg [New Zealand English derogatory comment] and trying to blame us for it. So anyway ... (Participant sighs).

8.3.3 The desire of the ward councillor to maintain a local profile

The voting system also contributed to the blurring of the local board and councillor role. Councillors are elected by the residents of the ward in which they are standing, rather than at large (by all of the Auckland population). In order to maintain visibility in the community which elected them, a key aspect of electability, ward councillors worked to build a profile within their ward areas, even though they were responsible for regional decision-making. In order to maintain this visibility, participants felt that ward councillors tried to solve constituent issues without referring these local issues to the local board, who were the designated decision-makers for local issues as illustrated by this participant comment:

He [the ward councillor] needs to find ways of getting re-elected on some policy thing. That's not spicy. But if he can show in the local papers that he's on a crusade for this, that or the other, that makes a huge difference.

This could cause tensions when ward councillors gave constituents different advice from that given by the local board members. One board member likened it to the role of a list MP in central government – elected representatives who did not have a constituency but were there to have a broader voice across different issues getting involved in local issues:

They think they're like a constituent MP when in actual fact they're like a list MP. They're there to consider everything, but you know we're all mortal, and we all think about our mortality in terms of elections and you want to do the stuff that is going to please and appease the people you got the support from.

These tensions could be exacerbated by differences in politics or personalities and also stemmed from the fact that many of the councillors had previously been elected to local boards and were therefore known to constituents who contacted them directly to solve problems. The effect was to undermine the authority of the local boards, contributing to the impression that they are both ineffectual and redundant.

The issues arising from the shared governance model work to the detriment of local board decision-making and credibility. If local board decisions are undermined or ignored, do not result in tangible results, and the public find that dealing with the ward councillor achieves outcomes just as effectively, constituents perceive the voice of the local board to be irrelevant. For the local board to have credibility it needs to have a more formal advocacy role as well as better recognition of subsidiarity in resourcing of local board decisions.

8.4 Dual decision-making

Dual decision-making, between elected representatives and administrative staff who need to work together to create policy and deliver projects is recognised as a key feature of elected governance (Hartley & Manzie, 2020). In many instances local board members reported that this worked well, with staff advocating for local board projects within the bureaucracy. There was also evidence of strong relationships and significant loyalty, particularly between local board members and staff who had been in the roles through successive election terms as this member points out: *“When he [the staff member] found out [the elected member was not standing again] he said, ‘Ah well, that’s me. Because I think she was our fiercest advocate’.”*

However, a tension is also created by New Public Management reform (outlined in Chapter Two), which requires that elected members in a governance role should make broad direction-setting decisions but should stay out of any administrative decisions. Participants raised a number of issues relating to the separation of governance from management

decisions. Participants expressed frustration at being frequently reminded by staff that they had a governance role and needed to distance themselves from the operational decisions.

This issue arose across the decision-making process. In terms of allocation responsiveness, Auckland Council departments were supposed to deliver the projects and services that had been agreed by the local board, or were part of Auckland Council's core services. However, with lack of local board and departmental resources and changes to staffing, project delivery often lagged far behind decision-making, and some projects which had been green-lit failed to eventuate at all. One board member described the importance of checking work programmes and budgets to ensure that items were not lost:

Our senior advisor is tearing her hair out. Friday we had version six [of the annual budget], she's got to go right back to the first version to see what's dropping out. She's having to check every single line. There are a lot lines in the work programmes. You should be looking at the detail, because if you're not careful, you'll see that things you were expecting to happen are not happening. We've gone back to the work programme at the beginning of last year. They've now set up three year work programmes, but it's important to check.

The importance of working well with local board staff is also illustrated by the above comment.

In addition, board member participants expressed concern that there appeared to be no process for board members either to audit Auckland Council service delivery for projects or to question the quality of Auckland Council engagement with local boards. This reflects the changes brought in with New Public Management reforms which create more processes around consultation, while neglecting to address how decisions will be implemented (Richardson, 2008).

As a consequence of this disconnection between earmarked projects and their delivery, board members often felt they had had little choice but to get involved in leading projects for which they had activated their networks or encouraged participation. Otherwise they felt these projects risked failure or loss of face:

I have been told off for being too operational. When you come from a background where you like to do things and you're putting so much love and passion into things, it is quite conflicting to be told to step back. You're not supposed to be doing that. It does not compute. ... It's a bit much for them to say I was in there for too long [supporting the group by organising and leading meetings] when they don't realise the extent of the work needed in that space. If I was to step back when they would have liked me to, you can guarantee that the youth council would have fallen over.

In terms of their advocacy role, participants spoke of identifying issues in Auckland Council activity that would be contentious, then trying to advise departments and CCOs. They felt that their comments, intended to protect Auckland Council from negative publicity or to support the decision-making process, were often ignored. It was particularly frustrating for local board members to signal an issue as problematic, see the departments ignore the feedback, and then deal with a barrage of complaints against Auckland Council. This often included personal attacks from the public to local board members who were seen as complicit in the decision, even when they had advocated against it:

*They [the officers]'d always say, "That's operational and you're just trying to micromanage." [The Chair] just stood her ground and eventually it was proven in a few cases that if you don't talk to the community properly about stuff, it will take you longer and it will cost more, you know. One good example was putting up a whole lot of new signage ... And people **really do care** about signage pollution ... And people do care about the colour of the sign and where it is and whether it's an extra sign or whether it's part of a sign that's already there.*

This struggle to be heard on advocacy positions was a constant refrain from local board members. Failing to address community concerns was seen as costly in the long run as issues then had to be remedied in response to a public outcry. The above signage issue arose in a heritage protection area and the public response might have been different in another local board area, and illustrates the need for flexibility in the Auckland Council administration's response to problems.

Board members also noted a difference in the demands made of board members and staff in terms of transparency which left them feeling disempowered in their decision-making. Business meetings are open to the public and members are expected to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests (Auckland Council, n.d. -e). Some participants felt, however, that the Auckland Council bureaucracy put unnecessary pressure on elected members to recuse themselves from decisions where they had declared a non-pecuniary interest. There seemed to be a lack of clarity in whether expressing a point of view was a "conflict of interest" reflecting a trend to emasculate political behaviour while giving more power to bureaucratic decision-making, an effect of New Public Management approaches to government (Drage & Webster, 2016). The view of participants was that they had many interests from living within a community, which had in fact contributed to their visibility in the community and helped them to be elected. They felt that a "perception of a conflict of interest" based on their previous advocacy positions provided insufficient reason to remove them from the discussion or decision-making on an issue. Some participants also described considerable pressure on

them from fellow board members, who were often seen to have their own undeclared interests around an issue.

Moreover, participants observed that less scrutiny seemed to apply in relation to Auckland Council employees and contractors. They noted a revolving door of employees leaving their roles to deliver gaps in the work programme, or alternatively, returning to their Auckland Council role having stepped out for a period of time to deliver a project as a contractor. Board members also spoke of having no insight into procurement decisions or how these were made, even when they had considerable knowledge of local service providers which could inform the decisions. The following provides an example of a board member who felt an Auckland Council officer had overstepped the boundaries by mixing personal interests with Auckland Council business:

*So she [the Auckland Council officer] rings me up. "I'm not calling on Council business, this is a personal call. Our grant application is with you for a project I'm involved with." ... And was basically asking me to ... Support her grant application. ... I felt that was a **huge** abuse of power because of the power she's got over my [work] programme. And then we had that massive restructure afterwards and the way they were going to pay for stuff ... was to work with NGOs and I was like, that is the **biggest** conflict of interest for her to be involved in any of those management decisions, of how to then rejig the whole ... programme, especially when we're ending up paying organisations just like [theirs] and I'm sure [their] organisation is getting some funding, and applying for grants.*

Finally, even when there was a strong indication of community preference, for example in Auckland Council solicited feedback from formal consultation processes, this could be ignored by the Auckland Council bureaucracy (Davis, 2016). In addition, changes were made which had a significant impact without consulting the public. In the following example, a bus route was removed after public consultation on bus routes in a particular area. However, the loss of the route was not canvassed with the public. In spite of complaints from the public and significant local board member advocacy, the community aspiration was ignored in favour of rationalising the network:

*So there used to be a bus going down there going through to the railway station, there was a mall there. In their judgement, AT decided to scrap the route. Over a year ago now. I keep fighting for it. We said, we want at least one bus to keep going down there because every time I go down there all my constituents, say "**Why** ... why can't you do it?" So I've come to a point where I'm shying away from them because nothing seems to be happening. "Oh, we'll do a review [in Auckland Transport], and we'll do this, and we'll do that, and we'll let you know," and even the AT liaison person is shying away from me because I've asked him so many times. So those kinds of things is where the problem is. I know AT is a bigger CCO and needs to look at the bigger picture, but sometimes you have this struggle to get some of those little things which is what we're here for, to help our little people. This is a genuine thing, our senior citizens, trying to get around in the wet weather.*

Thus, while the local boards played a key role in raising the profile of community issues, the advocacy items were not acted upon, or a different action was taken, either through lack of resource or by minimising the importance of the advocacy position. The above also reveals a tension between local board members in their role. On the one hand they were seen as representing Auckland Council to the public and therefore seen as part of the Auckland Council bureaucracy and on the other hand as holding Auckland Council to account for management decisions (consistent with the tensions noted by Richardson, 2008). It was almost impossible, however, to hold Auckland Council to account (for example in understanding whether the contract represented value for money) when no information was provided on contracts or Council decision-making in relation to these. The role conflict and the lack of ability to prevail in advocacy issues also led to a loss of confidence by the public that Auckland Council and the local board act in the interests of constituents. The following section identifies a number of factors which contributed to the challenges to local board decision-making.

8.4.1 Structural constraints on dual decision-making

Lack of role clarity for elected board members

The lack of clarity in the role of elected members noted in Chapter Two meant that it was relatively easy for the Auckland bureaucracy to ignore local board demands: *“In the wider Council they often don’t understand what local boards are, they ignore local boards, they see us more as an inconvenience.”* Legitimate requests, were declined within departments and CCOs rather than recognised as capturing valid community aspirations that should be addressed as this participant explains:

We repeatedly asked this officer to give us a breakdown [of spending] because we wanted to change it and itemise the spending and see the services we got and [they] repeatedly refused ... I felt that [the officer] was abusing her position of power and not listening to us.

The above also illustrated the challenge local board members faced in gaining insight into local board budgets which was a key feature of their accountability role. Although the budget line itself was visible, detail on where that spending was allocated was invisible and often described as commercially sensitive. Labelling an issue as commercially sensitive meant information around it was restricted by other kinds of legislation such as Rule 4 of the government procurement rules which states that “Each agency must protect suppliers’ confidential or commercial sensitive information. This includes information that could

compromise fair competition between suppliers” (New Zealand Government Procurement, 2023). This view permeated Auckland Council officer thinking and was unchallenged by local boards because there were a lack of options to do so. It proved impossible to ask or determine if contracts were fit for purpose or provided value for money. In some instances, board members felt that Auckland Council officers used their authority to drive through projects that were of little interest to board members or were inconsistent with the direction set by the board.

Lack of dedicated local board resource and specific local board advice

Some local board members were impressed by the quality of reports that came to the boards and which guided the decision-making with a range of options and recommendations presented. However, board members also reflected that officers could find themselves in a difficult situation which could compromise the advice given. This is because a recommendation that is appropriate to the region may be of detriment to the local community. Valid community concerns may then be neglected in the report-writing:

You will have situations that what is of regional benefit, may in fact not be and vice versa. I wanted reassurance, and guarantees basically, that if we have local board staff, they would actually be providing professional advice that was suitable to the local board, rather than repeating what Council and the Chief Executive wanted them to be saying, and that it didn't impact on their career lives.

This issue was noted previously in relation to the shared decision-making, but emerges again here, as it affected the levels of trust between local board members and the Auckland Council administrative staff who were relied on to develop the local board view. Board members expressed the view that they would like some mechanism to obtain advice that was independent of that provided by Auckland Council.

Auckland Council control of processes and information

The reality of local board work is that it is proscribed by processes set up by Auckland Council and reports prepared by Council officers who are therefore able to, either intentionally or unwittingly, create narratives around which decision-making is based. The development of the local board plan is an example of this, and occurs between the inaugural meeting in November of the election year and March of the following year when it needs to be signed off and accepted by the governing body – a period which also includes significant statutory holidays. Participants felt that decisions were often driven by the officers rather than local board needs or aspirations. The directive to establish budget lines for items very soon into the

term means there is insufficient time to develop or research outcomes that communities really want. One board member commented:

We don't write our own Local Board plan. We negotiate it with Council officers and each other but at the end of the day, a lot of the proposals that go in and the writing of it come from Council officers.

Some of the projects were convenient to deliver but may not have been relevant to local board needs. Climate change action plans by local board area, for example provided a way to spend local board money and meet the demands of the Climate Action Targeted Rate but some board members commented on the fact that this work was generic and not particularly useful in help to guide the development of localised climate change responses. Local board staff, particularly on boards where the chair or board members were inexperienced, were instrumental in informing board members about their role and contributed to whether board members felt comfortable asking questions and raising issues or project ideas. Many were described as helpful as this example illustrates:

A lot of the stuff, if I have an idea, I just ask them, "Hey, how do I get this through?" And our staff are really good. They tell me how to do a Notice of Motion or do things properly ... being someone new ... you have to ask to find your way.

There was also the view, however, that staff members acted as gatekeepers, supporting certain projects, or allowing other projects to fail or disappear from a lack of internal advocacy and board members felt heavily reliant on staff. Board members commented that staff had too much influence on whether an initiative progressed or not and it was very difficult to hold the organisation to account or to really understand why a project was held up or shelved. As noted previously, following up or seeking accountability was an ongoing challenge:

We're finding a lot of workstreams are dropping out. And we're saying, where's that gone? "Oh, oh ... Well it's dropped out but we can put it back in." The danger is ... And we've got dozens that have dropped off as it's rolled over from one financial year to another, and we're told it's because they just haven't had time to put them in. ... And what's going to happen next month when we agree to the work programmes going forward, those won't be there and we'll be forced into making a decision that doesn't include those items. And you watch in your area as well, in the next financial year, when you ask about those items it will be, "Well that's the work programme you've signed off, sorry." You should be looking at the detail, because if you're not careful, you'll see that things you were expecting to happen are not happening.

While the potential bias in the reports was noted previously in terms of favouring a regional view, here we see the difficulties board members face in seeking accountability or making decisions under what is clearly their area of responsibility.

8.4.2 Restructuring of departments

With the amalgamation of seven legacy entities into the creation of Auckland Council, there were significant changes that were made with the view to reduce duplication of services and to streamline management processes. Participants reported that continued restructuring of departments since amalgamation and loss of staff were hurdles to their decision-making. Restructuring resulted in loss of knowledge in several areas including what approaches had been tried and failed, community concerns, staff knowledge of key stakeholders within the community and an understanding of why projects had been set up in a particular way:

The other delaying factor in all the things that Council does, is every time there's a restructuring you lose the continuity and the institutional knowledge. All this term we've been short staffed. Two people left at the end of the last term, we eventually got those two staff replaced, someone else moved on, we got that person replaced and then another one. And we've had a complete turnover in Local Board Services. A lot of that has been around what they've all experienced around getting information from CCOs and the different departments.

This was often cited as a source of frustration for both board members as well as staff. For example officers could come back after several months, or indeed different staff could appear, without any visible progress being made on a project, and the local board members needing to clarify, yet again, why particular outcomes were sought. Meanwhile the budget for the project would be allocated elsewhere or the costs would have increased leading to further delays while more budget was sought so that projects were stuck in cycles of non-delivery.

Significant restructuring also meant that departments were no longer resourced to provide the same level of technical expertise so that important aspects of a project were neglected. The loss of institutional wisdom meant that the bureaucracy was spending money to find out information that had previously been held by staff. In this example a board member resists recommendations to engage an external consultant to do a review of parks infrastructure:

*I think one of the challenges going forward, a number of us have been around a long time and have that institutional wisdom. The difficulty going forward is you're going to have a lot more people who don't know anything. We managed to waste – this was one I easily voted against – we wanted to spend 15,000 to 25,000 [NZD] to find out where our signs were on our parks. And then we wanted to spend another 15,000-25,000 [NZD] on which needed sailcloth and then another amount on some other thing. I said, "I'll take you around and show you where the parks are." Because the problem is we don't have a parks officer who actually knows where anything is. So they're wanting to spend **our** money so they can have a list of what's actually in our parks.*

The above also illustrates how local board discretionary budgets were increasingly being requested to deliver aspects of Auckland Council core services. In the above case, local boards

had little visibility of the service, but were asked to pay for a review of signage, which some could argue should be delivered by the existing parks team within a service delivery budget. Some board members were more discerning of how local board budgets should be spent and were resistant to departments coming to local boards for funding to deliver these core services. Their ability to challenge decisions like these meant the board had more discretionary funding available to deliver projects initiated within communities with direct community benefits.

Finally, in the process of losing staff through departmental reviews, there was more pressure on board members and local board staff to maintain the continuity of projects:

*I think, one of the problems is that once they got rid of the parks officers and people who actually knew what was going on, there's been a lot more thrown onto our **own** local board staff but no increase in our local board staff to actually deal with it.*

Board members also commented on the breakdown in relationships and loss of trust between community groups and Auckland Council when staff were continually replaced which led to an erosion of social capital:

It's been complex ... A few years ago when the Empowered Communities approach came in, we lost the support person for the Youth Council. Since then, there have been trust issues between the Youth Council and Council. In the sense that the Youth Council has been hesitant to allow Council staff to come into the Youth Council. Just because the relationship is not there.

While departmental restructuring is seen as an internal decision, it can have significant consequences on local board project delivery and the ability of Auckland Council to develop trust and social capital with communities.

Additionally, there was a lack of clarity in the administration's responsibilities for project delivery, or how to hold the Auckland Council bureaucracy to account in responding to local board decisions. The following two examples, which focus on the use of portfolios and the debate around open and closed workshops, provide specific instances of Auckland Council processes which changed over successive board terms. Both of these impacted the quality of decision-making and as well as the local boards' ability to seek accountability and reflect bureaucratic inertia in supporting local board decision-making.

8.4.3 Loss of Portfolios

Until the 2016 term, the local board work programme was divided into portfolios with different members having oversight over the different work streams. A board member would be nominated by their local board to hold the parks portfolio for example. They would then meet with department staff and a local board staff member to discuss any matters arising, for example, checking progress on a playground development or discussing any issues that the public or local board thought were of concern, for example, signage, dog management or rubbish management. If a major resourcing or change of use was proposed. This would then be brought to a workshop of the board for discussion.

In the 2013 term some local boards, Franklin for example, had opted for meetings of the whole board rather than to have portfolio meetings. In the 2016 term the Auckland Council bureaucracy stopped resourcing portfolio meetings. Participants expressed mixed views about the role of the portfolio in the decision-making process and the changes that were made. Some board members supported the change as they had felt uneasy that board members were unilaterally making decisions in portfolio discussions that were inconsistent with the local board's position:

Portfolio leads were making decisions outside of the local board, binding the local board to those decisions. All of a sudden we'd go, "Why are we doing this?" "Because the local board agreed to it." "The local board never discussed it" [Staff would respond] "Oh the local board portfolio lead"

This could be frustrating for both local board members and staff because staff progressed items in the work programme based on the portfolio meeting, but resolutions developed from this work were then rejected by the local board. While the reasons given for the loss of portfolios was to make the decision-making more transparent (because all decisions would now be made by all board members) the boards which functioned well with the portfolio system lamented the loss of portfolios. This is because board members could now only query the detail of work programmes in the limited time provided by workshops, and there was no board member designated to provide systematic oversight of the work programme. Workshop meetings might occur every four months, rather than portfolio meetings which were more informal and occurred at least every month. Board members who did try and check departmental work found this much more difficult as they either received no response from departments or were seen as trying to subvert the process by following up on issues as this participant illustrates:

*I think in the third term of Auckland Council, we were directed not to have portfolios. I disagree ... it doesn't empower all the elected members to have a particular area of interest or particular focus. So what you end up having is a whole load of elected members, especially newly elected members being quite general in their response to the work programme, so they don't learn to specialise. And I think we've lost that ability to connect with more of the management within Auckland Council to ... Maybe it gets us too much into the managerial space, but we certainly had a stronger bond to the projects and a stronger understanding of what we were trying to achieve with the portfolios. **Now**, this term, all decisions are made by the full board. Everything comes to workshops. We're constantly struggling for workshop time.*

The above also reflects the loss of connection between staff and board members. This newly elected member, who had never experienced the portfolio system, comments on the change and intuitively feels that oversight and engagement with the community was diluted in this process:

I didn't entirely understand why or how important portfolios were, I just understood that what the others were asking for would essentially dilute the local board's power and influence because My perspective at the time was that each local board member would have to cover off all issues and have a say on all issues and therefore no local board member could put in the time to be an expert on any issue.

The removal of the portfolios is shown to reduce the engagement between board members and the departments and contributed to the difficulty of developing relationships with staff members within departments, which has been identified earlier in this chapter as essential to building trust. This had a stronger consequence for newer members who did not have established working relationships with departmental staff. Small queries, which could easily have been resolved by a phone call now waited months to be addressed. It also became apparent that the loss of portfolios offered Auckland Council the opportunity to streamline the process of dealing with boards. Resourcing was cut at a time when departmental staff had already faced cuts and were now expected to handle a greater number of projects across a greater number of local boards. In 2017, for example, the arts advisor for the Waiheke Local board was dealing with projects across eight other local board areas while also responsible for delivering an arts plan for Waiheke. This change also allowed department officers to simply take direction from the chair or from local board staff as a shortcut to understanding the aspirations of the board. This enabled further concentration of power into the chair's role and created the conditions for the bureaucracy to cut out the voice of the other elected local board members.

The above also illustrates the fragility of the democratic processes within Auckland Council. Local boards were advised of the change but, because this is an internal resourcing decision, rather than a legislated process, there was no accompanying report or formalised discussion

of the change. The change was introduced at the changeover of board terms which made it difficult to question as many of the board members were new and unaware of the implications of the change. The consequence was further loss of local board oversight of the Auckland Council work programmes as well as a loss in opportunities to build relationships across the organisation between staff and elected members.

8.4.4 Open or closed workshops

This ongoing debate on whether workshops should be open to the public or not also reflects tensions in the dual decision-making model. The call for open workshops that could be attended by the public, in the same way as the board meetings, arose from the perception that decisions were made behind closed doors in a way that lacked public scrutiny. The call for open workshops came from the public who felt the decision-making lacked transparency, board members wanting to make the work of the board more visible to the public and to increase public interest in local democracy, as well as from members of the board who were in a minority on their local board and who felt unheard or disrespected in a workshop setting.

The dilemma was between transparency of decision-making versus efficiency and the need for confidentiality on some issues. From the formation of Auckland Council in 2010 workshops had always been closed, but in the 2013-2016 term, the Devonport-Takapuna Board had resolved that their local board workshops would be open to the public as this board member explains:

The problem we were having before, with these workshops, is they were in secret. So our newspapers, particularly our local one would pillage us. Because even if we weren't making a decision, it looked like it. So when it came to the board, and because our minutes are terrible, that we'd already agreed on it and that was the end of that. And the real decision was [seen by the public to be] made in a workshop even if it didn't happen that way. As soon as we opened it people felt much more comfortable. They didn't need to come along then, only if they had a particular interest. So even if we don't have many people coming along ...

In the above case, the process of making the workshops open, provided reassurance to the public that the decision-making was transparent, even if the public chose not to attend. Interestingly, although there is nothing provided for in the legislation on the process surrounding workshops, board members reported significant resistance to open workshops from the Auckland Council bureaucracy:

We did not want any secret meetings, unless there was a staff or legal issue. We want all our workshops in the public arena. We obviously got a rebellion [from Auckland Council officers] from that: "We can't possibly talk in that situation. We will not be able to talk freely." As it happened, one member, happened to be on another board as

*well [and said] "I've just been in the same workshop for my other board and I haven't heard **any** extra information than what we've had in the open meeting. So what you're telling us doesn't quite add up." It was only because he was on both boards ...*

The Local Government (Auckland Council) Amendment Act 2016 now prohibits any local board member from being elected to more than one local board. The resistance from Council staff to open workshops was overcome, in this case, by the chair proposing a change of process, board members supporting it, and the board being able to show that there was no significant difference in the advice provided. The administration, however, continued to resist the process by refusing to publicise the open workshops, even though it was the result of a board decision. The result was an increase in workload for local board members who were now doing work that was arguably the result of a board decision and therefore the responsibility of their support staff:

Initially they said, they couldn't publish them [the times of meetings] and we couldn't do this, and we called them community briefings instead of workshops. Because we know our community and what's coming up I would ring or say: "Spread the word, there's this issue coming up," which we can do when we know our own community.

This shows that, although local boards made decisions, these were difficult to implement without staff support. This issue also illustrates dissatisfaction with the change in the way board minutes were recorded in the transition from legacy councils to the Supercity. Whereas in the legacy councils, the debate was recorded, listing the arguments raised and the responses, in the Supercity minutes only the resolutions were recorded. It was then unclear, to the public who read the minutes, whether any debate had taken place or whether issues of concern had been raised. This contributed to an erosion in public confidence in the transparency of the decision-making system.

It should be noted that not all board members shared the view that workshops should be open to the public. In the following case, the concern is that public visibility of the debate could result in board members using the opportunity for declamatory political statements rather than genuine debate which addressed the core issues.

I've got various concerns about doing public workshops as I think it will just lead to a lot of posturing from elected members, and you don't actually ask proper intelligent questions. I think having them inhouse, enables people to ask stupid questions if they want. Things that might not appear that smart. You know what I mean? I think there's a degree of safety.

This issue also reveals an interesting tension between board members as trustees or delegates (Pitkin, 1967). Some board members felt their role was to make decisions for others. Public scrutiny of the decision-making was described as uninteresting or inappropriate

for the public to follow. Board members who seemed to see themselves more as a delegate or who valued participatory democracy (Drage, 2008) felt that public attendance at meetings would help inform the public or raise the profile of the issues, hence allowing more direct participation by electors.

The importance of staff in supporting local board members was illustrated earlier. Here we see the complexity of the relationship with the administration. Local board members are reliant on the organisation for advice, support in navigating Auckland Council structures, and in asking for accountability. The decision-making role lacks transparency with decisions made that are beyond the scrutiny of either the board members or the public. The challenge of asking for accountability and in question budget lines appropriately also disempowered local board members within their role.

8.4.5 The employment status of elected members

The separation of governance and management roles was also reflected in the employment contract and the sense of responsibility, or lack thereof, of the organisation towards the welfare of elected members. The legislation treats elected members differently from employees. Elected members are paid a stipend and are seen as contractors rather than employees of the bureaucracy, even though their funding comes through the Auckland Council. Board members expressed frustration that officers were paid significantly more but were relying quite substantially on local board members for guidance.

A friend of mine got a job in the community action youth against alcohol and drugs [An Auckland Council advertised position] - 75 K for his role. I'm just like hang on – "What? That seems like only one area and one strand of what we do, and you get 75K?" I was complaining about me being on 42,000 [NZD].

Furthermore, local board members cannot access Auckland Council resources, insurance, mental health support, or other opportunities and services in the same way that employees do. Nor do they benefit from employee protections in legislation, the ability to negotiate remuneration rates (which are set by the Remuneration Authority), or conditions of employment. For some who felt bullied in their workplace, the lack of protection left them feeling exposed and without any support in addressing workplace challenges:

*I definitely feel like I don't have as much... Maybe **any** protection (participant laughs) any employment protection. I was literally thinking about that today. Coz I was comparing this experience of being pulled up for something compared to my previous actual job where I got pulled up for something and I actually had a proper disciplinary process that was adhering to the proper acts, and I had employee rights and things like that. Compared to this where I feel I'm **really** in a very vulnerable position and I*

could lose my job at any moment and if I did there's nothing I could essentially do about itCan I take these fellas to court? I dunno... (participant laughs).

This was echoed by another participant who also felt there should be more employment protections in the role:

And it's complicated by the whole political aspect. When that becomes intertwined, the bullying is on the local board but is also on your ticket. Who mediates that? Is that a Council problem or... (participant laughs).

Safety, and lack of safety in the role will be addressed under the section on negative behaviour in the following chapter.

8.5 The interplay between micro features and meso features

This chapter illustrates the interplay between microfeatures of personality and relationships, and the structural features of the organisation and the legislation in determining the success of local board members. In the first instance success required local board members to be elected to the role. Success in becoming elected reflects the demographic of the local board area (socio-economic profile, level of migration, youth profile), combined with the ability of the elected member to select the best way of standing to maximise their chances of being elected. This reflects a combination of strategic alliances, political orientation, and the ability to mobilise resources. The greater status and authority of the chair role, influences candidate affiliation choices. People's alignment with the dominant group on the local board and the culture of the local board significantly influenced how successfully board members were able to perform their role.

Success in the role involved being able to communicate and "champion" projects with local board members and within the organisation, as well as following up on progress within the organisation to achieving outcomes. High levels of trust between board members and the bureaucracy helped to further projects, provided there was sufficient funding or funding could be directed to the project. The structure of the organisation, and the legislative provisions for local boards affected the quality of the decision-making as is illustrated above.

The overall impression of local board member decision-making is that board members are disempowered in their decision-making, their ability to advocate on behalf of their communities and in their attempts to seek accountability. The shared decision-making model sees local boards carrying the responsibility for decisions made by the governing body with

lack of clear delineation between the responsibilities of the board and the ward councillor towards the local area. Furthermore local boards are under resourced to deliver the projects on their agenda. In addition, the dual decision-making with board members and staff working together is heavily reliant on administrative support, and is undermined by the New Public Management view that boards should distance themselves from the implementation of any decisions and should only engage in direction setting (Reid, 2016). This was stressful for board members whose contacts were leveraged to increase community engagement, but were then excluded from consultation, or leading projects with the community.

8.6 Conclusion

The above illustrates an increasing pressure within the system to distance local board members from meaningful decision-making. Governance decisions are made on the basis of officer recommendations in reports at business meetings, which local boards sometimes struggled to trust. Over successive local board terms, processes have also been changed in the interests of the organisation and identified as cost-saving measures, such as removing the resourcing of the portfolio process. This has further reduced the already limited ability of board members to request oversight of work programmes. In cases where the local boards have set a clear direction, for example requesting open workshops, the bureaucracy has undermined this process by failing to resource it, even within the local board resource allocation. This reveals the challenges of being in a governance role which is reliant on the bureaucracy for implementation of decisions.

The ability to form strong working relationships is also undermined by the difficulty for board members to connect with staff outside of workshop or formal business meetings. Given the importance of trust between elected members and employed staff identified in the first part of the chapter, it is concerning that Auckland Council processes, and changes to these, serve to weaken the elected voice within local boards. New Public Management reforms suggest an improvement governance by separating governance and management roles. In practice, at the local board level where elected members are embedded within communities, this separation creates tensions between staff and local board members and local board members and the community. Such tensions inhibit board member feelings of success and work against the provision of local democracy.

Local board members also varied in how far they challenged Auckland Council processes. For example, some board members insisted on being more directly involved in consultations, or

challenged attempts to exclude them from decision-making under the grounds they had a conflict of interest. Further, local board members differed in how far they challenged the advice provided by officers, either by asking for different options to be provided or questioning the advice given. Again, we see the interplay of organisational processes, and personal and interpersonal skills in navigating relationships between local board members and the bureaucracy to pursue successful outcomes for communities.

Having addressed the key interpersonal, organisational and legislative factors which influence local board members, the next chapter addresses the bullying of board members by other members. This was a recurrent theme in the interviews and described by participants as an important impediment to local board member success in their role. The complexity of negative behaviour and its use as a political strategy designed to undermine dissenting voices was an unexpected finding of this research. It is a critical problem so is addressed as a stand-alone issue in the following chapter.

Chapter 9 Negative behaviour

9.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to understand the experience of success from a local board member perspective through the following research questions:

RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role? These questions have been addressed in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven described the personal and interpersonal issues which affect success, while Chapter Eight addressed the institutional and legislative factors which influence success, thus answering RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

In the participant interviews, eleven of the twenty-one participants identified and described a range of negative behaviours as a key issue which interfered with their ability to be successful. Given the seeming prevalence of this behaviour, this chapter focuses more specifically on these experiences of this behaviour and individual and organisational responses to this negative behaviour. This includes an analysis of the mechanics of the behaviour, the contexts in which it arises and whether board members who are younger, women or non-New Zealand European are more likely to experience this. Within that, there is also some consideration of how Māori issues and Māori-identifying board members are subject to certain kinds of negative response. Taking steps to minimise negative behaviour therefore addresses a key factor which inhibits local board member success in response to RQ3 and also RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

Board member participants felt that negative behaviour is generally tolerated and fails to be addressed systematically at an organisational level. The ability to use a political voice freely and without feeling threatened is a cornerstone of the democratic process. The escalation in reporting of instances of negative behaviour, both in central government and local government (certainly over the last six years, Brown, 2018; 1 News, 2019; Neilson, 2020; Reid 2020a; Bellew 2023), and the increasing recognition that this is unacceptable make this a topical issue.

This chapter opens by defining negative behaviour, then exploring the contexts in which this is most likely to arise. The administrative and local board member responses to the behaviour

are then discussed. Understanding context in which this behaviour arises helps to explain the causal mechanisms of negative behaviour. These findings contribute to an understanding of bullying as raised in External Independent Review Bullying and Harassment in the New Zealand Parliamentary Workplace (Francis, 2019) and the Local Government New Zealand Report Rewarding, interesting, and frustrating: How elected members feel about their time in local government (Reid, 2020a). Lastly, suggestions are made for how negative behaviour directed by local board members to each other could be addressed more proactively by staff and local board members who witness this. The 2015 Health and Safety at Work Act provides for anyone who witnesses negative behaviour at work to intercede and for individuals to be protected from negative behaviour in the workplace. A case is made that this should be relied on more extensively within local board environments to ensure that people behave appropriately towards each other.

9.2 Defining negative behaviour

In Chapter Seven, participants described the value of working collaboratively and how this led to successful outcomes. As in any workplace, participants described a variety of relationships with some board members getting on better with each other or generally being more personable or having stronger social skills. Within a political environment one might expect relationships to fray more easily, with differences in viewpoint exacerbated when people compete to have their interests addressed. Florczak et al. (2020) note that politicians have low Negative Emotionality scores suggesting that they have a higher tolerance for conflict. My expectation was that negative behaviour would not feature prominently in board member discussions of success. Yet, over half the participants described a range of bullying behaviours directed at them as a key challenge in their role. The issue is in identifying these behaviours and when they simply reflect acceptable political debate and the “cut and thrust” of politics and when they are in fact part of a group of behaviours I identify as negative behaviour. The issue is complicated by the fact there was some variability in how far comparable situations were identified by participants as examples of negative behaviour and their responses to this.

In this study, building on Reid (2020a, p.11), negative behaviour is identified when board members do not feel safe, are unable to express their views or find the workplace culture uncomfortable. Participants reported feeling bullied, excluded from social events or ostracised, being discredited as well hearing personal attacks on their integrity, personality, or behaviour which they felt undermined the credibility of what they said in a political environment. The behaviour was considered to be beyond normal political sparring because it

was one-sided. The personal attacks caused personal stress, interfered with board member ability to fulfil their responsibilities as a board member, and the effects carried over into other personal relationships or relationships with staff. The effects continued beyond the immediate situation with participants reporting for example that political strategy meetings were held without them, or they were “dropped” from the group to contest the next election without being forewarned.

9.3 When negative behaviour occurs

While there are personality differences in who engages in negative behaviour, this study shows that negative behaviour manifested particularly in three specific contexts when board members want to emphasise political difference from the person attacked, vie for positions of authority, or when the person attacked engaged in oppositional advocacy.

9.3.1 Emphasising political difference

Political differences were reflected in the political dynamic of the board where one political group was in the majority and sought to dominate another group or individual and to be seen to control the local board agenda. It was very difficult for board members in a political minority on the board to be successful in these situations, particularly if it was known that they belonged to a political party which did not align with the political ideology of those elected from the dominant group on the board. Board members in the minority group found this frustrating, as there was often shared local board support for the project, but initiatives were still framed to score political points:

That’s what I keep learning, that it’s endlessly political. Like I’m just here to help parks and shit. I really don’t care about tribal stuff because I’m tribal nationally [within the National Party]. Like half of all our best legislation comes from the parties working together, like the Kermadecs [Kermadec Islands] Sanctuary for example.

When board member had few allies and were in a political minority, these individuals were particularly vulnerable to negative behaviour:

That particular person was incredibly disrespectful. So, at our inaugural meeting, in front of my 80-year-old father, my sister, her children her partner and my husband, she was incredibly, disrespectful, hurtful, mean, cruel in the formal inaugural meeting about her comments.

The board processes could also be used to make participation and decision-making difficult for that individual:

There were three local board members that made a point in the first few months of being elected, that each one would put up a notice of motion ... They each took a lead and each one would have a month of just being very difficult, quite obnoxious in fact.

As noted previously, if the local board was evenly divided in terms of political orientation, unpleasant comments were generally described as “normal political sparring” rather than examples of negative behaviour targeted to be hurtful, and both parties participated evenly in the scoring of political points.

9.3.2 Board members vying for authority

Board members competed for positions of authority on the board, such as seeking the role of chair or deputy chair, or to be the local board representative within another statutory process, (e.g., a board representative on the Manukau Harbour Forum). One local board participant who lost the contest for the chair role, then felt particularly targeted by the chair during the election term and describes his bewilderment and lack of support:

He just took control. It was astonishing. I was a threat, a risk. So he did everything in his power to minimise me [the previous chair]. And with me out of the way, he was able to manipulate the women ... Quite easily ... Then [he] was abusive to staff to the extent I had a tier two manager come to me and say, “[The chair] is really a problem, what can we do?” I said, “I know he’s a problem, I don’t know what to do.”

In the following case, an elected member described being attacked by the members of the political party they belonged to for not supporting a decision of the dominant group on the local board:

It was definitely worse for me because the other members of the board weren’t involved [in the political party] so [this person] could bully me a lot through my Party friends and associations and make my life miserable.

Negative behaviour was described as particularly hurtful when it originated from people within the political group. As one participant pointed out, being in the same group to contest elections “doesn’t mean we all think the same, and the [political] games still get played.” The above example also shows how members of political parties living within a local board area could influence the local politics or contribute to the negative behaviour.

9.3.3 Engaging in oppositional advocacy

In this case, the differences arose in terms of support for particular advocacy items. Board members needed the support of their board to develop a board advocacy position. When this support was there, the board had a sense of unity, even when the goals were then thwarted by Auckland Council departments or CCOs. However, negative behaviour was prevalent when

board members advocated for the community without broader board support in what I describe as adopting an oppositional advocacy position. I call this oppositional advocacy because it was opposed by the local board, while supported by parts of the community. This usually occurred when board members questioned Auckland Council processes or requested accountability when other board members thought this was unnecessary (see Chapter Six). This participant provides an example of what happened when they disagreed with the dominant group on a particular issue:

*I'm sitting here, the chair is there, there's another board member there, and he turns to me and goes, "Are you fucking mad?" And I went ... I said to the chair "Did you hear what he said?" And she actually said, "I'm not having this, we're moving on" but I should have actually called a point of order. So I turn to the woman next to me and she says, "You should lay a complaint with the staff." And I know that's **pointless**. Because the relationship manager, the staff, they don't give a shit. They just look the other way, like "Shut up." And then I thought, I just thought ... I don't want to go **home** carrying this, so he's Mr nice guy, he's still talking to people in the [foyer afterwards] ... I just went up to him. "[First name] ... Um ... Do you remember what you said to me in the meeting?" And he says "Yeah." And I said, "Well, I think you owe me an apology." And he said, "Aw...Do ya?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Oh, all right then. It was very unprofessional of me." And I said, "Thank you. I appreciate that. I hope you don't do that again." I know that sounds ridiculous, but it was like Monty Python.*

In this case the poor management of the situation by the chair and the staff, and the lack of board member trust in a process to address this, left the board member to tackle this by themselves. What should be seen as an organisational, workplace problem of inappropriate behaviour during a discussion is turned into a personal problem as this example also illustrates:

A woman who is experienced ... In the last term she was bullied incessantly by the then chair. She would cry after the after public meetings, and the relationship manager would say, "Look I'm sorry, there's nothing we can do. Elected members you're on your own."

Not all board members felt confident enough to address these issues with the person directly, and those that did, felt that an absence of organisational or board member reprimand meant that they were vulnerable to continued negativity. These attacks often escalated across the local board term and were more noticeable as people vied for selection to the political group for the following election.

9.4 Negative behaviour and political responsiveness

Chapter Three identified three types of responsiveness (Eulau & Karps, 1977) in political representation: political responsiveness (in developing plans and policies), allocation

responsiveness (in deciding how resource is allocated over substantial projects) and resource responsiveness (making decisions on how to address shorter term issues which often have a problem-solving element).

Negative behaviour and oppositional advocacy were identified predominantly in relation to the resource responsiveness role of elected members. This could be because political responsiveness relates primarily to general direction-setting and policy development. As such there are fewer immediate financial or political consequences for the decisions. Allocation responsiveness centred on large projects which are generally recognised by the public and local board members as being of value across the local board area. These were predominantly funded through the long-term plans rather than from local board funding and there were therefore limited decisions to be made, or the decisions had general agreement. Resource responsiveness, however, centres on day-to-day decisions of how board members will direct funding to projects within the local board term, and how the boards develop advocacy positions to solve localised problems within communities. There is greater potential for differences in opinion when projects compete for limited funds and local board resources, or where there is a political risk of the advocacy item resulting in a backlash from the community.

9.5 Elected member and administrative response to negative behaviour

Participants reported variability in how fellow board members, the staff and the chair responded to negative behaviour towards fellow board members. The findings suggest that the chair is instrumental in ensuring that bullying is not tolerated. Participants noted, however, as in the example above, that local board chairs used their authority to condone negative behaviour or engaged in negative behaviour themselves as a political tactic. In a few instances, the relationship manager, other employees, or board members interceded or took steps to challenge negative behaviour. However, in general, participants reported that people who witnessed poor behaviour were reluctant to intercede. Reasons given by participants was that staff were worried about being seen to take sides, back a particular political position or be attacked themselves.

The authority and reporting structures of local boards and the separation of governance and management realms means that anything related to elected political relationships falls outside the responsibilities of employed staff members. Auckland Council's own policies state that any concerns need to be addressed by the local board member with the chair or through

a formal complaint to the CEO by using the code of conduct process (Auckland Council 2010;2021a). One participant described how the organisational strategy was to change the staff working with the local board staff, while still avoiding addressing the behaviour with the person:

*He was abusive. They [the administration] **deliberately** moved people out. His behaviour is **so** bad that the organisation has to deliberately employ and find, not just pick the nearest person that has a reasonable level of skills. You've actually got to go and interview everybody very thoroughly and pick very carefully. It was an incredibly expensive process to put people into that position.*

As a result of the behaviour of one individual or a group, targeted board members also found themselves attacked by staff, being told they were difficult to work with, unco-operative or made to feel that they needed to change their own behaviour. Most elected members who reported this felt bewildered in these situations as they had come from a range of working environments where they had felt comfortable expressing their views. One board member reported their frustration with trying to follow a formal code of conduct process where the administration failed to recognise or address the level of abuse she experienced, or even to investigate the issue:

I did lay a complaint, and basically ... Was told ... That this was just X being X [Name of board member]. He ... Bullied me incessantly, and [I was told] face to face that it didn't meet the threshold of what they would investigate. He used to swear during workshops, he would ignore me, I was the chair for God's sake and he would come into my office and say, "You don't have the skills for the chair, you should admit it to yourself, you can't do this job." He used to send me emails late at night about lunatic asylums and how I felt about going there and [I was told by the administration that] it wouldn't meet the threshold for a complaint ... I let it go. Well I didn't let it go. I just thought, that's old white men protecting old white men. It's disgusting.

Since leaving my role on the local board, I had a chance meeting with a member of staff who shared his observations of bullying behaviour amongst local board members. His assessment as to why such behaviours occur was that *"there seemed to be fewer professional boundaries amongst elected members, and it was difficult to know as a staff member [referring to himself] attending a workshop how to intercede when behaviour was inappropriate."*

9.5.1 Personal strategies and individual agency

As noted previously, there was some variability in how far participants felt affected by the behaviour or felt that it fell outside of normal political behaviour. Responses varied based on their experience in different political terms, political astuteness and personality differences which meant they were more or less sensitive to the attacks. There is some evidence that women and younger people were more likely to be targeted by negative behaviour.

Board members demonstrated evidence of adopting a range of strategies to deal with negative behaviour as it arose in one-to-one, workshop or board meeting environments. Identified as “coping mechanisms” by one participant, the following list provides the strategies used with examples:

- Laughing off the comment and/or saying: *“That’s funny!”*
- Asking the person to repeat the comment: *“Sorry, what did you say?”*
- Checking with the person by repeating the comment: *“Did you say ...?”* Or *“You didn’t just say ..., did you?”*
- Asking for an apology
- Using meeting protocols to make a point of order
- Shouting back at the person.

As quoted previously, one board member reported that they were strategic about when they responded, recognising that there was a political element to the attacks. If they were in a closed meeting of the board, they did not respond, but if it occurred in an environment with the public they responded in such a way as to embarrass the person making the comment. Common attacks on the board member from fellow board members included accusing them of acting to gain political advantage or going against board decisions.

Feeling disrespected or excluded were important factors affecting people’s ability to participate and put forward ideas or gain support for initiatives. It could also affect board attendance. One board member reported avoiding going into work and remarked on the pettiness of the following:

It’s been full of personal attacks. I did go into the office one morning. I said good morning to two board members. One of them turned to me and said, “No, it’s not a good morning.” So I said, “Oh ... Why not?” And she said, “Because you’re here.”

Board members also reported poor attendance by other members. In many instances it was unclear as to why this occurred. Were absent board members unavailable, uninterested in the work, or did they stop attending workshops because they felt their contribution was unwelcome as this comment implies “We’d all turn up to workshops but not necessarily the other two [who were in the minority].” This political dimension of bullying, and how it relates to advocacy needs to be better understood. Participants reported that the effect of being treated poorly by their own group meant that they sometimes became allies with board members who were outside the group, one member commenting:

The terrible thing about ... The totally weird thing ... It's actually too weird. Often the terrible right wingers on our board, I can get along with them better than I can with my so called left Labour.

9.5.2 Raising the issues with a political party, ticket, or group

In cases where members belonged to a party or ticket, some board members tried to get support from the leaders within the group that had elected them. Political groups which stood candidates for election seemed to lack systematic processes to deal with these issues or were reluctant to get involved. There were exhortations to work better together, the implication that the issue was one where both parties needed to take responsibility for change. No sanctions, or clear directives to stop the attacks were given.

Two elected members reported having meetings with their political party organisers (in different political parties). Both felt they were provided with moral and emotional support to address the attacks at a personal level. One did not contest the subsequent election, because they felt uncomfortable that the person responsible for bullying them was chosen to run again, without their negative behaviour being addressed. The other member, who had expressed aspirations to run for central government, did successfully run again. Board members who had greater political ambitions and greater political experience tended to stand again in spite of the challenges and lack of action to address the negative behaviour. As one participant commented:

It's bigger than the person, bigger than the individuals. It's about the team and we've got ... We can't allow it to ruin the hard work we've done to establish ourselves as pretty effective.

This experience was more challenging for those who stood with a community group as it usually meant going against the group leader who was also an elected member and there was no-one else with sufficient authority to raise the issues with or to get support from. In these situations board members reported feeling particularly vulnerable, as this participant reports:

*He directly said, "I don't want you on the board" the other day ... But now he's changed his way of saying it and instead of saying "I don't want you on the team," he's now saying "You should probably go study. And local govt is not a vocation, it's a service. And I don't think you're tough enough for this environment, it's not gonna [going to] be safe enough for you ... I care about your mental health." He threw that in. As if he cares. (Laughs). So I can just tell by his dialogue that he's already made up his mind and he's **not** courageous enough to tell me **again**, a second time that he doesn't want me to be on the team. This morning, for the third time, I told him that my desire is to stay on this team and run in the selection, which he disregarded again.*

The New Zealand Labour Party introduced a code of conduct which includes reference to bullying in 2019 (New Zealand Labour Party, 2019). This will ideally provide greater clarity in how to approach bullying within the Labour Party when a Labour Party member is also an elected to local government.

9.5.3 Using the Auckland Council code of conduct process

The code of conduct process within Auckland Council provides the formal mechanism to address the poor behaviour of elected members. Nonetheless, board members questioned whether this process would result in any meaningful sanctions. Reasons given for not making a formal complaint, included that:

1. The behaviour arose from people within their own political group and would therefore cause embarrassment to the group or political party that contested the election if raised within Auckland Council.
2. The process would be too stressful, possibly resulting in being further victimised by fellow board members through the process of making a complaint.
3. The outcome, even if in their favour, would simply result in a reprimand for the person without requiring any substantial changes. In the words of one participant, it would be *“a slap with a wet bus ticket.”*

Only one participant had tried to use the code of conduct process to address negative behaviour directed at them. This was not investigated on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence of poor behaviour. In fact, two of the bullied participants reported that board members in the dominant faction of the local board had tried to use the code of conduct process against them, to manage the fact they had disagreed with the political majority. Thus, there is evidence that the code of conduct process is used as a political tool and “weaponised” (Knight in Campbell, 2021) to silence dissenting board members rather than to protect all board members.

The following example of how the code of conduct is used to manage board member behaviour is taken from my own experience of challenging an alcohol licencing application:

Wrongfooted by the board

A local bar wanted to extend its operating hours to 2.00 am in my residential area. Several people in the community had expressed concern at the poor management of the bar, with

noise and nuisance issues already arising from the current licence. The local police sergeant also expressed concerns at the extended hours. I raised the issues with my fellow local board members who initially said the board would appear at the hearings, raise community concerns and provide the licencing panel with a letter outlining the issues. I informed the concerned members of the community and the police sergeant that the board would appear at the hearings.

The applicant invited the board to meet with them. Three of the board members then met with the applicant and then withdrew the local board opposition to the extended licence, all within a period of 24 hours. Given that the local board role is part-time, I did not read my emails in that period as I was working elsewhere. Consequently, I missed the opportunity to discuss the issue through the email thread as well as the meeting that was scheduled with the applicant. A 24-hour turnaround period, with a change in position with no input from the person who initially raised the issues and advocated for them illustrates the fragility of board processes.

I was also invited to meet with the applicant and dropped into their café the following week. In hindsight, I should have taken someone with me for safety but given that this meeting was in a public place and apparently amicable, I went alone. In the middle of the meeting, the applicant pointed me out to the patrons and made it clear to everyone that I was responsible for the business not getting an alcohol licence. Before I could leave, they then proceeded to make personal attacks on my family. I later found out they had also threatened another objector by visiting them at their house and stopping them from leaving by blocking their driveway.

Given that nothing had substantially changed in terms of community concern, and the fact I now felt I had misled the community into thinking the local board would appear at the hearing, I went to the alcohol hearings in a personal capacity, while also being a member of the local board. I explained that the board had withdrawn their support, leaving me in the position of appearing as an individual. Meanwhile, the police authority also failed to send someone to the hearing stating that they were too busy.

While I had the support of community members, and the local police station, I came across as making an unsubstantiated personal attack on a business, rather than representing community and police concerns because I spoke neither with the authority of the local board nor the support of the police. This was awkward given that the business operates in my community, and also left me feeling unsafe and vulnerable given the previous behaviour of the applicant towards me.

Furthermore, a fellow local board member attended the hearings, at the behest of the local board. Although I invited them to speak or sit with me to speak to the item, they declined, instead making notes on the proceedings and exacerbating the perception that I had no authority to speak.

The following week, I was told by members of the Waiheke board that I had misrepresented the board view, and that they were thinking of invoking a code of conduct process against me.

Thereafter, I was asked to attend a meeting with an Auckland Council lawyer and the head of democracy services and was informed that I was lucky the recording had not been made of the proceedings as otherwise I would be facing a code of conduct process.

This serves to illustrate how the code of conduct process is misused to manage fellow board member behaviour. Moreover, it shows how stressful it is for individuals to speak up for community interests without broader board support, even when they are representing a legitimate view for which there is community support. This also illustrates how the Auckland Council administration, whether knowingly or not, is complicit in victimising board members, under the guise of following process, rather than using their authority to diffuse political power games.

It is important to acknowledge that the code of conduct process has improved since 2013, when I was elected to the board, and now better recognises the challenges of addressing negative behaviour in the political realm. Before 2016, the Code of Conduct process for Auckland Council provided for the CEO to decide on the severity of the issue and a committee of the governing body was selected to resolve the complaint (Auckland Council, 2013). These members are themselves elected and their political orientation could influence whether governing body members saw the issues as bullying or not. Furthermore, prior to 2016, the governing body was predominantly older and male, adding an additional layer of complexity and perhaps influencing what is seen as a threshold of acceptable behaviour. The code of conduct has now been reviewed and updated. In the current version the CEO appoints an investigator, who decides on the severity of the issue possibly in conjunction with a conduct commissioner and there is an opportunity to use skilled mediators (Auckland Council, 2021a). There are clearer consequences for breaches, with bullying and harassment, and unacceptable behaviour is clearly defined.

While the code of conduct process has improved, the overall process to address negative behaviour is still flawed, requiring board members to continue working in potentially unsafe environments. There is no mechanism, as with employee complaints, to rearrange work allocations so people can avoid contact with each other. This means that either the bullied board members withdraw themselves from the proceedings, or boards work under very uncomfortable conditions. There is no-one tasked within departments or the local board to address these issues as soon as they arise within local boards, so that they do not escalate in the first place. The human resources department is not accessible to board members as they are not employees of the organisation, and, as noted previously the political group or party

which contested the election may be of little support. Lastly, there is no time frame or process for appeal, and the elected member can be further isolated by the decision to formally address the issues, this time by other board members who feel they have acted inappropriately in launching a code of conduct process.

The above demonstrate the inadequacy of the current process. Board members felt there should be immediate support in addressing the issues, and that the relationship manager or local board advisors were best place to address this behaviour with board members and the chair as it arose. The chair should also ensure that boards which they lead are free from bullying, but given the fact the chair is a political role, it can be harder to get their support for creating a safe working environment.

9.6 The role of the Workplace Safety Act 2015

The Workplace Safety Act 2015 provides a mechanism for negative behaviours to be addressed more actively by the Auckland Council administration and the local board. This workplace safety legislation is designed to protect employees from mental and physical harm occurring at work. The Health and Safety Guide: Good Governance for Directors (Institute of Directors & Worksafe, 2016) explains that:

It is important to remember that an organisation's primary duty to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of workers extends beyond it's [sic.] Own workers to all workers whose activities they influence or direct (including subcontractors and volunteers). Legislation in New Zealand also extends an organisation's health and safety duties to all those who could be put at risk by the activities of the organisation, such as visitors, customers and the public (p.4).

Directors are required to ensure that the workplace is safe for those identified as "workers" and "to hold management to account for implementing strategy" (p.15). The document does not, however, address the safety of the directors themselves, even though the introduction makes it clear that the legislation applies to anyone engaging with the business.

The 2019 Auckland Council Handbook (2019b) recognises this legislation and identifies board members as "officers" under the Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015 (p.125). It then directs board members to identify risk in local board decisions, and to raise issues of health and safety affecting staff, to protect Auckland Council as a PCBU (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking). No mention is, however, made of the well-being and safety of elected members who are perceived as independent elected representatives, remunerated by a stipend from Auckland Council for their services to the community.

Given the stated importance of health and safety in the Auckland Council documents and in legislation, and the responsibility of boards in addressing health and safety in the workplace, it seems reasonable that local board members, the chair and the staff all have a role in addressing negative behaviour which is harmful and interferes with people's ability to fulfil their role. The Workplace Safety Act, 2015 provides a way for Auckland Council to take a more proactive role in addressing negative behaviour from board members. Precedence for this is set in Australia where a decision based on the Fair Work Act 2009 (AU) (Adamson, 2017) recognised that a board member bullied by another board member was in fact a worker under the Act.

9.7 Negative behaviour and difference in board members

There were differences in how participants responded to comparable situations. The two older New Zealand European men in the study sometimes felt unheard. While they described tensions within the group, they did not describe this as bullying. They tended to attribute the comments made to being in a political minority (even within their own faction), and to recognise the attacks as political tools used to undermine them. It is unclear if they were more thick-skinned and less sensitive to negative behaviour, or they interpreted this as normal behaviour towards those in a political minority, a situation which might change in subsequent elections:

[They] kept me out of the loop then suddenly told me they didn't have any space in their team because they'd filled it up with others. Which was fine, I just went out and stood as an independent, and then they elected their chair, one of the new ones coming in.

This contrasts with the younger non-New European elected member who had been elected for the first time and experienced a comparable situation by being excluded from running with the same ticket for the next election.

So I'm in a predicament at the moment. I know that the only way I'll get re-elected is if I stay on that ticket. Because no other group ever wins in this area, that ticket wins every single time. So for me, there has also been some hurt from this experience.

Younger board members and women were more likely to report feeling upset by negative behaviours and to see the attacks as personal. This could be because they were less experienced in a local government environment. However, it is also clear that the kinds of comments made to minority board members (particularly female and younger) played on negative stereotypes of youth and women, and that board members found it easier to attack board members who were younger and female. This younger elected member comments:

I definitely see ... Certain male members ... Treating the female members, not just on my side, [not just in the political minority, in their faction as well] ... They definitely speak to them differently than they speak to ... Is it as bad as in the rest of the world? No. Is it still bad. Yes ... More interruptions, getting shut down more often, the patronising voice comes out a lot faster. Although, I've managed to annoy [name of older male New Zealand European member] recently. He pulled out the patronising voice on me, called me stupid. That's good fun. It's only happened twice to me in two years so that's a pretty good record I guess.

Behaviours could include eyerolling when someone was speaking, interrupting them or telling people how to behave. As noted previously, in the case of women it could involve using gender slurs such as “*Stop being hysterical,*” and to young people it could involve highlighting the board member’s inexperience or referring to them disparagingly as “*yung-un*” [young one]. It is possible that minority members are more likely to be targeted on a board because they are also the people challenging the status quo, bringing new ideas to the board, and may have fewer political astuteness strategies at their disposal.

As noted in Chapter Five, younger board members were also more likely to be ethnically non-European. People who had been targeted by ageist and sexist comments generally had a greater expectation that Auckland Council should provide a safe working environment and that the negative behaviours needed to be addressed as soon as they arose in the workplace. These findings are consistent with the reports from Parliament which show younger and female members both experiencing high levels of negative behaviours but also being at the forefront of speaking out about how to stamp these out (Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington, 2021).

In terms of ethnic slurs, none of the board members felt that these had been directed at them. Board members did, however, report that general negative comments were made in contexts where there were no ethnic minorities present, such as “*Asians are terrible drivers.*” These comments seem to reflect board member beliefs, which they did not feel they had to manage as there were no ethnic minorities present, rather than being strategically deployed. As such, it is possible that “soft” misogyny and ageism (for example, telling a woman they need to calm down or a young person that they lack experience) is socially acceptable, whereas making ethnically targeted comments is less acceptable. Alternatively, it could be that there was no political gain to be made as the comments were raised about a community that none of the board members belonged to. In some cases younger members reported helping older, usually male local board members to see that “you just can’t say that.” Through this process

the younger members reported feeling that they were developing good working relationships with other members of the board.

9.8 Negative behaviour and Māori

While many local boards increasingly used aspects of tikanga (Māori cultural protocols) and made efforts to reach out to Māori within communities, some participants felt their board struggled to engage appropriately with Māori. This seemed to arise from board members:

1. Finding it hard to know who to engage with. This included being confused by and failing to differentiate between whether Māori were acting in their role as Iwi, Hapū, community leaders or constituents.
2. Feeling challenged by certain groups who were very vocal, for example a hapū group demanding their rights to a particular area be recognised.
3. Feeling awkward using Māori tikanga during meetings including knowing when to speak and how to address the topics.
4. Being resistant to a different language or viewpoint, for example adopting signage in Te Reo for a new subdivision or not wanting to open meetings with a karakia.
5. Feeling that Māori were catered to by other parts of Auckland Council or central government initiatives and therefore resistant to using local board resources to support Māori led initiatives.

This lack of sensitivity to Māori issues occurred whether or not Māori board members were present. If Māori board members were present, these elected members were treated as the in-group, while the issue was described as referring to others. This phenomenon is described as out-group heterogeneity (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992) where the out-group are positioned as negative and undifferentiated, reflecting “they all look the same to me” phenomenon (Ackerman, et al., 2006). Hence, while Māori felt a sense of pride in being able to raise issues relating to Māori, they also sometimes felt awkward when the group they belonged to was “othered” (Canales, 2000) by fellow board members.

Similarly, board chairs were described by some participants as lacking cultural competence in engaging with Māori, while enjoying the concept of meeting “*chief to chief*”, and talking to Iwi leaders as the designated representative of the local board. As a result, Māori board members sometimes felt side-lined in relationships they were instrumental in developing and in which they could have had a more important role. In addition, Māori elected members found themselves attacked on occasion by Māori community members and Māori groups who

thought they were not representing Māori aspirations well enough. The tensions existing in this space are captured in a Waitematā Local Board meeting (Baldock, 2020; Theunissen, 2020) where Kerrin Leoni, a Māori local board member is singled out and verbally attacked by a local Iwi member. Member Leoni challenged the behaviour, pointing out that it is inappropriate to single her out for attack for what is a local board decision.

Hence, with respect to Māori participants, and around issues which predominantly affect Māori, success required a level of cultural competence and understanding. At times this was sometimes lacking and could result in issues being blocked from an agenda or in cultural protocols not being followed. As is illustrated above, this could be by design or through ignorance.

9.9 Understanding the causal mechanisms of negative behaviour

In this study, the use of critical realist tools has been instrumental in accounting for negative behaviour in a local board environment and in understanding the causal mechanisms of negative behaviour. The process of retrodiction (understanding the conditions under which the behaviour arises) has identified that bullying is prevalent when there is a power imbalance between a dominant political group and individuals who are in the political minority, or when an individual engages in oppositional advocacy which is not supported by other board members. As evidenced by the alcohol licencing incident (described in section 9.5.3), the same challenge was experienced differently based on how far the dominant faction advocated for the issue.

The demi-regularities that contribute to the negative behaviours being felt more strongly include:

1. Lack of allies on the local board or being in a political minority.
2. The skills and commitment of the board chair towards creating a positive working environment.
3. The agency of the individual in both insisting on engaging in oppositional advocacy or in challenging negative behaviours as they arose.
4. Staff and local board member individual actions to maintain a safe working environment and call out, or not participate in, the bullying.

The process of abduction revealed that the negative behaviour was politically motivated, more likely to occur when there was a power imbalance. The use of ageist and gendered stereotypes was more likely when directed at female or younger members of the local board.

This provides important insight into how negative behaviour should be addressed.

Understanding that it is a political tactic (albeit inappropriate) provides the opportunity for people who are confronted by this to adopt strategies to challenge the behaviour without being hurt by it or taking the comments personally. Approaching it in this way also provides space for an organisational response which addresses the issue as bullying, rather than normalising this as *“this is just the way it is, the cut and thrust of politics.”*

The comments are often described as someone trying to be funny, not knowing how to behave, or accusing others of not being able to take a joke. The examples provided by participants in this study make it clear that bullying is used to gain political advantage or to discredit an opposing viewpoint. This both explains the limitations of cultural competence training in improving workplace relationships (Shepherd, 2019) and why this will never be enough to address workplace bullying in a political environment. The problem is not that people do not understand how to behave, but that as a tactic, it is deployed to be hurtful and undermine a credible viewpoint. The behaviour can then be positioned as a joke if challenged. If the policy-makers in organisations (e.g., Auckland Council) adopt a zero-tolerance policy to the behaviours and take immediate action as they arise, both formally and informally, such behaviours would likely be less frequent as they would no longer achieve the desired results.

9.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored negative behaviour through the recollections of participants of such events. As such, it addresses an important issue which some local board members have to navigate which in-turn, impacts on their experience of success in the role. Negative behaviour is shown to be deployed as a political strategy, either to discredit a local board member in a different political group, or a board member in the same group who is competing for greater authority or presenting a dissenting board view. The negative behaviour could include ageist or sexist comments. How this was addressed depended on the behaviour of the local board members, chair and staff in condoning the behaviour. The behaviour was generally portrayed as an acceptable reflection of the “cut and thrust” of politics. Staff and local board members who witnessed the behaviour tended to avoid becoming involved. Although individuals adopted a range of strategies to address the behaviour, this study identifies the issue as one

of workplace safety which threatens people's ability to perform their role and affects their well-being. A case is made that when personal attacks are made on individuals, these should be challenged as unacceptable, rather than normalised under the guise of "acceptable" political behaviour. An immediate response from those who witness the behaviour would be welcomed by those who are subject to negative behaviour (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021). The Workplace Safety Act 2015 provides for both elected members and staff who witness negative behaviour to deal with this immediately and directly with the person to maintain a safe working environment for everyone. Board members who engage in negative behaviour to fellow board members also direct this behaviour to staff and the public. This in turn affects relationships between board members and staff and contributes to the negative perception of the public towards Auckland Council. Addressing the behaviour would contribute to a more positive environment for all those engaging with Auckland Council elected members.

The ageist and sexist aspects of the negative behaviour explain why younger and female board members are both more vulnerable to such attacks and more adamant that such behaviours are unacceptable and need to be eliminated.

Generalised cultural competence training may go some way to raising the profile of inappropriate behaviours and in doing so help members to avoid making comments through ignorance. This may be particularly effective in helping local board members to understand issues around Te Tiriti responsibilities and how to approach tikanga and Treaty issues in a local government context. But, if comments are strategically deployed to undermine another person, then cultural competence training will have little value as the comments are intentional rather than being made through ignorance. While speaking to gain political advantage is the nature of politics, negative behaviour needs to be tackled immediately so that the governance environment is safe for everyone, and elected members can participate to the best of their ability.

The political dimension of bullying, and how this relates to advocacy also needs to be better understood. If the public see the value of local boards in demanding accountability of Auckland Council, then the elected members who request accountability need to be better supported. While the ability to speak frankly and colourfully to defend a position is a recognised feature of politics, this does not excuse the use of personal attacks, particularly when these attacks are one-sided and serve to undermine the value of opposing arguments in what is a powerplay by those who already have a dominant voice. While the protection of "free and frank" discussion (Ombudsman New Zealand, Kaitiaki Mana Tangata, 2019) is an

imperative for government officials, this protection needs to be afforded to elected members who express a different opinion to the dominant view. In discussing negative behaviour and suggesting measures which can be adopted to minimise such behaviours, this chapter has addressed one salient issue that falls within RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role? Relying on the available legislation, policy-makers and staff within Auckland Council and local boards must work together to bring about a cultural shift to ensure a safe and positive working environment for elected members to support their decision-making.

Chapter 10 Synthesis of findings

10.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to synthesise the key findings from the preceding four findings chapters. Four research questions guided both the analysis of quantitative data (Chapter 5) and the qualitative, semi-structured interview data (Chapters Six to Nine) from 21 local board members elected to Auckland Council in the 2016-2019 term:

RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards?

RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings that seek to comprehend how success is understood and experienced (RQ1) and the factors which affect this (RQ2 & 3) for the 21 elected participant local board members. This is followed by a discussion of how well this form of local government provides for local democratic participation and a commentary on nature and influence of political parties within Auckland Council local body elections. The chapter ends with recommendations for how local democratic participation could be better provided for and ideas to provide for more successful outcomes for local board members.

10.2 Key Findings

10.2.1 The Nature of success

In response to RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards? The participants understanding of success was far more nuanced, than simply citing outcomes and achievements. In local board member descriptions of success, one could sense an interplay of their values and personality, the contextual and political dynamics of a particular local board and the processes of Auckland Council. Achieving successful project outcomes was indeed an important focus for participants, particularly for members of the board who were more experienced and were more adept at leading and guiding projects. Being successful in this area required the local board to work together to provide clear direction for the staff. In these scenarios, the leadership skills of the chair were

also essential to ensure that information was available for decision-making, advocating for the local board and community and in fostering a positive local board culture so that board members and staff could work together effectively. Strong relationships with staff were also important to ensure that projects went ahead, and organisational issues were resolved.

Aside from delivering larger infrastructure projects, local board members felt successful if they were able to stop a process from happening (for example the chopping down iconic trees or stopping library closures). However, these feelings of success varied depending on whether there was broad based local board support or if they were in a minority on the board but supporting community aspirations. Success also had a personal dimension, reflecting a personal sense of achievement. Local board members felt proud of their role in solving tensions within the community or in representing a community which had previously been unrepresented. This was particularly the case for non-New Zealand European and younger board members who felt they brought a distinctive voice to the board. Some board members were using the role as a steppingstone into a councillor role, central government politics or policy advisory roles. All participants talked of the importance of community representation and their role in voicing the concerns of local communities within the larger structures of Auckland Council.

10.2.2 Difference and the elected member experience

The focus now turns to RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role? As noted in Chapter Six, the advocacy necessary for projects to be successful reflected the interests or perspectives of participants. Whether it was the community worker advocating for youth events, or the parent advocating for more playgrounds and safe cycleways, one can see the value of greater diversity in elected members. The value of visible minority candidates on boards was noted by participants as arising in five main areas:

1. Engaging communities that were considered disengaged from the political process;
2. Enhancing the visibility of the political system within local communities and opportunities within this (by building awareness of voting, funding opportunities or participation);
3. Broadening the Auckland Council agenda to address a greater range of needs and interests;
4. Improving social cohesion (this was specifically identified by visible ethnic minority participants);

5. Ensuring that local board member behaviour was less ageist, sexist and more tolerant of Te Tiriti issues and different ethnicities in their deliberations with each other.

Participants from visible minority groups reflected on how their presence had improved local board engagement from other minority groups. Pacific-identifying participants talked of being approached by Asian members of the community, or younger members spoke about working more actively for Māori interests, even when they themselves did not identify as Māori. Participants who were younger and ethnically non-New Zealand European expressed a sense of pride in being “the first” elected member from their group and having the added responsibility to act as a role model for others. They tended to view themselves as delegates for their communities more than trustees (Pitkin, 1967). This could also indicate their newness to the role and young age, resulting in more of a commitment to representing their community’s defined aspirations. In contrast, older participants tended to view themselves more as trustees, making decisions on behalf of communities.

Moreover, younger and non-New Zealand European members highlighted the needs of the communities to which they belonged in their decision-making. However, visible minority local board members were also keen to point out that while they might have greater interest in these areas, they were there to represent all constituents not be “put in a box” where they only had responsibility for minority issues or issues arising in their perceived community. These participants expressed the view that being assigned to deal with youth or ethnic issues, was also a way for the local board to side-line certain issues or to avoid responsibility for more substantial changes that would have wider effects. In one instance a younger participant spoke of how there was support from fellow board members for a youth forum, but less support for high density housing, which might result in cheaper housing options and provide an important material benefit for this demographic who struggle with housing affordability. Māori board members felt other board members should try to learn Te Ao Māori tikanga (Māori cultural protocols) rather than always leaving it to Māori-identifying person on the board to ensure that appropriate tikanga was followed.

While all participants discussed the importance of reaching out to all communities, non-New Zealand European participants brought a more nuanced perspective to the discussions on inclusion and were comfortable with identifying as New Zealanders while also having another identity. New Zealand European participants spoke more in terms of encouraging “other” cultures to participate and were less sensitive to the fact that ethnic minority participants also have a New Zealand identity. Non-New Zealand European and younger participants placed

greater emphasis on partnering with different groups or empowering them to do things for themselves, for example supporting youth to run their own events. In contrast, older New Zealand European participants spoke more of ensuring that visible minorities were invited to existing events or creating events for them.

One might expect that visible minority members on boards felt uncomfortable, struggled to participate, or felt marginalised in trying to get support for their advocacy items, particularly if they represented minority viewpoints (Radio New Zealand, 2022). The reality was much more complex and revealed a political dimension. The Asian-identifying board members, for example, found themselves representing the local board at an Asian event if they were in a political majority, but not if they were in the political minority, even though it might be more culturally appropriate for them to take the lead in this space.

Women participants did not express concerns that were substantially different from those of other board members. The exception to this was mothers who sometimes struggled to participate in evening meetings due to lack of childcare support and their parenting responsibilities. In addition, these participants spoke more of the needs of children, for example prioritising safe crossings at schools. Issues affecting children could sometimes struggle to attract fellow board member support unless there was significant lobbying from community groups, or greater numbers of younger members on the local board.

There was some evidence of collaboration across the political spectrum. As noted above, younger members were more likely to support better cycling and walking infrastructure and greater housing intensification, regardless of their political orientation. At the same time, more experienced members (and historically therefore older and generally New Zealand European members) brought a greater knowledge of the system and stronger working relationships across the organisation. This knowledge was vital in gaining traction for more complex infrastructure projects that required work over successive local board terms. This illustrates the importance of a diverse range of skills and experience in local board work that goes beyond the visible difference characteristics of local board members.

10.2.3 Personal factors affecting success

This section addresses RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? It reflects interpersonal features and a board members sense of agency. At an individual level, success was shown to stem from an interplay between personal

behaviours, interpersonal behaviour and political skills. These attributes have been identified and grouped as the Skills of Political Astuteness for Local Government (SKEMLG) and described in Chapter Seven (see figure 7.1). This work, adapted from the work on political astuteness (Hartley et al., 2013; Hartley & Manzie, 2020) and local board role descriptions (Auckland Council, 2016b) combined with the findings of this study, highlights the skills which are valuable for local board members to be effective in their role.

The most important feature identified at the personal and interpersonal level in this study is the ability to develop trust in order to facilitate strong working relationships across Auckland Council, and within the local board. Trust serves both to create a positive culture and ensures that there is better communication and support for projects as they evolve. The second necessary quality is to advocate, indeed to champion projects to ensure they are at the forefront of people's thinking in all decision-making arenas, including those where local board members are not present within the respective departments of Auckland Council or the CCOs. A strong knowledge base and general governance skills including how to participate in formal meetings was also deemed essential. These are all skills which can be developed and learnt.

The importance of a bicultural commitment, involving the patience to understand issues around Te Tiriti obligations and co-governance arrangements, and to put aside time to develop these relationships was also seen as important, and distinct from, cultural competence awareness. The latter was seen as distinct and focused on increasing sensitivity to working with all kinds of different needs and communities which are not necessarily ethnically focused (for example working with the LGBT or disability community).

The SKEMLG framework (section 7.9), can be used to assist board members in understanding the range of qualities and knowledge they need to maximise the opportunities to perform the role successfully. As part of the findings, a political astuteness locator (based on Hartley & Manzie, 2020) is provided (see figure 7.2). Building on their research on the experience of bureaucrats working with politicians in central government, this locator provides elected members with a tool to understand how their behaviour influences the discourse around a particular issue. While at one level this is germane, it can be hard for local board members to navigate political issues and understand why these are either contested by staff or challenged by communities. Political resilience involves being able to navigate these issues over successive board terms where alliances may change. The locator should help individual elected members and employed advisors to understand the social dimensions of issues

and/or problems to understand how best to engage with the organisation and communities in order to reach a solution that different parties will find acceptable.

10.2.4 Structural and organisational factors affecting success

Success is further facilitated by structural features of the organisation and applicable legislation. The following section considers RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards? With respect to legislative determinants and organisational constraints of Auckland Council.

Board member comments reveal that within the shared decision-making model, local board member decisions were undermined by regional decisions made by Auckland Council councillors. This resulted primarily from lack of resource for a distinct board voice and the belief within the organisation and Auckland Councillors that a standardised approach across the Auckland Council organisation is more practical for the public as well as easier to manage and enforce for the staff. When board members in a particular local board area adopted an advocacy position, this was often disregarded by the bureaucracy. The avoidable consequences of this was often a public uproar which in some cases led to a review of the decision.

The legislation contributes to the confusion in the shared decision-making model where councillors make regional decisions but are elected by ward, and therefore have a vested interest in solving local problems to maintain their visibility. At the same time, statutory consultation for community engagement is designated as the responsibility of local boards who are then asked to represent Auckland Council and councillors for issues on which they may have a poor understanding or may have opposed. The confusion results in lack of clarity around what the board actually does, including which issues the public should approach the board with and those that would be best addressed by the ward councillor.

Board members reported that both members of the public and local board members themselves felt that the local boards are disempowered and crucially, lack credibility. This is primarily because decisions they make are overruled, advocacy positions are ignored and the public struggle to understand the value and role of local boards. It remains to be seen whether changes brought in by the Governance Review (Joseph, 2023), will address this in material ways or simply be a “shifting of the deck chairs on the Titanic,” a phrase used by local board members to comment on new developments in Auckland Council processes, which

while being identified as a change, make no material improvement to the delivery of local democracy.

This study also reveals a tension in the dual decision-making role of elected members and the Auckland Council administration. New Public Management reforms (Naschold 1997; Reid 2016) have emphasised the importance of separating governance from management decision-making and responsibilities. Yet, there was unease with the directive that governance and management are different and separate. This is because in practice, board members found that for a project to be delivered they had to engage in management decisions and work alongside Auckland Council staff. Project delivery was exasperated by changes in staffing, restructuring of departments, lack of departmental resource or lack of trust between the communities and the Auckland Council staff. Moreover, board members experienced extensive frustration when they were asked to leverage their contacts to develop support for projects, but then either had to watch projects fail and deal with community backlash as the project unfolded with different aims. They were also left trying to lead projects or publicise events extensively so they would be successful. This direct support of projects could lead to criticisms from staff, and other board members. Criticisms that board member was overstepping their role by being too involved emerged particularly when the board member was in a minority political faction on the board. Participant board members reported feeling stressed when working without staff or local board member support to fulfil community expectations while also being undermined by fellow board members and staff when doing that work.

The dual decision-making model also illustrates the challenges in requesting accountability for services delivered by Auckland Council. Although identified in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 and a feature of the Local Government Act 2002, participants reported that it was increasingly difficult to access information on which to make decisions. Staff reports favoured certain recommendations but local board members felt that their queries for specific details were increasingly declined as being commercially sensitive. Board members expressed concern at increasingly having to rely on the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act [LGOIMA] 1987 to obtain information, in a process which places additional requirements on board members. Information obtained in this way, if obtained at all, occurs long after decisions are made. While board member participants were provided with broad brush data such as the booking data for hall usage or spending in different areas, other key information was lacking. This included the detail of whether contracts provide value for money, understanding the levers of underutilisation of halls, or whether projects were

delivering on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Thus, while the New Public Management approach insists on greater visibility of decisions, the lack of access to relevant, timely information made it difficult to ensure accountability.

Participants felt that the loss of the portfolio system concentrated more decision-making authority in the chair of the local board and Auckland Council staff. In the absence of a portfolio holder, any follow up to departmental work programmes could bypass local board input completely, with the chair approached by staff in some instances as a shortcut to the local board view. A second consequence was that there was even less reason for board members to engage with local board staff, except in more formal workshop or business meetings. Given the fact that relationships are the key to successful outcomes, lack of opportunities to engage between local board members and staff is particularly concerning. This study reveals how the absence of opportunities to engage outside of formal settings erodes the trust identified as necessary for strong working relationships. These working arrangements also favour board members who have been in the role longer and who have an experience of working with staff prior to the changes in the portfolio system. Evidence of this was seen both in terms of board members who felt their knowledge of staff and the Auckland Council processes facilitated their ability to obtain good outcomes, as well as comments made by newer board members on how they felt they lacked connection with staff.

10.2.5 Negative behaviour and oppositional advocacy

Negative behaviour is discussed as a key issue in response to RQ1, in terms of interfering with a local board members ability to be successful. But importantly, this study shows that negative behaviours are part of a collection of behaviours that go beyond simple disagreement. Participants described a range of experiences where they felt bullied, victimised or ostracised. Some felt they had been targeted in ways that overstepped professional boundaries, where inappropriate comments were made about their behaviour, ideas or personality. These behaviours have recently been acknowledged as being prevalent in New Zealand within the dynamics of local board politics (Reid 2020a), the public sector (Crimp 2017) and the parliamentary environment (Francis 2019). This study identifies the issues as arising primarily in three situations in the local board context.

The first was in asserting political dominance of the group who had the political majority and wanted to be seen to “call the shots.” In this instance the solutions were often the obvious response to an issue, so minority board members described feeling confused when they were

attacked for a position which was later adopted by the local board. Secondly, negative behaviour arose when board members challenged another local board member for a position of authority. Lastly, negative behaviours occurred when board members raised the profile of issues that required advocacy. Such issues were brought to them by constituents or community groups and generally fell outside the agreed work plan.

Tensions arose when a board member stuck to their view and this position was not supported by other members of the board. I identify this as oppositional advocacy as it was advocacy in opposition to the views of other board members, while supporting a community position. Examples of oppositional advocacy items raised by board members included speaking out for alcohol harm reduction, promoting a safe crossing outside a school, promoting cycleways or tree protection. In the last two situations, the negative behaviours were directed at local board members who were both within and outside the dominant faction on the local board who disagreed with the position taken by the board. The same issue could be approached completely differently on different boards depending on whether the dominant faction was in favour of the issue. Alcohol reduction strategies or cycling infrastructure were wholeheartedly adopted by some boards but not others, for example.

Instances of negative behaviour were noted towards people who are older and New Zealand European, as well as to younger, non-New Zealand European members. Changes in the local board term was seen to affect the experience of board members, and varied in relation to whether they were in the political majority or minority in different terms, the political orientation of the dominant faction and the personalities of the people elected. Younger board members and women were more likely to mention during the interviews that they had felt upset at having negative behaviour directed at them and to provide examples of prejudicial bullying which exploited the prevalent stereotypes of young people and women and reflects gendered behaviour. This included drawing attention to people's lack of experience, talking over them, and identifying comments as inappropriate or irrelevant to the discussion.

10.2.6 Local boards and the promise of local democracy

This study has focused on board member experiences of success. However, some of the issues which impede success raise the issue of how well Auckland Council structures and practices enable local democracy. The Report of the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance identified four characteristics as necessary for effective local government (Richardson, 2008,

p.400) which were described in Chapter Three: transparency, accountability, efficient use of resources and responsiveness. This section discusses how these concepts have featured in the comments made by local board participants, and whether this iteration of local governance and local boards provides effectively for a local voice in political decision-making.

Transparency

Board member participants spoke extensively about transparency, which is often a public concern in local government (Gill, 2021). Participants noted that opportunities for public scrutiny and transparency were fragile, directed more at transparency of local board member behaviour than the Auckland Council administration. They commented that transparency is challenged by the fact decisions affecting communities occur in various parts of the Auckland Council bureaucracy, often without public or local board scrutiny or the ability to prevail on the decision-making process. In addition, their ability to be transparent was challenged by the fact information and processes to seek information were managed by the bureaucracy. The loss of portfolios for example which board members spoke of as limiting their ability to ask for accountability, simply disappeared from changes within the bureaucratic process.

Transparency also had a political dimension. Board members were seen to change their views on whether local board workshops should be open or closed depending on whether they were in a political minority or majority (Gulf News, 2019). Board members also noted that the bureaucracy put pressure on them to exclude themselves from decision-making processes where there might be a “perceived conflict of interest,” but that it was almost impossible for board members not to have a perceived conflict of interest when they had lived and participated in the community for years.

This issue of open and closed meetings also reveals a tension between board members as trustees or delegates (Pitkin, 1967). Board members who saw themselves more as a delegate or who valued participatory democracy (Drage, 2008) felt that public attendance at meetings would help to inform the public and facilitate public debate, hence allowing more direct participation by electors. Those who viewed themselves as trustees, entrusted to make decisions on behalf of their communities, tended to be agnostic towards or against opening meetings to the public.

Accountability

Participants reported tensions in their role which stemmed from holding the administration to account, working with the bureaucracy to further local board initiatives, being held to account by the public for the work of Auckland Council, while being held to account for their own work as a board. This lack of clarity in the role made it difficult for board members to get consistent advice and support across different areas of work. Board members particularly noted challenges in seeking accountability about Auckland Council services. While generic information was available and recorded in local board agreements available for public scrutiny, local board members struggled to obtain information on specific services or contracts. As noted previously, it was impossible to determine whether contracts were delivering value for money or to inform the conditions of future contracts. Requests for information were declined on the basis that the governance role requires a separation from the administration of contract delivery, or that issues are commercially sensitive. Two participants commented on the absurdity of needing to use the LGOIMA process in attempting to seek accountability from Auckland Council staff, particularly given seeking accountability is defined in their role under the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009. Seeking accountability also created tensions with the staff or fellow board members and could have repercussions for other projects. This was because questioning Auckland Council officers could potentially erode goodwill. However, this may also have been because staff were time poor and therefore had limited time to address queries around both accountability and project development and made choices which reflected their own interests and time constraints.

Efficient use of resource

The local board system implies a more efficient use of resource for local communities. Ideally, decisions are made for the use of resources by the people who live within communities. Local board plans have a local flavour and address local interests, either driven by the interests of the local board members, the staff, or the community. Examples of these projects and initiatives included trees in schools, naming new streets, weed amnesties, or neighbourhood street clean-ups.

Conversely, board members noted the impact of uneven rates revenue. Wealthier areas were far better resourced, and areas of higher deprivation were less well-resourced through the property rating system. Within local board areas, particularly boards with a split caucus that

reflected the makeup of the subdivision and the levels of social deprivation, board members felt that some parts of the electorate were better served than others, depending on which political caucus held the majority, and where legacy services and resources existed prior to amalgamation. This issue of inequity in service continues to be the source of considerable frustration as some areas feel that service provision in their area is neglected (Latif 2021a).

Local board decision-making also resulted in wasted resource when projects were replicated across the Auckland isthmus. While there is the potential for benefits to be negotiated through economies of scale, this did not always occur. Contracts seemed to be negotiated separately with different local boards, and the projects failed to address the interdependence of board areas in the way they were developed. In addition, projects were contracted to providers who had no community connections and the plans lacked the insights and depth that would be possible if they were produced locally. Cited examples of this included Climate Action Plans which have been delivered across Auckland for different board areas. It was also difficult for boards to get support from other boards for initiatives in their area which would also serve these other local board areas, for example, a targeted rate for a swimming pool built in one area but serving a need across local board areas.

Board members also noted that significant resource is allocated for feasibility studies which creates the perception of local board activity, but the earmarked projects fail to be delivered. Waste is attributed to the “use it or lose it” ethos of local board funding. This has fed the perception that it is better for boards to spend their resource allocation on projects which are less important within the financial year than allow it to go into a shared pot that might benefit other functions of Auckland Council or different local board areas.

Responsiveness

Using the Eulau and Karps (1977) model of political responsiveness, discussed in Chapter Three, Auckland Council budgets and processes for local boards seem geared primarily towards political responsiveness. This includes policy development and developing the annual plans and local board plans, as well as the statutory processes including consultation that go with this. Auckland Council decisions on how resource is spent within the operational budget is, however, decided by the administration. For example, the libraries budget is identified as an allocation within different board area budgets but there is little ability for the local board to query staffing, resourcing or opening hours because the library network is managed as a regional resource. There is some limited ability to advocate for changes to operational

expenditure by suggesting that some projects are delayed or brought forward. Boards direct spending to projects they identify as important by allocating discretionary board budgets to these. The organisation of a local board Christmas event would, for example, be allocated in this way. Advocacy for capital expenditure is done through support for the One Local Initiative (OLI) identified in the local board plan.

It is therefore apparent that the allocation responsiveness of the board is not well provided for. While there is some discretionary funding, the budgets for work in a local area are primarily allocated by the governing body or delegated to staff to allocate, with little local board visibility of how this money is actually spent in project delivery. These issues become particularly important when local boards face cuts in funding and are unable to provide meaningful input into which services could be pared back across all of Council's work in a local area, as occurred more recently in the discussion on the 2022-2023 Annual Budget (Johnson, 2022). The ability for boards to provide meaningful input is essential as local boards might accept a lower standard of parks and roading maintenance for example, in order to better support community activities or extended library opening hours. But, as with the comments above related to transparency, without being provided with the granular detail within budget allocations, it is impossible to make these recommendations and for board members to exercise their role in terms of allocation responsiveness.

Service responsiveness occurs in responding to individual constituent queries and problems as they arise during a local board term (for example, addressing poor stormwater management which has caused flooding), or more broadly in resolving issues which the community see as an issue (difficulties for people in crossing a busy intersection, for example). These issues involve specific advocacy with Auckland Council departments and CCOs or require board members to provide a leadership role in community disputes. Still, as noted previously, this function of the local board role suffers from a lack of organisational support and local board members express frustration when issues go months without being resolved, if they are resolved at all. Through this study, it became apparent that advocacy for individual issues are in fact dealt with through allocation responsiveness mechanisms. So, for example, the allocation of funding for the development of cycling infrastructure in an area is used to address the specific safety issue which has been repeatedly raised as a service issue by a local school over what could be several years.

This aspect of the role suffers from a lack of legislative clarity. This means that board members can neglect their service responsiveness role and to take a narrow view of civic

leadership which is restricted to attendance at ribbon cutting events and award ceremonies or issues they take a personal interest in. At the same time, if an issue lacks whole of board support, board members can find themselves isolated in adopting an oppositional advocacy position which is not supported by other board members, even when they try to support the resolution of issues in response to community requests.

Symbolic responsiveness was identified by Eulau and Karps (1977) as the public's view of the perceived potential for advocacy by board members. The significance of this becomes apparent in the challenges described by board members in engaging in oppositional advocacy. Board members varied in how willing they were to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy on their board. Those that did found that there were repercussions, affecting their ability to participate effectively as a member of the local board. Such challenges also impacted on whether they were elected in subsequent elections. In electing local board members, the public should perhaps focus more overtly on symbolic responsiveness, and how willing they think a board member would be to champion or fight for issues the public think is important.

Richardson (2008, p.400) identifies another four features as essential for the effective delivery of local government. These are subsidiarity, social capital, civic leadership and capacity.

Subsidiarity

The subsidiarity principle reflects that decisions should be made at the lowest level of competence and as closely as possible to the affected communities, or as the Maungakiekie-Tāmaki Local Board put in their submission to the Royal Commission (Salmon et al., 2009) “What can be done well at local level should be done at local level” (Richardson, 2008, p.409). While subsidiarity is provided for in the legislation, the prioritisation of regional decisions over local decisions, the lack of resource to develop a local board view, and the lack of compliance with local board decisions, limits the value of these local decisions. Board member decision-making capacity is being therefore progressively eroded thereby making this primarily an advocacy role.

Social capital

This study shows that some boards actively worked at increasing social capital through their work, for example helping community groups to understand and apply for grants or allocating money towards governance training for community groups. This focus varied across board areas. However, the mobilisation of the community for an Auckland Council project, while

Auckland Council failed to resource projects, meant that Auckland Council involvement could, in practice, negatively affect the development of social capital. Board members reported that members of the community were increasingly reluctant to engage with Auckland Council to get support for local initiatives because of previous negative experiences.

In addition, there was an increasing perception that community feedback did not affect decision-making, either within the governing body or by the bureaucracy. In addition, local board decisions were described as “toothless”, according to one participant, because the local board view was not represented in final decisions. This is consistent with McKinlay (1998) who comments on public dissatisfaction with the consultation process. Participants also reported that communities felt over-consulted on some issues which were of little interest, while there was no consultation on issues which affected them materially, such as the rerouting of a bus route. A further issue affecting social capital was that the support of projects was at the discretion of board members. Depending on the makeup and politics of the board, areas of need were neglected in favour of projects which had more visibility or served a more politically active demographic (Forbes, 2019b).

While the three-year local board planning process provides for communities to raise aspirational projects, participants noted that consultations give rise to the same issues that continue to remain unresolved. They also commented that local board plans need to deliver the projects listed and/or be simplified so that they do not set up expectations for initiatives which will never be realised. While boards do build social capital through placemaking consultation activities, inefficiencies in the process, and continued inaction on areas of community concern, lead to erosion of social capital and increased public dissatisfaction, effects also noted by Belfield (2019).

Capacity

In terms of capacity, participants felt that boards were under-resourced to provide a locally focused view on some issues and would have appreciated the opportunity to seek independent advice. Some local board areas, particularly those with greater numbers of wealthier and professionally educated constituents, were able to leverage community members effectively in order to question Auckland Council report recommendations and decisions. There was also substantial variation in the professional skills, governance and interpersonal skills that board members brought to the role. While local board training was developed to address the gaps in governance skills and to build interpersonal competence or

cultural awareness, this training was often poorly attended. In addition, there was a feeling that the training was directed at making board members easier for the administration to work with, rather than providing them with the skills to interact and negotiate outcomes effectively in governance settings. As noted previously there was a strong focus on declaring interests with little discussion of when an “interest” was or was not a “conflict of interest”. Being able to navigate these issues was important when board members were asked to recuse themselves from decisions as a result of political manoeuvring by members of the public or fellow board members with differing views. In contrast to the near obsession over whether local board involvement represented a conflict of interest, there was little discussion of how to ensure that different voices were heard equitably around the local board table.

Civic leadership

The importance of civic leadership has emerged throughout the study as a key feature of local body representation and responsiveness. When members of the community have exhausted other possibilities, they appeal to local board members to help sort out the problem. As one participant explained “We are at the coal face of community” and the first and last point of contact for issues which affect communities, and which cannot, or have not, been resolved by the Auckland Council bureaucracy. This advocacy role is recognised in general terms as falling under community representation and is also repeatedly mentioned as an essential feature of local democracy (Drage 2008, Rao 1998). Despite this there are few statutory parameters which provide for how this is to be done. In addition, there is no formal allocation of funding for this aspect of the role, and it falls on the shoulders of board members to navigate this space with variable support from the Auckland Council administration. The potential and value in local boards embracing a responsive civic leadership role that goes beyond their statutory responsibilities was most apparent in the Covid-19 response. To illustrate, it was local board members in some parts of Auckland where vaccination rates were low, who took a strong leadership role in ensuring their communities were vaccinated (Manhire, 2022; Our Auckland, 2021c), even though this was not strictly defined as something they needed to do.

The support required to exercise this civic responsibility can be substantial and involves topic research, organisation, promotion and facilitation of meetings and. Public events, as well as advising affected parties of possible solutions. With little agility in the bureaucracy, the administration can ignore the resourcing requirements for any work that needs to be done, and the lack of legislative guidelines means that issues are selectively taken up at the discretion of the local board. Consequently, community advocacy may not occur because

board members can claim it is beyond their remit. This allows local boards to avoid adding to their workload, and in some cases avoiding having to deal with politically charged situations which may in fact benefit the most from civic leadership.

When a local board does engage in advocacy on behalf of their community, decisions can fail to be acted on. For example, on Waiheke there was significant local board lobbying and advocacy against a bed tax (Lennon, 2021). The bed tax was seen to unfairly penalise seasonal incomes for small scale holiday accommodation providers in a destination that is highly dependent on visitor income. Although the tax was, in fact, overturned in the appeals court through the actions of a hotel lobby group representing the interests of large Central Auckland hotels, and then reinstated through a decision of the supreme court (Leighton, 2022). The particular issues of concern raised within the local board area around small businesses paying a levy for short seasonal occupancy and how this differs from central city hotels which benefit from year round occupancy were never addressed by the bureaucracy. This provides an example of how the failure of the system to act on board member advocacy erodes the confidence of the community in the local boards – if the local boards are unable to advocate successfully on behalf of constituents, it is unclear what function they serve. This also illustrates the importance of a local voice which can identify any issues that may make an initiative inappropriate for a particular local board area but there needs to be a more effective mechanism for this feedback to be addressed.

Board members who tried to represent their community, when this view was not supported by fellow board members, are described in this study as adopting an oppositional advocacy position. Board members who engaged in oppositional advocacy reported feeling stressed and isolated. In these instances, verbal abuse and exclusionary tactics were prevalent and deployed strategically to manage the board member's behaviour. The code of conduct was also used to manage dissenting board members. Most board participants had a strong sense of agency and adopted a range of skills to deal with the behaviours, as described in the discussion. However, they also felt hurt or unsafe in exercising this aspect of the role.

Hence, board members can feel successful in terms of individual actions they take, but there are systemic issues that need to be addressed in terms of whether the current form of local government, and local boards, provide for effective local democratic participation. The findings suggest that while the semblance of democracy is there with local board members elected within communities, the promise of local board decision-making to resolve local issues often remains unrealised. Decisions are under-resourced or ignored when they conflict with a

regional or standardised approach. Advocacy items are also ignored even when there is significant public outcry and, even if the issue is addressed by the bureaucracy, the local boards find themselves excluded from developing a solution. Consultation processes capture feedback which is a requirement of the statutory processes but does not appear to lead either to project delivery or successful advocacy. The most effective use of local board time and resource described by participants was in identifying uses for board discretionary funding and trying to connect and advocate with people within Auckland Council and the CCOs to promote particular solutions within the organisation. Thus to summarise, while there is the potential for local boards to act in the interests of local communities, in practice this is limited by resourcing and their decision-making authority.

10.3 Political Influence and Local boards

This study notes that choices candidates made in how to stand for election were an important factor in electability. Being voted in was the first and essential step to success in the role. The local board participant experience in this study informs the debate on the role and the influence of political parties in Auckland's local body elections, (Asquith, 2012; Webster et al., 2019). Consistent with Aars and Rinkgjobt (2005), the challenge of standing in large electorate areas makes it more likely that candidates will stand and be elected as part of a group to local boards. These groups tended to consist of loose alignments of left or right of the political spectrum and included political party members. These groups also included non-political party aligned independent candidates who broadly share the same values as the group. Non-politically aligned groups also stood candidates for election. The benefit of standing as a group was identified as sharing resources and leveraging name recognition for candidates who were less well known and were standing with incumbent candidates. Additionally, there were brand recognition effects for groups that had been stable across election cycles. There was also a drive to be elected as a group, to ensure that someone with the same values was selected by the group as the chair.

The level of support provided by more formally constituted groups varied across the political spectrum. Support from the right was generally more covert, with candidates or party members supporting the campaigns financially as individuals. On the left/green side of the political spectrum party volunteers were generally more active and visible in attending and organising fundraisers, getting out the vote, or distributing leaflets. As a consequence of personality differences or differences on a particular issue, or because someone had failed to be selected by a group, an alternative to the political party endorsed group might emerge.

Ostensibly from the same part of the political spectrum, one had greater political party support, but each might support a different person for the chair role. In the 2016 term there was also evidence that some community based groups provided an opportunity for visible migrants to stand for election, with some of these contestants failing to be selected by a more formal politically-aligned group.

The differences in experience of elected board members within a group once elected reflected in-group and out-group biases (Brewer, 1979). Those who were in a political minority often found themselves excluded from both the decision-making and the collegiality of a shared working environment by the majority faction. People who were part of the majority faction but expressed a different opinion on one or more issues also found themselves marginalised. As the board term unfolded, and in preparation for the subsequent term, local board members who spoke against the group position, could find themselves dropped from the team they had stood with at the previous election. Unlike a political caucus within central government, this illustrates the ad hoc nature of these groups where there are variable processes around candidate selection, little transparency in processes, and no recourse to appeal decisions or address bullying within the group or Auckland Council.

Likewise, the above illustrates some complexity in the influence of political parties. Support for candidates from people who belong to political parties occurs across the political spectrum, but this does not necessarily influence their voting patterns on specific issues once elected. Voting in the formal decision-making process once elected generally reflected personal values, the general orientation of the electorate and experience rather than political orientation. This is also evidenced among elected Labour elected members who are the only candidates to have been elected with political party branding. The support for changes to the Unitary Plan or voting on the Living Wage (a campaign promoted by the unions and then developed into a Labour Party initiative) attracted support from elected representatives from across the political spectrum. In fact, as noted previously, the biggest differences in political support for initiatives was noted in terms of age with younger members generally prioritising better public transport and more housing density over better parking and retention of village character.

While elected members tend not to vote along party lines, the oft-quoted refrain that “central government politics doesn’t have a place in local government” (Linda Cooper, previous Auckland Councillor in Niall, 2019), and the implication that it is somehow distasteful to make any links between the two, seems to favour those standing on the right of the political

spectrum. This is because campaigns on the right tend to receive larger individual donations, and generally rely on greater campaign funds, and are therefore able to dominate media advertising and pay for the distribution of leaflets without needing to rely on volunteers. In addition candidates on the right benefit from a lower voter turnout (Terry, 2016). These candidates do not rely as much on mobilising volunteers through a political party structure to door knock and get out the vote. It is therefore in their interest to create the perception that local government elections should not receive political party support. In contrast the progressive left relies on smaller campaign funds and the ability to target non-voters. This requires volunteers, more readily available through a political party structure, and public events to get out the vote. Thus, the left tends to run more visible campaigns, both to increase their visibility to potential volunteers and voters, and as a pragmatic response to less funding.

The 2022 Auckland Mayoral election illustrates the disparity between campaigns on the left and right of the political spectrum. Both leading candidates, Wayne Brown and Efeso Collins stood as independents. Collins was, however, publicly endorsed by both the Green Party and the Labour Party. Wayne Brown had the support of people who were influential in the National and ACT Parties (Osman, 2022) but was never officially endorsed by any political party. Election expenses (Auckland Council, 2023; Niall, 2022) reveal greater election spending on advertising, level of personal contribution and in-kind contribution, and numbers of larger donations for Wayne Brown's campaign.

10.4 Recommendations

The following suggestions emerged from discussions with participants. They reflect the changes that could be made in various areas of local government legislation, and Auckland Council processes, to better support local board members and provide for better democratic participation. These also reflect steps that individuals can take to improve their experience of working on local boards to maximise their likelihood of success in the role in response to RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

10.4.1 Legislative recommendations

The importance of local government in providing civic leadership (Drage, 2007, Reid, 2016; Salmon et al., 2009) features strongly in participant responses. The nature of civic leadership could be described more effectively in the legislation, including reinstating sections 91 and 92

of the Local Government Act 2002 which provide for a long-term community led plan. This foregrounded the importance of community outcomes as well as the obligation to report against these outcomes (removed under the Fifth National government through the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2010). While local board and public input is possible and provided, the Act emphasises budgetary decisions around infrastructure rather than recognising key community concerns or providing a vision for the future of Auckland (see O’Callaghan, 2021).

Given the fact the governing body decides on the extent of local board decision-making, there could be a better provision in local government legislation for how decision-making responsibilities are shared (between local boards and the governing body). This would recognise these as separate tiers of governance, rather than giving the governing body the responsibility to determine activities and funding mechanisms for local boards.

10.4.2 Recommendations for Auckland Council

Greater local board decision-making and funding

After the 2016-2019 term, steps were taken to address greater decision-making by local boards and improve the funding of local boards through the Governance Framework Review (Auckland Council, 2021c). Through this process the governing body agreed to increase local board decision-making and approved changes to funding from July 1, 2022 (Joseph, 2023). This has included greater ability for local boards to manage service delivery, provided the minimum levels of service agreed by the governing body are complied with, and includes the ability to reallocate resources within the funding allocated to each local board. NZD 2.8 million have also been allocated across local boards to support the additional decision-making demands. At the same local board resources are now allocated more systematically to sub-regional initiatives.

The local board funding model was also updated in 2021 to replace the allocations decided in 2013. The change represented a funding allocation based on 80% rates revenue (dropping from the previous 90%), 15% based on deprivation (increasing from the previous 5%) and 5% continues to be based on population.

While these changes are welcome, local board responsibilities are still constrained by funding models and funding decisions made by the governing body. Local boards are also expected to

find savings of NZD 16 million to address their share of the reduction in local board budgets as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic so there is still a funding shortfall (Joseph, 2023). Inequities in funding for local boards should continue to be addressed as the higher allocation of funding based on rates will continue to advantage wealthier areas over both the short and long term. Although unpopular, the allocation of rates based on revenue across local board areas could be removed or reduced from the political decision-making realm. This is because the variable levels of funding across the Auckland isthmus does not currently reflect equity of outcome. The distribution of rates funding by area is, however, unlikely to change significantly when the allocation of rates revenue based primarily on rates collected in each area is made by ward councillors who are responsive to their constituents.

Local board advocacy to the governing body

The current provision for local board input into governing body decisions mean that boards have little time to respond to items on a governing body agenda (Hu, 2023), do not find out about these until the decisions are made, and, even if they do have concerns, can be excluded from presenting at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair of the committee. Given that the governing body make decisions that affect local board areas, it is essential that the advocacy role of local boards is better provided for so that local board feedback is addressed more systematically in governing body decisions. This could require governing body committee agendas to be available for a greater length of time before a meeting than the two days currently provided for in Auckland Council standing orders (Auckland Council, 2022). A suggested timeframe could be one or two weeks. This would give the local boards time to consider any issues of significance and provide formal feedback to the governing body members to feed into their deliberations.

Alternatively, there could be formal local board representation on all committees of the governing body (one local board chair elected to each of the committees) and the feedback could be channelled through these local board representatives. This currently occurs with the Hauraki Gulf Forum which has local board representation. However, given the political nature of local boards, indirect representation might mean that some local board views are lost if represented by the Chair of a different board. A more systematic way for local board views to be heard prior to governing body decisions, would, however, help ensure that better decisions are made. For example, a recent governing body decision not to lower the voting age to sixteen years old, was contrary to the views of the majority of local boards who were in favour of the change and only found out about the decision after it had been made (Hu, 2023).

Subsidiarity and accountability

The findings of this study suggest that for subsidiarity to work in practice, greater resource needs to be managed by local boards to deliver local projects. This has been recognised in the Governance Framework Review (Auckland Council, 2021c). However, the review focused on giving local board members the responsibility to allocate and reallocate existing funding rather than substantially increasing authority to create and fund projects in their area. In addition, the review does not consider how local board members are to hold Auckland Council to account. This relies on a better quality of information being provided to board members to inform their decision-making.

Administrative savings

The cost benefits of restructuring departments and staff turnover could be addressed. Auckland Council seems to be in a perpetual cycle of organisational and department restructure. There is some discussion that the costs of restructuring far outweigh the benefits (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2008), with the loss of good will, the loss of institutional and community knowledge, the loss of good working relationships, and new systems and processes which all causing inertia in the system. Less staff turnover, more consistent project support and resources, and more selective consultation would also help safeguard the social capital generated through Auckland Council projects, thus leading to a more positive view of the public towards the local boards and Auckland Council.

Strengthening relationships across the administration and local boards

The frustrations identified in the legacy councils by Richardson (2008), continue to be an issue. Auckland Council is described by local board members as having a highly managerial culture with little opportunity for staff or local board members to show initiative or develop collegial relationships. Trust was identified by participants as an essential feature of successful outcomes and strong working relationships. Yet, the current organisational choices such as the loss of portfolios, centralising of Auckland Council functions and restructuring of departments, serve to distance local board members from Auckland Council staff and works against the development of trust between staff and elected members. Opportunities for local board members and Auckland Council staff to work on projects together should be encouraged and might include reinstating the portfolio system.

Community engagement

Local board members reported consultation fatigue from communities who feel overly consulted on plans which fail to result in any material changes. There could be simpler processes for consultation and review of the local board plan as this does not change substantially across local board terms.

Steps could also be taken to engage more appropriately with the community on issues that have a material effect on communities. While Auckland Council frequently consults with communities, participant comments reflected that there is a strong managerial culture with little appetite to address community concerns even when this issue has been the focus of significant community and local board advocacy.

In order to fulfil their civic leadership role, local board mechanisms could be more agile. There needs to be funding and dedicated resource to support initiatives which come up during the term of the board and respond to community need as these arise. Currently the system locks in a local board plan in the first six months of the election cycle and requires all funding to be allocated to projects rather than providing flexibility for needs which arise during the term.

Local board member education

Participants felt that the opportunities for learning about the local board role failed to capture the challenges that local board members face. They expressed the need for better training and skills support for elected members, ideally developed by elected members who understand the constraints of the role. The SKEMLG model (see Chapter 7.9) could be used to as a framework to develop these skills. There could also be more formal training opportunities provided through the funding of courses through the Institute of Directors or universities which would help local board members understand and upskill in the role. Following Drage and Webster (2016), there is also an opportunity here for board members to be better informed about the differing requirements of being both a representative and decision-maker in performing their role as elected representative.

Addressing negative behaviour

Participants in this study have described how and when they feel unsafe in their work environment with negative behaviour tolerated as “the cut and thrust of politics.” The perception that elected members are independent of Auckland Council and therefore subject

to different legal protection means that there is little pressure on elected members to manage their behaviour appropriately as they would have to do in any other workplace. However, board members identified that being the victim of negative behaviour interfered with their ability to perform their role, particularly when they were requesting accountability or challenging a local board position. They also commented on how the stress of doing what they felt was right in a context where they felt unsupported affected their well-being. This suggests that in order to perform the role to which they are elected, board members need support when they are targeted by bullying behaviour. By far the most effective strategy identified by board members, and in the literature (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021) was for another person to intercede when negative behaviour occurs or as a soon as practicable thereafter (for example straight after a meeting).

The Workplace Safety Act 2015 provides for the psychological and physical safety of workplaces and a mechanism for the Auckland Council administration to ensure the safety of elected members in the workplace. In practice, this could involve making sure that staff and local board members feel empowered to address the behaviour as soon as it arises, or as soon after as possible, through standing orders or discussion. If this behaviour was addressed in a timely way and called out as unacceptable, people might be more cautious about engaging in negative behaviour towards others. The empowering of the local board staff under the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015), might also reduce the use of the more formal code of conduct process which has been identified as inadequate (see Chapter 9.4.3). This is because it is a cumbersome process which can be manipulated for political gain as well as being generally ineffective in addressing negative behaviour.

10.4.3 Recommendations for policy development and further research

Local board audit

The local boards rely on limited staff resources. This situation was exacerbated by the additional demands placed on the Auckland region both over the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2023 responses to cyclones and severe flooding. The participants expressed frustration at what they perceived as an emphasis on document production rather than community outcomes. An audit of how much resource is spent fulfilling local board statutory obligations, feasibility studies, reserve development and/or community facilities plans, as opposed to providing direct community improvement through creating new resources would be useful. For example, board members commented that it would be more useful to spend money on

the development of a community garden than a climate action plan, or to develop a playground rather than review the reserve management plan. Auckland Council should continue looking for opportunities to provide a more localised bureaucracy and localised responses, particularly for projects which have sub-regional value. To a degree this has been recognised with the provisions made for sub-regional clusters and shared local board funding of projects (see Joseph, 2023).

[Understanding the effects of the separation between governance and management](#)

This thesis has illustrated the lack of data on the elected member experience, particularly in local government. The tensions between the bureaucratic delivery of projects and the local board member experience highlight the weaknesses in the New Public Management reforms and how they apply at the local government level. Concepts that seem plausible in theory, such as the separation of governance and operational decisions, do not hold up very well under the scrutiny of how dual decision-making occurs in practice. The separation of elected member and administrative roles creates a false division between those who are asked to direct the work and those that do the work in this lowest tier of government where representatives are embedded within the communities they serve.

The relationship between elected members and employed staff in the context of local government activity needs to be examined closely. This cannot simply be done through the more “distant” theorising of policy advisors and academics, who are not faced with the daily challenges posed by a dual decision-making model. The voices of the people who are elected and deal with the practical challenges of being caught between their communities and the local government bureaucracy must be heard and their direct experience captured in research (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). As mentioned previously, promoting a culture where both parties are seen as equal and necessary, and the support for them to work together, would result in stronger decisions that have a better chance of lasting success.

Further research on this topic could include an extension of the work in this thesis to interview staff within Auckland Council and CCOs as well as members of the governing body to understand how best to improve outcomes for communities. Staff, particularly those on the local boards, can find themselves in the difficult position of having to mediate between the conflicting demands of different board members, as well as trying to advocate for local board projects within the Auckland Council bureaucracy. The challenge in navigating this space, while potentially dealing with abuse from elected members and the public, is poorly

understood. Such a research agenda would add to the knowledge available on people working in public sector bureaucracy (Crimp, 2017). Interviews with governing body members would also serve to clarify whether the challenges reported at local board level, including challenges around making decisions with limited access to information or seeing accountability, are replicated within the governing body decision-making realms.

Further exploration of difference in representation

Gender parity in local board representation has been achieved in Auckland Council elected representation. Moreover, there have been greater numbers of younger and ethnically non-New Zealand European candidates elected in each successive election term since 2010. Building on the work of Reid (2020b), the intersecting effects of ethnic diversity with gender and age is in need of further study. Additionally, how far descriptive representation leads to the substantive representation of the issues that are of interest to the people they represent would be insightful in the Auckland context. A further contentious arena in need of research is the tensions between calls for the descriptive representation of minority groups in a role that demands political nuance and governance skills, when these are more prevalent amongst those who had been in the role over a number of local board terms, often majority candidates.

10.4.4 Recommendations for political parties and groups contesting elections

The findings show that diversity of elected representation arises primarily from diversity on the political tickets. Standing as a group has been particularly successful for non-New Zealand Europeans with 81.5% of non-Europeans elected in this way (2010-2022) compared to the average of 71% for all elected members from 2007 to 2016 (Webster et al., 2019). There could be a role for political parties and groups to encourage, develop and mentor those from unrepresented demographics to acquire the necessary political skills and navigate the inherent complexities in becoming elected. The findings also point to the fact that underrepresented demographics are forming their own groups or aligning with others to contest elections (for example Independently Papatoetoe).

This issue of descriptive representation is acutely relevant to communities which are ethnically diverse, but for whom the elected slate of candidates does not reflect that diversity. For example, 40.6% of the Hibiscus and Bays local board area were born overseas, with 8.5% Māori descent, 12.3% Asian, 8.3% MELAA (Statistics New Zealand, n.d. -a). Apart from one

Asian member elected in 2016 and 2019, the local board has consistently seen New Zealand European candidates elected since 2010. Political groups have a role to play in ensuring that candidates broadly reflect the demographics of their communities. However, it may require more election cycles for ethnic minority candidates to be elected in greater numbers, given that electability depends on candidate name recognition and brand recognition of the group.

The prevalence of negative behaviour was an unexpected finding in this research that impeded participants' experience of success as an elected local board member. Political parties and groups need to be cognisant of its various forms and play a stronger role in ensuring that candidates and elected members feel safe in performing their role. Bullying behaviours do not occur in a vacuum and should not be tolerated or excused from members of the party or within the group. If such behaviours occur, there must be transparent processes to address this. This could include, at the very least, the discussion of role expectations at the time of re-selection, rather than tacitly condoning the behaviour by selecting candidates who are known to have behaved inappropriately during the previous term. Mechanisms which can provide for this are increasingly prevalent. The Labour Party, for example developed a code of conduct to include bullying in 2019 (New Zealand Labour Party, 2019). For those candidates that belong to a political party, assigning a mentor to candidates, from outside the group standing for election but within the party, would also provide some support to elected members as they navigate the election process.

10.4.5 Recommendations for individual candidates and board members

The findings show that candidates who are serious about being elected need to think through their campaign strategy carefully. For new candidates, standing with a ticket is likely to be far more effective than standing as an individual. This is because candidates standing with a ticket can leverage both brand recognition of the group and name recognition of previously elected or well-known candidates. Similarly, the converse can occur in an environment where trust and reputation matter. Hence, the electorate may be more comfortable with a candidate who has gone through a selection process. Being selected to represent a ticket may require participation with a party or a group for a longer period than the election year. This requires candidates who are serious about being elected to build their profile and community visibility before standing for election. This study has described the knowledge areas and skills that are necessary to be a successful board member, and candidates could use this SKEMLG model to develop their knowledge gaps and ensure they have the necessary acumen and skills for the role.

As noted earlier this study identified the challenges of local board dynamics which affect local board member well-being. Individual board members are especially vulnerable when they adopt an oppositional advocacy position. While the intension behind such an advocacy position may be commendable, they should be prepared for negative behaviours and personal attacks against them. Understanding the conditions under which these negative behaviours occur, and that they reflect a political strategy (even if unacknowledged by the perpetrator), will help board members be more empowered in responding to these. Board members should also understand the role of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 in protecting them from bullying behaviours and demand that the chair of the board and staff manage this behaviour to ensure a safe working environment. Sadly, the role of the Act in managing bullying may only be recognised into the future if it is challenged through the court system as occurred in Australia (Harben et al., 2017).

10.5 Conclusion

This chapter's aim has been to synthesise the key findings from the preceding four findings chapters and discuss the results framed by the following research questions:

RQ1: How is success understood and experienced by those who stand and are then elected to local boards?

RQ2: How do key dimensions of difference (ethnicity, gender, age) affect individual local board member perceptions of success in the role?

RQ3: What factors do elected members perceive as contributing to their success on local boards?

RQ4: How can local board members be supported to feel more successful in their role?

The various ways the 21 elected local board participants understood and experienced success (RQ1) and the factors which affected this (RQ2 & 3) highlight the complexities of the role, the impact of managerialism and the policy driven structural challenges at this lowest tier of local government. The nature and influence of political parties within Auckland Council local body elections adds a further layer of complexity. The broader question of how well this form of local government provides for local democratic participation is deliberated with recommendations linked to each of the research questions. Suggestions for further study and to guide policy work to make local boards more effective and provide for more successful outcomes for local board members have been proposed. The thesis now turns to the final chapter, where the limitations and the significance of the study are addressed.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This study has focused on the experience of local board members in the 2016-2019 term of Auckland Council. In positive and successful local board environments, participants felt they were part of a team, working with administrative staff and responsive to ideas coming from the public. They were able to contribute, raise concerns and implement actions which led to positive change in the interests of their communities. Projects were successfully delivered when they had the support of the board, they were actively championed by one or more local board members who were skilful at navigating their way through bureaucratic processes and where the objective was achievable and resourced.

Problems that defy easy solutions have been identified as wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). This thesis illustrates that positive outcomes are dependent on a range of factors, which are difficult to define and like wicked problems are “‘tricky’ (like a leprechaun)” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 160). The key contribution of this study is that these “tricky” problems are brought to the fore at the individual, organisational (meso) and macro-political levels. By doing so, the thesis contends that an array of factors need to come together to contribute to the alchemy of success for local board members. Chapter Ten has synthesised and discussed the key findings in relation to the research questions. This chapter considers the significance of the study and identifies the key limitations.

11.2 Significance of the study

11.2.1 The local board member voice in the third term of Auckland Council

This study focuses on the third term of Auckland Council and a time unclouded by the issues arising from covid-19 and the adverse weather events in 2022. As such it provides a snapshot of Auckland Council and the 21 local boards within its regional boundaries before the additional financial pressures on Auckland Council posed by the global pandemic.

This is also a time of greater societal and organisational recognition of the importance of diversity in New Zealand (Gooder, 2017; Spoonley, 2015) resulting in specific actions to raise the profile of diversity in political representation (Auckland Council, 2017a). As noted in Chapter Five, Pacific and Māori peoples were increasingly represented and women achieved

parity in elected representation in the 2016 local board elections. Thus, the timeliness of data collection (2016-2019) reflects this important contextual demographic shift. Significantly, the thesis emphasis on success, provides an insight into the value and the challenges of greater diversity in elected representation on local boards within an increasingly demographically diverse region.

To date, qualitative work on elected representation has generally focused on elected members at a higher tier of governance (councillors or elected members in central government) or on the experience of bureaucrats working with elected members (Hartley & Manzie, 2020). Much of this research has taken place outside the New Zealand context. The lowest tier of local government has had less attention hence comparatively, is scantily understood or researched (Drage, 2008). While this study builds on the more recent work by Tester (2014) and in particular, Reid (2020b) it makes a significant contribution to filling a void in understanding and raising awareness of this lowest tier of political governance both in New Zealand and elsewhere. Additionally, it enlarges the body of quantitative data gathered on local government elections in New Zealand. (Allpress & Osborne, 2017; Webster & Fa'apoi, 2017; Webster et al. 2019; Reid, 2020a). Local board members stand and are elected within the localised communities they serve. Given the recognised value of local government (Reid 2018), it is crucial to understand how this tier of governance adds (or fails to add) value to democratic decision-making. This is particularly important as we face the emergence of increasing threats to democracy and democratic participation (Chapple, 2018), and the governing body considers whether to combine some local boards thereby six local boards with a population of over 149,000 (McNaughton, 2024) and what more empowerment could look like (Nash, 2024).

To capture qualitative data from politicians at all levels can be a challenge because of their fear of misrepresentation. Interviews rely on trust, so good relationships with politicians are required to enable free-flowing conversations to emerge. This study has benefitted from a high level of trust between the researcher and the elected representatives who volunteered to participate in this study. Equally important was the insider knowledge of the researcher who had experience of the bureaucratic intricacies of how the administration works in relation to local boards. This personal experience when meshed with those of participants has allowed a unique insight into the performance of local board roles and success (or not) within local government in the Auckland Council region.

11.2.2 Understanding the experience of success for local board members

The study has provided a valuable insight into what success in the role means to local board members. Beyond achieving outcomes, success in a local board context also involves advocacy, be it against proposed initiatives or calls to change processes to facilitate better outcomes. Likewise, the personal and interpersonal factors which contribute to this success have been identified. Trust, the ability to build relationships and to advocate for the public are the key determiners of positive outcomes. This reaffirms and adds a further dimension to the findings around the value voters place on trust in government (Stoker, 2017).

The consequences of political alignment are highlighted in this study. This is despite the fact that many local board members are not politically aligned. Significantly, the study shows that belonging to the dominant local board faction, and how this faction behaved, played a key role in whether local board members felt successful or were able to participate meaningfully in local board work. With the increasing diversity in elected members, and a cumulative emphasis on the responsibilities and opportunities under Te Tiriti, the role of cultural knowledge and a specific need for a bicultural commitment emerge as key areas in need of further development in terms of local board member competence.

The study extends the work of Hartley and Manzie (2020) to understand political astuteness for local board members within local government. Importantly, the skills and knowledge areas identified with success have been developed into a SKEMLG framework. This provides a simple and systematic way for Councils, Local Government New Zealand, and individuals seeking election to develop key skills and competence for work in local government. This framework could be applied in all situations which rely on forms of dual decision-making where there is potential overlap between governance and operational roles, and can be used to inform training, or personal development initiatives.

11.2.3 Insight into the shared governance experience

The findings demonstrate that the shared decision-making between the governing body and local boards is challenging. Of note, is the difficulty in defining which decisions are local and which are regional, a situation made more problematic by the under-resourcing of local boards. Governing body and CCO decisions also systematically overrule or ignore local board decisions. In some cases, local board and public advocacy has been able to reverse decisions. In many cases, however, the local boards feel unheard, which in-turn reinforces the

community perception of being ineffectual because their advocacy has little or no material effect in addressing the issues raised locally. This study raises important questions as to whether the current model is indeed shared and significantly, whether structural changes need to be made to ensure the local board voice is heard at the highest level of Auckland Council.

11.2.4 Insight into the dual governance experience

Dual governance occurs through elected members and Auckland Council staff working together. New Public Management theory adopts a normative approach to the separation between governance and management, insisting that those making governance decisions, should not engage in project delivery decisions in local government. This study illustrates the difficulty of separating governance and management responsibilities at this lowest tier of community governance. As an example, local board members are asked to set direction, provide information and identify suitable participants to enable a project, while at the same time being excluded from any operational decision-making as the project unfolds. Projects were seen to fail from lack of appropriate support or because they were framed in a way that did not meet community aspirations. Weaknesses in the dual governance model results in the Auckland Council losing credibility for project delivery amongst the public and the erosion of trust between local board members and the administrative staff.

A tension is identified between local board members seeking accountability (an aspect of the role involving a critique Auckland Council work) and local board members working together with staff to develop projects. The bureaucracy can avoid acting on local board decisions with little ability of the local board to challenge this. In addition, while much is made of the separation of governance and management in terms of transparency, the findings illustrate that there is a lack of transparency in administrative decisions which are not subject to public or local board scrutiny.

The magnitude of the above tensions in the dual decision-making role is shown by the stress this caused for participants. This was partly from board members carrying additional responsibilities to ensure that their community was sufficiently well-informed on issues, while dealing with accusations of overstepping the governance role by both the staff and fellow board members. The findings here once again emphasise the importance of trust and long-standing relationships in dual decision-making. These findings can inform other dual governance environments, and changes could be made to promote a positive and high trust

environment. This would contribute in a meaningful way to encouraging elected members and staff employed by the bureaucracy to work together more effectively in the interests of communities.

11.2.5 Ways of thinking about difference

This study emphasises the value of having a diverse local board. Life experience strongly influenced local board decision-making and advocacy positions, whether it was the teacher promoting fruit trees in schools, the cyclist promoting safe cycleways, or the older person advocating for disability parking. Greater visible diversity (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity) contributed to social cohesion when board members reflected the demographics of their community. This instilled confidence that their concerns were more likely to be included in the decision-making. The findings reaffirm that board members with diverse backgrounds were better able to relate to a greater number of communities and crucially, were more systematic in thinking about how issues might affect different communities. Younger, non-New Zealand European local board members were conscious of adding value by developing projects which might not have had much visibility previous to their election, for example instituting youth or ethnic festivals. Of note, this study showed how such visibly different participants stood to represent their constituency and work on all kinds of projects. These elected representatives did not like being side-lined into only being able to comment or lead projects which ticked the “diversity” box. At the same time, their ability to act effectively for a minority voice was heavily influenced by whether they were in the political majority or minority on the local board.

While the above suggests that descriptive representation continues to be valued, particularly for communities who are underrepresented such as the Asian community and younger elected members, the wider preference expressed was for difference to be accepted as the norm from which equitable and fair decisions could be made which provide the best community outcomes. This supports the position put by Rao (1998) that as descriptive representation increases, this becomes less of a focus than substantive representation.

An interesting and pertinent aspect of the findings was that the greater the visible diversity on a local board, the less board members reported ageist and sexist comments. Not surprisingly, local boards were described as functioning effectively when board members are supportive of each other. This places the onus on electors as it suggests they should seek to elect board members who value collaborative leadership and come from different backgrounds. This may

be just as important as having governance skills to ensure decision-making is both robust and values the different voices within the group.

11.2.6 Understanding how elected members are selected and elected

The findings show that to be successful, board members must think carefully about their choices around how to align themselves prior to an election. Electable candidates are visible in the community and understand the political landscape. A well-resourced campaign, volunteer support, name and brand recognition also help candidates to become elected. Moreover, community relationships, geography and historical factors affect the kinds of groups that manifest to contest elections in the Auckland Council region. This finding is thus significant for any prospective local board candidates, and signals the need to give careful consideration of how to run for election to ensure a successful campaign.

11.2.7 Oppositional advocacy

The role of oppositional advocacy is an important finding of this PhD. Success depended on the local board members being able to work together to develop an advocacy position. In cases where a board member supported a community position that was unsupported by the board, which is defined in this study as oppositional advocacy, board members could find themselves subjected to negative behaviour. The irony is that board members are vulnerable when they are advocating for community interests, which is a key component of the expectation of the role. Understanding this can help board members who adopt an oppositional advocacy position to ensure that there is sufficient visible community support to justify their position. They can also take steps to ensure that they are mentally prepared and have sufficient personal support for dealing with situations where they may find themselves isolated or subject to bullying for their oppositional advocacy position which disagrees with the majority view.

11.2.8 Negative behaviour

One unexpected finding in this study was the extent and impact of negative behaviour participants experienced. Negative behaviours included bullying, ostracising, and controlling information. Such behaviour was prevalent both within the dominant political caucus as well as towards other elected members on the local board, particularly when elected members vied for roles of increased responsibility, such as the chair role. This resulted in quite

acrimonious interactions which could have negative consequences on relationships throughout the local board term.

As noted above, negative behaviour was also used strategically to undermine board members who engaged in oppositional advocacy. The use of these behaviours illustrates that, negative behaviour in local government has a political complexity. The findings suggest that older New Zealand Europeans are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour, and to target younger, ethnically non-New Zealand European women using ageist or gendered language. Examples from this study show that most of these comments are intentional rather than arising through ignorance. They are designed to undermine the credibility of the person being attacked. This study concurs and reaffirms that of Gillard (2019) around political bullying and the dire need for actions to address rather than excuse such destructive behaviours.

To this extent, this study documents the (lack of) organisational response, leaving individuals to address negative behaviour. The commentary on the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 points out how Auckland Council should use provisions in the legislation to address negative behaviour. That these behaviours arise primarily in situations of oppositional advocacy, gives weight to the contention that such behaviour cannot be attributed to unconscious bias and “fixed” by a training course in cultural awareness. As politically motivated personal verbal attacks, addressing this behaviour would go some way towards safeguarding robust discussion, an essential hallmark of policy development and other aspects of local board work. While there is a fear that free speech will be inhibited by addressing negative behaviour, the importance of staying focused on policy not personality has a parallel which is clearly understood in sporting arenas where players are penalised if they “play the person not the ball.”

11.2.9 Methodological significance

The methodological significance of this study is fourfold. Firstly, the research adopts an intersectionally sensitive perspective. This resulted in a more complete view of the elected member experience and ensured that the perspective of the majority, New Zealand Europeans was not generalised across the cohort of participants. This helped to distinguish between issues that were specific to younger and non-New Zealand Europeans while also recognising that some issues were shared across the 21 participants.

Secondly, the study provides insight into addressing research participant bias (RPE) by using indirect questions. This contributes to an area identified by McCambridge et al.,(2014) as requiring greater understanding and more empirical research. The initial interviews, where people were asked about their experience of diversity, resulted in vague answers or those that could reflect “susceptibility to social desirability” (McCambridge et al., 2014, p. 847). In the main body of interviews, the use of the indirect questions about participant experience of success provided much more nuanced answers. This unobtrusive style of questioning (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) gave local board members an opportunity to talk about issues which were salient to them in contrast to diverting their attention to particular issues of interest to the researcher. This technique could be replicated in situations where researchers want to avoid the risk of normative answers that fail to engage with the nuanced participant perceptions of an issue.

Thirdly, drawing on a critical realist framing which acknowledges that research is not “value-free”, the role of a research insider was identified and explored. The study provides a practical example of how to navigate researcher bias and potential conflicts to facilitate conversations. The case is made that this insider knowledge created the conditions for participants to share deeper insights than would have been possible through using an external researcher who may have been less familiar with the political context or the site of the research.

Lastly, a critical realist framing led to a more detailed analysis of how negative behaviour operates in a governance environment and the causal mechanisms which underly this behaviour. This offers an example of how this approach can be used to inform methods and analysis, thereby adding to an understanding of how critical realism can be used in practice.

11.3 Limitations of the study and steps taken to mitigate these

This study focuses on the experiences of local board members on Auckland Council in the 2016-2019 term. The primary data consisted of 21 semi-structured interviews reflecting the views of 20 members elected in this term and one member who stood down in 2016. Multiple written documents were also used to provide additional insight into the findings and to contextualise the data. The following limitations were observed.

11.3.1 Focus on board member experience

Data is not included from staff, the CEO or the leadership team of Auckland Council, governing body members or the public which would further inform the findings. Some informal interviews were done with staff but given the difficulty of obtaining permissions to interview employees of Auckland Council, their insights were used to provide further detail of Auckland Council processes. The perspective of governing body members and the public were considered out of scope as this study is focused on the local board member experience.

11.3.2 Selective sharing of information by participants

This is a risk, particularly as my own ideological positioning (having green values and being to the left of the political spectrum) was known to the participants. To mitigate possible effects from this, I made it clear to participants that I did not belong to a political party at the time of the interviews. In talking to participants, I made my previous political involvement clear (I had been a member of the Green Party prior to 2015). I also emphasised that the objective of the research was to explore success and what could be done to support local board members to be more successful rather than to understand or comment on the dynamics of particular local boards.

The richness of the responses and the consistency with which participants addressed the issues across interviews, suggest that people spoke frankly about their experiences and that these reflected shared concerns across local boards. As outlined above, being both an elected member and researcher added value to the research. Although steps were taken to minimise researcher bias, the value of the research, given the positioning of the researcher could be challenged. In an additional step to ensure the interview cohort was as diverse as possible, I was careful to establish the diversity profile of all prospective participants, and use this as the basis for whom I would approach to participate. The rationale was to achieve the greatest diversity among elected local board members as well as have participants from different boards, independently of how familiar the local board members were to me.

11.3.3 Lack of relevance

The interviews occurred in the third term of Auckland Council (2016-2019). At the time of the submission of this thesis, April 2024, we are in the fifth term of Auckland Council (2022-2025). As such, the study provides a snapshot of local boards at a time prior to Covid-19. While it can

be argued that the constraints and conditions affecting the role have changed, informal discussions with current local board members suggest that issues around internal resourcing, and the inclusion of a local board viewpoint in regional decision-making, continue to occur. The challenges of dual decision-making including the building relationships and the erosion of trust, still exist and have been exacerbated within a reduced funding environment with greater pressures on resources and departments. Difficulties in negotiating interpersonal tensions and negative behaviours also continue to be a problem in local government, despite the increased awareness that bullying is a problem (Reid, 2020a). However, given the emerging and discussions on local board reorganisation and what this means for representation (Scott, 2023), this study provides insight into the value of local boards and an insider perspective on their value.

11.3.4 Lack of systematicity in processing results

The results have been assembled as a coherent narrative which explores issues that came to the fore in participant interviews. The process of abduction requires theory to be used to provide a plausible explanation of experience. By taking steps to balance the cohort of participants, asking open-ended questions which avoided directing people to particular viewpoints, and asking participants to suggest solutions to problems, the conditions were created for people to share their views frankly. The explanation provided of bullying for example, provides a detailed account of the causal mechanisms involved in bullying and reveals how this operates as a political strategy. The issues discussed have also emerged in the public domain with greater reporting of bullying in local government and the challenges of shared decision-making.

11.4 Final comments

This PhD was started under what seems like a very different political and social climate. Some aspects of life have become significantly more difficult since 2017. The Covid-19 pandemic has substantially reduced the revenue coming into local government. The current mayor is trying to cover a budget shortfall of NZD 375 million (Johnson, 2023) with an approach that relies on selling Auckland Council assets (Auckland Council, 2024). The cost of living has increased by 7.4% over the previous twelve months to September 2023 (Statistics New Zealand, 2023) and followed a 10.3% rise in food prices over 2022 (Prasad, 2023). This has particularly affected young people, thus predominantly Māori and Pacific Peoples who form a more substantial part of the younger demographic in the Auckland Council region (Fraser et al., 2022).

Alongside this, there is an increasing awareness of climate change and the effects of poor environmental management, much of which falls under the responsibility of local government. In the marine environment, water quality at beaches decreases every year while overfishing increases. There are also increasing pressures from unmanaged land based activities with lack of political will to address the issues as documented by the State of the Gulf Reports (Hauraki Gulf Forum, 2004; 2008; 2011; 2014; 2017; 2020). In 2023, severe rain, probably the consequence of changing weather patterns arising from climate change, caused significant flooding in the Auckland Council region, destroying properties, livelihoods and lives. It remains unclear how and when infrastructure will be built and consenting mechanisms and legislation changed to resolve these issues.

From a more positive perspective, since 2017, there are increasing numbers of women in government. Gender parity in ministerial representation was reached with the cabinet reshuffle of April 2023 (McClure, 2023). Women are no longer in the minority in local boards, even though equity in female representation at community level continues to lag in other parts of local government in New Zealand (Casey, 2021). Data collated in this study (see Chapter Five) show that Māori are elected in increasing numbers, and Māori and Pacific populations, in Auckland if not in other parts of the country, have reached numbers in local government in Auckland which reflect the numbers in the population.

At each successive election, there is also increasing age and ethnic diversity in elected representatives, with migrant people becoming increasingly electable. However, the election of younger elected members and Asian candidates continues to seem tokenistic and fails to reflect the numbers in the population. Nor is it clear how greater descriptive representation is leading to better substantive representation. While a female leadership style and collaboration are valued (Sinclair, 2014), women and younger people still find themselves the target of gendered and sexist attacks. This is despite the fact negative behaviours, misogyny and bullying now have a spotlight on them that never existed before. The issues have been identified in central government, local government and in the state sector, but work is still required on how best to address these issues, particularly in a political environment. This PhD has identified under which circumstances this behaviour is the most prevalent, provided strategies to address this and calls for this behaviour to be addressed so that elected members can benefit from a safe working environment.

By identifying both the structural and interpersonal features which affect success for local board members, the limitations in the local board model with its shared and dual decision-

making structures have been described. In 2024, local boards need to be empowered to have a more effective community voice and stronger civic leadership role to ensure that communities are better engaged in the democratic process. Strong local boards have a role to play in maintaining social cohesion and providing community advocacy which should feed into the decision-making process. Consistent with Reid (2018), this study also reinforces the view that local government generally is not delivering on the promise of democracy:

One effect of the reforms has been to limit gradually the ability of citizens to engage with their councils, despite rhetoric to the opposite. The reduction in formal opportunities through which citizens exercise voice, such as the removal of mandatory consultation on annual plans, risks a technocratic and managerial dystopia in which there is little room for citizens' voice and participation (p.14).

These topics are not new, but they continue to be neglected in the development of legislation, policy and Auckland Council processes. Trust and the importance of building trust have been identified as a key feature determining positive outcomes in local government. Severely eroded by New Public Management approaches to governance, steps need to be taken to ensure that trust is restored both between elected representatives and the Auckland Council administration, as well as between Auckland Council and the public.

Political influence, particularly on election outcomes, and how this is mediated by social media is still poorly understood, both in terms of spreading misinformation and in terms of fuelling the fires of misogynistic and racist behaviour. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) point out that Donald Trump “would not have been elected president were it not for the influence of fake news” (p. 213) in the 2016 American presidential election. In New Zealand, available research suggests that negative campaigning is more a feature of the right than left of the political spectrum (New Zealand Social Media Study, 2020). There also seems to be an increasingly strong emphasis on highlighting difference within New Zealand culture and media reports, whether in terms of co-governance issues (MinterEllisonRuddWatts, 2022) or gender issues (Wilson, 2023). While a focus on difference is useful in identifying how groups are marginalised and could participate better, this also needs to be continually interrogated and carefully handled. The recognition of difference should lead to greater understanding of each other and our shared needs rather than replacing of some inequities with others as increasingly seems to be happening with the emphasis on identity politics. The participants alluded to this in their comments, feeling that we should focus on descriptive representation for those that are currently minimally represented (for example youth or Asian elected representatives in Auckland) but that the bigger objective is to create the conditions for all elected members to participate equitably. The study also suggests that a balance needs to be maintained between newer candidates and those that stay in the role for a number of terms.

More experienced board members were seen to have stronger relationships with people within the bureaucracy and a better understanding of using the bureaucratic processes to achieve outcomes and to seek accountability.

He waka eke noa is a Māori whakataukī (saying) which is commonly translated as “we are all in this together” (Perkinson, 2020). This can also be translated as there is only one waka which holds us all; a difference which stresses that we need to focus on our shared interests and to do this with urgency. This requires honest, non-partisan engagement with the issues to promote dialogue, and to ensure that our solutions are as robust as they can be for a changing world. While it has been important to recognise difference and the negative effects of marginalisation, I have a strong view that the focus now has to move to more collective and collaborative engagement to address our common interests for the benefit of humanity and the environment.

I feel very lucky to have been elected to the Waiheke local board between 2013 and 2019 and to have met and continue to meet so many people within my community, central and local government, community groups and elected members who are dedicated to supporting local communities. Together we are the fabric that holds society together. Being in local government is not easy, stuck between intractable problems and poor mechanisms available to solve these problems. This is not helped by a bureaucracy which is minimally responsive, and focuses on statutory responsibilities rather than actively striving to improve community outcomes. Locally elected representatives then become a magnet for dissatisfaction while trying to do their best to address the issues.

I hope this study has provided some insight into the workings of local boards and ideas on how local democracy could be better served. Decisions made within local government can affect people in significant ways and should be better supported to improve the conditions on the ground for communities and the environment in a way that central government is not localised enough to do. To finish with the comment of one participant:

At the end of the day, local government is about achieving stuff and you've just got to get on and do that. Len Brown [first Auckland Council mayor 2010-2016] said that to me once: "If you really want to achieve something, you'll achieve it at local government level rather than central government. You'll have far greater an opportunity at local government level to have an impact on people's lives in community."

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval



AUTEC Secretariat

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D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

8 February 2018

Irene Ryan
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Irene

Re Ethics Application: **18/31 Diversity in Local Board Representation with Auckland Council: The Experiences of Elected Members**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Subcommittee.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 8 February 2021.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEK prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEK Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEK Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEK grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: shirinlives@gmail.com; Vijay Devadas

Appendix B: Interview sample questions Local Board member experience

Main questions followed by SQ (possible supplementary questions)

In this interview we'll be covering a bit about your background, your experiences as a candidate and as a local board member. You can choose not to answer any of the questions.

- 1. Could you describe your background and how you came to be in local government?**
(Possible prompts – where you're from, experiences growing up, family, ethnicity...)

On standing for election

- 2. Is this the first time you're standing or have you stood before?**
SQ: (possible supplementary questions): How was this election different for you?
- 3. Why did you stand for election?**
SQ: What is important to you about this role?
- 4. Did you stand as an individual or in a group?**
SQ: Why did you choose this option?
SQ: What were the challenges in the selection process (if you stood as a group)?
SQ: Was it a difficult process? And
SQ: What do you think contributed to your success?

On being a local board member

- 5. Why do you think you were successful?**
SQ: Were there any challenges? Why was that? How did you address these?
SQ: Is the experience as you imagined it would be?
SQ: What would you do differently if you stand again?
- 6. Can you give an example of where you have been particularly successful as a board member?**
SQ: What contributed to the success?
- 7. Can you give an example where you felt you weren't successful as a board member?**
SQ: What contributed to the lack of success?
SQ: If this issue arises again how will you approach it differently?
- 8. What has been your biggest challenge in the role?**
- 9. Do you have any additional comments or questions you'd like to make?**

The following questions/topics were explored depending on how the interviews unfolded:

Majority/minority experience

- SQ: How do you think your ethnicity/gender/age affects your decision-making?
- SQ: How do you think your ethnicity/gender/age affects how you are perceived?
- SQ: Have you ever felt that unconscious bias is operating in the decision-making process? (explain what this is if necessary)
- SQ: Can you describe the situation?

Confidence/ethical stance

SQ: Have you ever felt strongly about something and spoken about it to other board members?

SQ: Have you ever felt strongly about something and decided not to say anything?

SQ: Can you describe the situation and explain what influenced your decision?

SQ: Have you ever faced a dilemma in voting on a resolution and felt torn about how to vote?

SQ: Can you talk through that process?

SQ: What contributed to the dilemma and what contributed to your voting the way you did.

(You don't need to identify the situation, but talk about the experience).

Representation

SQ: Representation involves taking into account a diversity of viewpoints and needs of different communities. How do you address this in your decision-making?

SQ: Has anything been easier to deal with than you anticipated? Can you give an example?

SQ: Has anything been harder to deal with than anticipated? Can you give an example?

SQ: Voter turnout is around 40%. Why do you think this is and what could be done to increase it in your view?

Group dynamics

SQ: What kinds of strategies do you adopt so that your ideas will be taken on board?

SQ: What is the role of the chair/relationship manager in creating a positive working environment?

Interactions with key stakeholders/consultation

The main interactions as board member are with Council staff and the council organization, board members, the public, community organisations, other board members and the press.

SQ: Have you had any particular challenges/successes in these areas?

SQ: What advice would you give a new candidate dealing with these issues?

SQ: How well do we manage the balance between meeting Council objectives and fulfilling community aspirations?

SQ: How effective is our consultation?

SQ: Do you have any ideas on how it could be done differently?

Support for elected board members from Auckland Council

SQ: How far do you think the information provided by Council on the election process and the role prepared you for the work on local board?

SQ: What have you learnt through the election process and as an elected member?

SQ: What is done well and what could be done better to support local board members?

SQ: Look at the local board role description provided by Auckland Council. Is this an accurate description of the role or is there anything else you would add/remove?

SQ: Do you think at this stage, you would be interested in standing again? What would affect that decision?

Questions that have emerged through the process of interviewing:

SQ: What could local board members do better to support officers or Auckland Council or communicate with the public?

SQ: There seems to be a lack of Trust of each other, Council Officers and the public of Council. Do you have any ideas of how that could be improved?

SQ: Have you had any conflict of interest issues on the board and how were these addressed?

SQ: How could the process of consultation be improved?

SQ: How did you address the bullying/attacks/negative behaviour (depending on what was mentioned)?



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

01/02/2018

Project Title

Local board member experiences on Auckland Council

An Invitation

As you may know I'm elected to the Waiheke Local Board. At the same time I am studying for a PHD at AUT in local board member experiences in Auckland Council. I would really like to interview you about your experiences during the election process and as an elected board member. Taking part is fully voluntary and I hope you will find the opportunity to discuss your experiences quite interesting and useful in your work.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose is for me to gain a PhD in Communication and explore the experience of local board members. I will be exploring and articulating some of the challenges and issues we have in our roles, with a view to understanding and addressing these.

Over a third of New Zealanders live in Auckland, which represents a diversity of communities, attracting both people from other parts of the country and overseas. At the same time voter turnout hovers at 40%. One of the strands of the research is thinking about how we enact inclusivity in our decision-making and to discuss areas where we feel we have been more or less successful.

The results of the research will be provided to you as a summary for personal interest if requested, the PhD will be available online and it will also form the basis of some journal articles.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I have invited one board member from each board to participate based on reading the candidate statements. I am trying to interview people so that there is coverage of the widest range of experience as possible – rural/city boards, different ethnicities, ages, gender, political orientation, new candidates and those standing again. All the contact details have been obtained from publicly available information on the local board pages of Auckland Council or because we have spoken at different council events.

What will happen in this research?

We will meet (or chat over the phone if easier) for about an hour and a half depending on your availability and at a time that suits you. I will ask semi-structured questions and there will be a short tic box questionnaire to fill out (5 mins). This means that there are basic questions but we can also follow your interests. The discussion will be recorded on a digital recorder and then transcribed. This will form the basis of the findings on local board experience. You will not be identified in the research, unless you choose to be. I am looking for patterns of experience that are shared amongst local board members.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to participate in the research, please reply by email and, if possible, fill out the consent form attached. If not, I can bring one to the interview. If you have further questions, please call me or text me on 0212423310 and I can call you back.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I don't think there are any discomforts. Your information is protected, I will be the only person who knows who said what, and you have the opportunity to remove the interview data in part or in its entirety, at which point it will be deleted from the transcript.

What are the benefits?

I hope you will benefit by having the opportunity to discuss and reflect on your experiences. I will gain a qualification, the findings will be shared with Auckland Council and LGNZ, and I hope the findings can be taken on board to improve aspects of the Auckland Council elected member experience.

How will my privacy be protected?

I will not tell anyone that you have taken part and it will be up to you to share this information if you want to. You will not be identified in the findings or acknowledgements unless you wish to be and any identifying information you share about others will be removed from the published research. However, given the small number of participants it is possible that you could be identified.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

1/1.5 hours for an interview, plus the time involved in getting there. You may also like to read and check the transcript. There is also the opportunity for a follow up phone conversation if you would like to add anything further.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

It would be great if you could respond in the next week – before the xx. If you haven't responded, I will send a further email and there is still no reply I will assume you are not interested. However, I would really appreciate it if you could let me know whether or not you would like to take part as soon as you know.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The full results will be published as a PhD and I will provide a summary sheet of the main findings for circulation to Auckland Council, and participants.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Irene Ryan, irene.ryan@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999. You are also welcome to contact me, as I am the researcher.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Shirin Brown, 0212423310, shirinlives@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Irene Ryan, irene.ryan@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEK Reference number *type the reference number*

Appendix D: Participant Consent form



AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: *Local Board Member Experiences*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Irene Ryan*

Researcher: *Shirin Brown*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 01 02 2018
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I am happy for my own name to be used and not changed in the recording of results and published research (please tick one): Yes No
- I would like to have a pseudonym identifier (not my name) for results recording, and in the published research and understand that my name will not appear in the the acknowledgements of the research (please tick one). Yes No
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details):

Address :
.....
.....
.....

Landline or Mobile :/.....

Email :

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee 8 February, 2018, AUTEK Reference number 18/31

Appendix E: Participant Demographic questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

Demographic information : *Underline or fill in as appropriate.*

1. Gender : M F Other : _____
2. Ethnicity/ies _____
3. Age 18-24 25-34 35-40 41-45 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+
4. New Zealand Born Overseas Born
5. Renter Home owner Multiple home owner
6. No qualifications Finished School Bachelor Degree Masters Degree PhD
7. Full-time Part-time Occasional/contract work Only work on local board
8. Employer Employee Self-employed (in addition to board work)
9. Primary caregiver for Children AGES _____
10. Primary caregiver for parents/inlaws Yes No
11. First time elected Second or more times elected Previously elected to government
12. Belong to a political party Which one ? _____
13. Stood as a local board candidate for a political party
Stood as an independent Stood as a local board candidate in a group that was not a party.

Appendix F: Research Safety Protocol

I will be interviewing participants in public places – either a cafe, an AUT office, a Council office, by phone and possibly in their homes.

If any interviews are conducted in people's homes, I will inform my supervisor or my partner when I am starting and ending an interview by leaving a message on their phone.

I do not anticipate any personal safety issues.

Appendix G:

Interview questions for initial five interviews and Shirin's answers (self-reflection)

Main questions followed by SQ (possible supplementary questions)

In this interview we'll be covering a bit about your background, your experiences as a candidate and as a local board member. You can choose not to answer any of the questions.

1. Could you describe your background and how you came to be in local government?

(Possible prompts – where you're from, experiences growing up, family, ethnicity...)

Originally of British and Indo-Persian heritage, I was born in Iran and grew up in Europe, mostly in France and Belgium. Having followed the British education system at Independent schools in Europe, I then went to University in England and obtained a BSc in Natural Science, majoring in philosophy and psychology. After I worked as an English language teacher which took me around the world, with longer periods in Japan, Spain and the Czech Republic and shorter stints in India, Australia and Fiji. I came to New Zealand in 1999 on a working holiday visa. This turned into a work visa and a job as the head of teacher training in a language school. In 2002 I had my first child and moved to Waiheke and had a second child a year later. In 2007 I became a New Zealand Citizen. Over the years, living in a small community, I became more involved in local issues – for example fighting the expansion of a retirement village which was already struggling with managing its sewerage issues, and advocating for slower speeds in my suburb. I was also active in cinema and theatre and supported my children through various extra-curricular activities. In 2009 I completed a Masters in Screen Production at the University of Auckland and started writing theatre and making short films. In 2013, the discussion came up on standing for election and I decided I would have a go.

On standing for election

2. Is this the first time you're standing or have you stood before?

SQ (possible supplementary questions): How was this election different for you?

I stood twice – in 2013 and 2016 and was elected both times. I stood down in 2019 as I felt it was turning into groundhog day and I wasn't as fresh or interested in the issues ... partly because they seemed to remain unresolved ... e.g. We were still unable to fund public toilets through local board resources based on rates of 10,000 people in spite of the importance of these for a visitor destination welcoming up to 40,000 visitors a year. The 2013 election was a landslide from the progressive left and four of the five board members elected to the first local board term, failed to be re-elected. The second election returned three members who were centre left and elected two who were more centre right leaning. Both times I felt like an outsider, the first time I was the only one not elected as part of the dominant "team" and the second local board was dominated by older voices.

3. Why did you stand for election?

SQ: What is important to you about this role?

There was a feeling that Waiheke was losing its character and becoming too pro-development or working too hard for the benefit of a wealthier/more entitled demographic. I stood to find out more about local government, to have a go, and to try and be a voice for a wider, perhaps less wealthy part of the community. I was also conscious that as a migrant, part-Indian and a

woman that I wanted to signal that local government was for everyone. I felt that by being there I was challenging the concept that local government only represents the interests of older, mostly male, New Zealand Europeans.

4. Did you stand as an individual or in a group?

SQ: Why did you choose this option?

SQ: What were the challenges in the selection process (if you stood as a group)?

SQ: Was it a difficult process? And

SQ: What do you think contributed to your success?

I stood as an individual but attended events by City Vision for progressive candidates. I was also aligned with a progressive group on Waiheke but I felt I wanted more independence in being able to fundraise. They felt that I was too independent to work well with them and I felt that one person on their team was particularly negative.

There is no doubt that aligning myself with this group helped to get me elected in 2013. They produced a leaflet where I was mentioned and I think this helped get me the additional votes I needed to poll third. Their main candidate was known for their work in community and came from an old Waiheke family. Another candidate was a midwife and was also well known in the community.

In 2013 social media was just starting to emerge as an election tool and I used Facebook to communicate with the public both through my own public profile page and by contributing to a social media group that had been created for the elections. I participated in the Waiheke Radio Candidate debate, made three videos, including one which was a spoof based on the America's Cup Lean Campaign. In both elections I designed billboards that were more creative than the norm but still fell under the requirements of billboards. I knew that it was important to have high face and name recognition as an outsider, and I wanted to make the campaign fun so I used a number of different strategies to increase my visibility within the community.

I also wrote two plays – *Alice at the Local Board* (a spoof inspired by *the Mad Hatter's Tea Party* from *Alice in Wonderland*) about the public petitioning local board members. This was performed as part of a variety event where other performers, including Warwick Broadhead in one of his last performances, performed an extract from his show, *The Snark*. In 2016, I wrote another play, *Alice Behind Closed Doors*, which focused on the deliberations of local board members with officers.

Through the events I helped develop my profile, increased name recognition and also raised most of the NZD 2,000 I needed to pay for advertising and billboards. It was important for me to feel I was able to raise the cost of the campaign in a process that did not rely on being wealthy enough to stand.

I also spent 3 hours driving around with a local taxi driver talking to passengers, which was a stunt I picked up from the then Norwegian prime minister who spent the day as a taxi driver to canvas public opinion. I also organized a launch at the local Irish Pub where one friend created a Brown Ale called "Through the Looking Glass" and another designed the tap label, to continue the Alice in Wonderland theme.

A friend also photoshopped my face into movie posters which I used for online promotion. I also tested ideas around ethnicity in the election process ... for example asking people to choose whether they preferred a profile picture of me with or without a headscarf.

5. What was your experience of the election process?

SQ: (Were there any challenges? Why was that? How did you address these?)

I really enjoyed standing that first time. It was exciting and fun finding out about the community and organising events, being online and having an opinion. The challenge was first in being part of a group and having to compromise, and then realising I was on my own. I found it much easier standing the second time because I was already in the public arena and the processes of election, the Council processes and the role of community representative were more familiar. It was challenging because I wanted to protect my privacy more.

6. Is the experience as you imagined it would be?

There were a few things that really stood out for me.

Both the encouragement and the lack of encouragement I received from some people. Often the people you expected to support were quite negative – “Do you think you’re ready? What do you have to offer?” This was in a context where it was clear that there was a shortage of credible candidates. On the other hand, people that I didn’t particularly know were very encouraging and supportive.

The change in perceptions once elected was hard. I felt I went from a “community representative” to a “politician” once elected. Suddenly I felt some people became suspicious or felt I was seen a mouthpiece for Auckland Council even though my own attitudes had not changed.

Being in the public arena 24/7 was a challenge. People were curious and also wanted problems to be sorted out. I remember soon after being elected I was sitting staring into a campfire at about 11.30 at night and someone approached me about a problem they had. I was a bit techy while trying to answer. On reflection the next day I realised people want to engage with you, so they try and find common ground and often they don’t know who to turn to. So I developed strategies like – “Send me an email or call me in the morning, I’m not really focusing on this now” or changing it to topics that were more focused on them to deflect the political focus on me in so many conversations.

In the first term I was blindsided by the post-election and pre-first board meeting lobbying, strong-arm tactics and nastiness. I expected the situation to remain collegial and instead it became a powerplay for portfolios, seats on committees and the role of the chair. I felt that this negativity, which was simmering before the election, was exacerbated by post-election jockeying for power and driven by a very masculine approach to needing to dominate the discourse. In the second term there was a similar effect.

I found it interesting that the qualities required to stand for election were very different to those you need to perform the role. To be elected you need high visibility and self-promotion skills. To do the job, a lot of discretion and attention to detail is required to get decisions over the line, and you can’t really talk about decisions publicly until they are announced.

I was interested that **in practice**, the public were often less interested in what you actually did than the fact you were able to be fair and listen to different voices. I felt that at local board level people want to feel their representative is approachable, and they vote for you because they can see themselves coming to you with issues.

7. What would you do differently if you stand again?

I would be less naïve and if I stood again and would position myself to become the chair by developing a group that would support this to contest the election. I would chase opportunities to be on committees better and would have clearer goals.

Were you surprised at the result of the election? Why do you think you were successful?

I think I was most surprised at the lack of support and antagonism and group closure I experienced from fellow board members in what I felt were, or should be, shared goals.

On being elected

8. In terms of being a board member how do you think your perspective similar or different from other board members?

SQ: Can you give an example?

SQ: What particular perspectives do you bring to the role?

I was a working single parent, academic, migrant to New Zealand with experience of living in different parts of the world. As such I had experiential understanding of local government, e.g. How public transport or cycling was organised in different places and what worked and did not. I didn't think I was different until it came to the decision-making where the world experience, my experience as a mother, my critical thinking and reading skills from being an academic meant that I had different life experience. I think I probably had an advantage in that my previous work environment was more similar to being on the board than it was for others. However, I was not as strongly connected into the community as others, and I was also not as politically astute or familiar with a governance role. I often felt that board members tried to put me down or cut me off. Some of the responses to what I said seemed gendered as was the aggression I experienced particularly from one member. I therefore developed strategies to deal with this – for example waiting to speak on an item after everyone else, or acknowledging others and showing how what I said fit in with what they were saying, seeding ideas early and staying on message and not being upset when others were heard repeating an idea that I had introduced.

9. Can you give an example of where you have been particularly successful as a board member?

SQ: What contributed to the success?

In returning the waste contract to a local group and removing it from the waste service provision of a multi-national organisation. This required changing the procurement criteria for the waste contract to increase higher social procurement outcomes and encouraging community to bid for the contract. They had felt messed around by Auckland Council but it was clear that the Council wanted to see some evidence that the community could pull it off so I mediated three meetings between community and the Council so they would put bids in for the contract.

10. Can you give an example where you felt you weren't successful as a board member?

SQ: What contributed to the lack of success?

SQ: If this issue arises again how will you approach it differently?

I often felt I wasn't heard. Or my ideas were not considered fairly. I think it was because one member took a dislike to me and seemed to colour other board member perceptions of me. Because I was able to think quickly and spoke my mind I was also seen as a potential threat.

Success was also dependent on the right conditions existing in Council. For so many things the right conditions did not, however, exist. For example, there was no way of preserving local character and enhancing perceptions of safety by banning double decker buses on small roads. For other things there was no appetite or way of engaging those people who could make a difference, for example introducing price controls on a private company operating ferry services. So although there were problems that should be resolved in local government, there was no mechanism to do so.

In response to the answers to the questions on the participant's background....

11. How do you think your ethnicity/gender/age affects your decision-making?

12. How do you think your ethnicity/gender/age affects how you are perceived?

13. Have you ever felt that unconscious bias is operating in the decision-making process? (explain what this is if necessary)

SQ: Can you describe the situation?

I think I had a greater sense that there was a plethora of ways of solving a problem, not just one answer. I think this comes from travelling, experiencing different ways of doing things and speaking different languages which provides for greater flexibility and allows for more tolerance of different ideas.

I was an arts practitioner, academic, single parent of children who had been at primary and were now in secondary school so I had a good grasp of the challenges facing many different communities.

I tried to be deliberately conscious of considering things from as wide a perspective as possible – how any issue would affect children, young adults, Māori etc. And I think I felt a responsibility to consider a diversity of views and would try and put each issue through a systematic lens, and time permitting would call people in various communities to check if they had concerns or wanted to present on the topic at Public Forum – the public's opportunity to comment on local board agendas prior to decisions being made.

I remember once I came to a meeting and said, I think this but we should also think about a) b) and c). I was told, "If we're all agreed, why are we wasting time talking about it?" I was quite taken aback as I thought it was our responsibility to make sure we had deliberated and considered different possibilities and how items might affect different communities.

14. Have you ever felt strongly about something and spoken about it to other board members?

15. Have you ever felt strongly about something and decided not to say anything?

SQ: Can you describe the situation and explain what influenced your decision?

It could be hard being out on a limb. I was concerned that we gave a hall to a community group to manage without proper process. We were all members of the group, they managed the adjoining space and it was certainly a reasonable decision to make. None-the-less I felt it should have been a contestable process. I didn't really say anything as I felt the decision had been made, they would probably win a contestable process and it was not worth the effort. I was more concerned about the process.

16. Have you ever faced a dilemma in voting on a resolution and felt torn about how to vote?

SQ: Can you talk through that process?

SQ: What contributed to the dilemma and what contributed to your voting the way you did. (You don't need to identify the situation, but talk about the experience).

I voted against moves for Waiheke to become its own unitary authority which was a proposal before the Local Government Commission. Firstly, because I thought the rates would become exorbitant, and secondly because a small council would not be able to afford to fight developers who were intent on subdividing the land. This was a passion project for others and I think it resulted in resentment against me, particularly as I often questioned the processes followed. I agreed that Auckland Council did not always serve Waiheke particularly well, but I did not think that breaking away was the solution.

17. Representation involves considering a diversity of viewpoints and needs of different communities. How do you address this in your decision-making?

As above, putting it through a lens of consideration which includes those directly affected and then other communities or groups which might be affected.

18. Has anything been easier to deal with than you anticipated?

SQ: Can you give an example?

I found reading, asking questions, following up with officers, easy to do and built good relationships. Championing projects and anticipating fishhooks or how a policy might have hidden consequences were things I was good at.

18. Has anything been harder to deal with than anticipated?

SQ: Can you give an example?

I felt I wasn't always clear on what our role was as local board members or the significance of decisions. As such I missed important opportunities to make decisions or influence decisions. I felt the constant undermining by some members of the board and the complicit behaviour of others and officers disheartening. I did not anticipate that the chair provides a shortcut for the organisation to the board and significant choices or decisions never came to board members. I didn't have the support to get things through, even when they were things I knew the most about ... E.g. The local arts centre consultation, so I think the ability for forge alliances was something I struggled with.

19. Voter turnout is around 40%. Why do you think this is and what could be done to increase it in your view?

There was a sense that the local board was powerless. I think this comes from failing to understand how local boards work and that they have a community advocacy role and can lobby within the Council. At the same time the budget is very small, so people often didn't feel it made a difference who was elected. I think we need to raise the profile of local boards, and create more opportunities to educate the public on how board decisions affect communities. This could also include better civic education generally to understand local government, central government, elections and how to participate politically.

Group dynamics

20. Do you more often feel like a core member of the local board group or an outsider?

SQ: What do you think contributes to this feeling?

I usually felt like an outsider. I felt there was a lack of willingness to share or listen to ideas but there were also differences in cultural norms in terms of behaviour, particularly women, that I did not understand. I also think to some degree, it was group closure issue. I was labelled as challenging by one member so others found it easier or convenient to adopt that view. However, we often made decisions unanimously as one solution fell out as the most appropriate. I also voted for items that I did not have strong feelings about to avoid antagonising the group. For example, the local board were keen to support a Rotary project to put in more defibrillators. When I talked to the health services the view was that other things were more useful and it would be hard in practice to access the machines in public places given the security measures around them. Nonetheless, having made my point I went along with the decision.

21. Can you give an example of when you feel you are a core member or an outsider?

I felt like a core member when something was glaringly obvious ... e.g. To support a transport plan for the community. I felt like an outsider when decisions were based on issues that I perhaps had a greater understanding of than others, or which were perhaps counterintuitive and I struggled to understand why I did not seem to get a fair hearing. For example I struggled to explain why the dance group should receive a grant rather than the rugby club (unsubsidised costly activity which does not get support from a national organisation), even though I knew from the experience with my daughter that, dance was considered an unaffordable extra-curricular activity.

22. What kinds of strategies do you adopt so that your ideas will be taken on board?

I used to try and speak last so that I could hear other views before putting my own. Later, I became more strategic. If I was trying to influence the thinking with a new idea, I sometimes felt it was better to throw it in the mix early to avoid any potential loss of face for fellow board members who might express a strong view but would now want to change it. I would try to be as informed as possible, either by calling or emailing officers with questions and would try and anticipate problems. I also found myself working outside the board, supporting communities to access board funding or mediating in situations where support was requested and taking fewer things to the local board for discussion unless it was vital to do so.

23: Do you feel that all members of the group are treated equitably or are heard equally?

SQ: If you think there is a difference, what influences this/why are some members heard more easily than others?

No. As above, this was surprising to me ... both how some members are ostracised or are given fewer speaking turns or interrupted more, and how the same idea could be put forward by someone else and they would be acknowledged for it when I was ignored or undermined for the same idea.

SQ: If you think there is a difference, what influences this/why are some members heard more easily than others?

I think there was a sense of "know your place" which felt very gendered. The men struggled to deal with me as, I understood the issues and was forthright. The other women in the first term were both working full-time and did not attend many of the workshops. Perhaps

because they had stood together as a group, it was easier for the men to adopt a paternal and guiding role with them.

In the second term, the board was older and more conservative so some issues did not occur to them as being relevant. For example, we were asked for a view on whether elected members should have their childcare costs reimbursed for local board work. The chair felt this was not board business and we should write individual letters if we were concerned. I had to make the point that the Council has a reimbursement policy for parking, but gives no support for childcare and that it was important from an equity perspective for the board to support this. Which they then did and the chair wrote a letter to the remuneration authority supporting paid childcare to attend meetings.

24. What is the role of the chair/relationship manager in creating a positive working environment?

The chair has a key role in working collaboratively, sharing information, creating a space for others to respond, not dominating or making decisions without consultation, not bullying or protecting others from bullying, choosing items to be presented to the board, ensuring the right people are made to come to workshops, being proactive in planning rather than reactive, chairing meetings efficiently, ensuring outcomes are clear.

The relationship manager is the eyes into the organisation, so having a positive working relationship with them is very important, as is their relationship with the chair. They should be planning, anticipating, following up on decisions within the organisation. In some instances the relationship manager can be complicit with the chair or the organisation and not share important information, or be seen to pressurise the board into certain decisions. On the other hand I have also witnessed situations where there has been little trust between the Chair and the relationship manager, which makes the relationship with the bureaucracy challenging.

Interactions with key stakeholders

The main interactions as board member are with Council staff and the council organisation, board members, the public, community organisations, other board members and the press.

25. Have you had any particular challenges/successes in these areas?

I think I was able to build good relationships within the bureaucracy of Auckland Council. People took my calls and often gave me valuable insights into holdups or who to talk to or how to get things done. Interestingly, the Auckland Council bureaucracy closed down these opportunities in the 2016 term by a) shutting down portfolio meetings b) removing phone numbers from the Auckland Council database so that officers could only be accessed via email.

What advice would you give a new candidate dealing with these issues?

Whenever an officer comes to a meeting, follow them out and get their card and put their number in your phone with a clue – e.g. Janice, AKL Parks, so you knew how to find them again by searching for the topic rather than the name. Otherwise you were reliant on officers following up and sometimes the questions were lost in translation or they did not respond.

26. How well do local board members manage the balance between meeting Council objectives and fulfilling community aspirations?

Significant Council resource is put into meeting statutory obligations so the secret is to use those consultations to test the pulse of the community or find out about other issues that are of interest. I don't think we meet community aspirations because, as discussed earlier, a) the problems are not resolvable by local boards b) departmental decisions can have significant effects but there is no transparency around them, e.g. Creating a stormwater network to direct stormwater into the sea increases marine pollution and sedimentation but it was impossible to stop this decision. C) decisions are made by CCOs or private business which affect communities and it is difficult to have any input on these decisions, board members often find out about them after the changes have been made.

27. How effective is Auckland Council consultation?

Consultation tends to capture the most vocal voices and particular demographics that a) understand the notion of public participation, and b) have the time to be consulted As such it draws in wealthier older demographics and the outcomes are a poor reflection of community needs generally, e.g. There is generally more support for parking and mobility parking over cycleways.

SQ: Do you have any ideas on how it could be done differently?

Having community organised consultations which tap into networks worked better, e.g. Meeting at the sports club to consult around sport, or at the Resident Association meetings to talk about area plans. This has occurred more frequently in successive local board terms.

Support

28. How far do you think the information provided by Council on the election process and the role prepared you for the work on local board?

There was basic information on standing and the role, but it was really in performing the role that the biggest learnings took place. It is difficult to teach notions around "political behaviour" such as building strategic alliances, or how to deal with bullying.

29. What have you learnt through the election process and as an elected member?

I've learnt to be a much stronger listener and to think about why people are saying what they say, to anticipate and plan for the outcomes I want, to work at including the things I want into the agenda by seeding these early. I've learnt how to make things seem like someone else's idea and to work in the background.

30. What is done well and what could be done better to support local board members?

I think local board staff need to support members more evenly and stand up against bullying of local board members. I think board members also need to stand up for people in the administration so that staff are not bullied.

The IT system often let us down so we could not access papers or store these properly.

There needs to be a change in culture so there's less of a sense of board members needing to be managed, than for their ideas to be facilitated and put into practice. There could be better planning with board members and staff as to how and when something will be delivered so

everyone is clear on the process. Instead there's a feeling that officers go away, things disappear for months and come back with little progress.

The separation of governance and management/project delivery does not seem to work very well in practice for local boards. Often it is the board connections which mean that the consultation is successful or fails or the outcome is achieved. As such the board members could be much more active in this space and it would be great if there was better staff support for this.

However, both in terms of time necessary to resolve issues, the remuneration offered, the pressure on local board members not to be involved in operational decisions, constituent work falls to officers, with local board members supporting as best they can. As a result projects often fall over or fail to get the necessary input either from the community or support from within the organisation.

31. Overall, how would you describe the experience?

It was very positive in that I learnt a lot about community and myself. Being fair and acting with integrity were two things that posed interesting challenges. I resolved these issues by thinking through the effects of decisions as carefully as possible, taking into account as wide a range of circumstances as possible. I also made a conscious decision to articulate why I was supporting decisions, particularly controversial ones so that I could explain the rationale for the decision-making if anyone were to ask. Thankfully, I think this stood me in good stead. I felt I was consistent and that people respected that I tried to consider things fairly, even if I did not always agree with them.

Look at the local board role description provided by Auckland Council.

Is this an accurate description of the role or is there anything else you would add/remove?

I think it is focused on how Auckland Council would like board members to be rather than the specific challenges of being a board member.

31. Do you have any other comments or questions?

No.

Appendix H: Additional detail on codes and memos

As noted in section 4.8.3, information was coded in several places if it was relevant to the topic coded. The following were the main coded categories:

- > Diversity qualities
- > Improving the system
- > Individual Interpersonal issues
- > Individual Micro
- > Institutional Meso
- > Perception of success

Under these main codes additional subcodes were created. All the codes and subcodes used are listed below.

- ∨ Ideas for Improving the system
 - ∨ Macro improvements
 - boundaries and wards
 - Understanding complexity
 - ∨ Meso improvements
 - Wrking other boards
 - ∨ Micro improvements
 - Childcare

- ∨ Individual Micro (done)
 - ∨ Chairing
 - Local leadership
 - ∨ Community connectedness
 - Hands on
 - Importance of local knowledge
 - Dealing with negativity
 - Name recognition
 - ∨ Skills
 - Advocacy
 - Learning
 - Personality and perspective
 - Unique role
 - ∨ Working with others
 - Building Bridges for funding
 - Support to stand
 - Values experience background
 - ∨ Wanting to make a difference
 - Increase diversity

- ∨ Institutional Meso
 - Consultation
 - Contestable advice
 - Councillor LB separation
 - Group dynamics
 - Institutional wisdom
 - Knowing processes
 - Separation governance management
 - The chair can do anything
 - Trust

- Interpersonal issues mainly bullying
 - Dimensions of bullying
 - Age dimension to interpersonal issues
 - Board member response
 - Code of conduct
 - Community conflict
 - competing for roles and responsibilities
 - Effect of negative behaviours
 - Effect on family
 - Effect on self
 - Electing the chair conflict
 - Examples of bullying
 - Gender dimension to bullying
 - Getting support for your ideas
 - Interpersonal dimension
 - longevity
 - Political dimension to interpersonal confli
 - The cut and thrust of politics
 - Chair overstepping
 - predetermination
 - racial
 - managing conflicts of interest
- Negotiating council
 - Conflict with GB
 - Conflict with officers
 - structural system faulty
- Response to bullying
 - Board member response
 - Chair setting up good processes
 - Council actions and training
 - Council staff response
 - natural allies
 - Personal behaviour required
 - political group response
 - Protection from bullying
 - Responsibility of role













































- Maori
 - Pacific
 - Youth
- Perception of success (done)
- Achieving an outcome
 - Working and knowing the system
 - Societal Macro
 - Attitude to government
 - Maori ward
 - Branding parties
 - Impact of representation
 - Press social media
 - Size of electorate
 - subdivision
 - Being a good advocate
 - Being a voice for those that don't have a voice
 - Changing the system
 - Improving Making communities better
 - Leveraging other work
 - Self benefit
 - Spanner in the works
- Processes (done)
- Specific characteristics of boards (as opposed to community boards)
 - Left and Right matters in LG

The note function in NVivo was used to provide additional detail about the meaning of the code or focus of the comments. For example under macro improvements the note states: Includes remuneration, funding campaign and childcare issues. Childcare, for example is identified here as a “macro” issue here which could be remedied by the Remuneration Authority (making childcare a claimable expense). However, it could also be addressed as a “meso” issue. Political parties could supporting candidates with centralised funding for campaigns and care of children so parents can campaign, and the organisation changing meeting times to have fewer evening meetings (so that parents are more likely to be able to attend). It is also potentially an individual issue with parents having family support to look after children so they could attend meetings.

In terms of the practicalities, each interview was opened in NVivo and then segments were dragged and dropped into the various codes.

Memos

Memos were created for each participant and a general impression or focus of the interview was identified. The memo function was also used to describe patterns in the data as well as to identify additional literature required to understand the data, and store or organise information that might otherwise be lost, or keep track of progress. The memos used are listed below using participant pseudonyms.

Name	^
 1 Opal Penzance	
 10 Craig Orchard	
 11 Brigit Dartmoor	
 12 Lara Morris	
 13 Edgar Freidman	
 14 Micky Franks	
 15 Tom Limerick	
 16 Tracy Denver	
 17 Connor Dunleavy	
 18 Ursula Cook	
 19 Bob Dreaver	
 2 Nick Malone	
 20 Dorothy Gardener	
 21 Jackie Grey	
 3 Don Eastwick	
 4 Tom Granger	
 5 Erin Kelly	
 6 Kristina Lyons	
 7 Matthew Smith	
 8 Bruce Chalmers	
 9 Tina Underwood	
 Article notes and summaries	
 Cartoons	
 Differences across interviews	
 Diversity Inclusion	
 Email to Louise on improving pre-inaugural time	
 Getting out the vote - Spinoff	
 Going through dimensions of difference	
 Going through meso 10 9 21	
 Going through nodes 29 12 2020	
 In group out group	
 Intersectionality	
 Knowing processes	
 Local government acts and 4 wellbeings	
 Macro meso micro level of analysis	
 Māori protocol	
 Nervous states	
 NZPSA thesis in progress	Files List
 Observations on Council	
 Party politics and groupings	
 Theories	
 Trust	
 Values	
 What is success	