

Council

Meeting of 19 August 2026

Business Unit: Corporate
Date Created: 25 June 2026

Endorsement of the Council Strategy

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

To endorse the Council Strategy (Annex A) for use as the strategic framing for Council's 2027-37 Long-term Plan (LTP). This will enable the Strategy to be used to help guide prioritisation and decision-making for the LTP project.

Clause 1, Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states that "A long-term plan must, to the extent determined appropriate by the local authority, describe the community outcomes for the local authority's district or region." The Council goals will be included in the draft 2027-37 Long-term Plan as Council's "community outcomes," for consultation with the community.

Some of the strategic priorities within the Council Strategy reference key projects that are yet to be confirmed for inclusion in the LTP. The intention is therefore to endorse the Strategy now, and to formally adopt the Council Strategy alongside the 2027-37 LTP.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohunga

1. That the Council endorse the Council Strategy (Annex A) and agree to its use in setting the strategic direction for Council's 2027-37 Long-term Plan.
2. That the Chief Executive be authorised to approve any final edits required to the Council Strategy (Annex A) prior to its use in setting the strategic direction for Council's 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

Note: The Strategy will be finalised and adopted alongside the 2027-37 Long-term Plan, following consultation and Council's final decisions on the contents of the Plan.

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Approved for submission by:
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General Manager - Corporate

1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 The proposal to refresh Council's community outcomes was first introduced at the 3 December 2025 Council workshop. This presentation introduced the legislative requirements in relation to 'community outcomes,' and our intention to refresh Council's strategic framework to ensure alignment from the goals, through our strategies, our activities, and our performance measures.
- 1.2 During the 3 December 2025 introductory workshop, we looked at some examples of other council's strategic frameworks, including that of the Palmerston North City Council and Whanganui District Council. We agreed that the Whanganui Strategy was a good framework on which to base our new Council Strategy. Elected Members were then presented with five draft Council goals and invited to provide feedback.
- 1.3 The LTP Focus Group did a 'deep dive' into the draft Council goals at their 10 December 2025 meeting. The revised goals and "why" statements were then presented at the 4 February 2026 Council meeting, along with a plan for early engagement to test how the goals resonate with the Manawatū Community.
- 1.4 Early engagement on the new Council goals took place between 20 March and 24 April 2026. The purpose of this engagement was twofold. The dot board was to identify which Council activities are of the highest priority to the community. The submission forms sought feedback on whether the draft Council goals reflect the right priorities, are representative of the people and communities that make up the Manawatū District and are easy to understand.
- 1.5 Participants were invited to provide feedback via the "Make Your Mark" engagement platform for the duration of the engagement period. Participants were also invited to provide feedback via the following in-person engagement events:
 - Family Fun Day – 22 March
 - Community Committee and Marae/Hapū Committees Forum – 1 April
 - Feilding Farmers Market – 10 April
 - Manawatū Community Hub Libraries – 22 April
 - Seniors Hub – 23 April
- 1.6 Interim findings of the council goals engagement were presented to the LTP Focus Group on 22 April 2026. The final results were collated and shared with the LTP Focus Group via Teams on 27 May 2026.
- 1.7 Early engagement results on the Council goals suggested broad support for the overall direction of goals. Core infrastructure and day-to-day services remain the highest priorities for the community. No changes have been made to the goals as a result of the early engagement feedback received.
- 1.8 Members of the LTP Focus Group were invited to provide feedback on the draft Council Strategy, including the strategic priorities, draft 10-year metrics, and Council work areas at the 27 May 2026 meeting, and afterwards via email. No feedback was received.

- 1.9 A designed version of the Council Strategy is now presented (Annex A) for Council to endorse for use in setting the strategic direction for Council's 2027-37 Long-term Plan. Any minor edits to the Strategy requested by elected members at this meeting will be noted and approved by the Chief Executive.
- 1.10 Once the Council Strategy is adopted by Council, alongside the 2027-37 Long-term Plan, the goals it contains will replace the current 'community outcomes' contained in the 2024-34 Long-term Plan. The strategic priorities within the Council Strategy will assist with Council's decision-making by giving increased weight to these matters when making trade-offs. The metrics within the Strategy will be reported on through each Annual Report, providing a means of measuring council's progress against the new Council goals. Linking each goal to council work areas helps to ensure direct alignment between the goals through to the work that is delivered by council staff on behalf of the Manawatū Community.

2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to revise the current strategic direction for Council, as set out in the 2024-34 Long-term Plan. The current community outcomes will remain relevant to Council and this report until such time as the new Strategy is adopted by Council.

3 Discussion and Options Considered Ngā Matapakinga me ngā Kōwhiringa i Wānangahia

- 3.1 The key options available today are:
- (a) Council endorses the Council Strategy, attached as Annex A to this report.
 - (b) Council requests edits to the Council Strategy prior to endorsing it for use in strategic direction-setting for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.
 - (c) Council decides not to endorse the Council Strategy and to retain the current community outcomes.
- 3.2 The main advantage of endorsing the Council Strategy at this stage is that it provides officers with greater certainty regarding the strategic direction Council wishes to take into the development of the 2027-37 Long-term Plan. Endorsement also provides a stronger basis for using the goals and strategic priorities contained within the Strategy to evaluate new initiative requests and inform decisions on levels of service and other trade-offs.
- 3.3 Choosing not to endorse the Council Strategy is not recommended. This would require Council to continue relying on the current strategic direction, established through the 2021-31 Long-term Plan and retained without change in the 2024-34 Long-term Plan, to guide decision-making for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan. This would not reflect the direction developed through elected member input or the feedback received from those members of the community who participated in the early engagement process.

4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

- 4.1 If Council chooses to endorse the Council Strategy, the primary risk is reputational. While the Council goals have been subject to early engagement with the community, the

supporting 'why' statements, strategic priorities, metrics and Council work areas have not. There is therefore a risk that, when considered as a whole, the Council Strategy may not receive the same level of community support as the goals did when considered in isolation. This risk is considered low, given the high level of support for the draft goals during early engagement. The community will also have a further opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed goals when they are incorporated into the draft 2027–37 Long-term Plan for public consultation in March 2027.

- 4.2 Delaying endorsement of the Council Strategy may result in inconsistent decision-making during development of the Long-term Plan, with priorities and trade-offs potentially being assessed against the current community outcomes at one stage of the process and the new community outcomes at a later stage. This risk could be mitigated by agreeing an interim strategic direction for officers to apply consistently until the Council Strategy is endorsed; however, this would provide less certainty than endorsement of the Strategy at this stage.
- 4.3 There is also a risk associated with the use of metrics that are not wholly within Council's control. External economic, social or environmental factors may result in declining trends against some metrics despite Council's actions. This could create a perception that Council is not making progress towards its goals where the underlying causes are outside its direct control. This risk will be mitigated by reporting results alongside appropriate narrative explaining Council's contribution and the broader factors influencing outcomes for the District.
- 4.4 There is a risk that endorsement of the Council Strategy could be perceived as a commitment by Council to fund and deliver all of the strategic priorities identified within it. Some of these priorities relate to projects or initiatives that remain subject to consideration through the 2027–37 Long-term Plan process and may not ultimately be funded. This risk is mitigated by Council endorsing, rather than adopting, the Strategy at this stage. Endorsement enables the Strategy to provide direction for development of the Long-term Plan without pre-empting subsequent decisions on priorities, affordability and funding.

5 Engagement Te Whakapānga

Significance of Decision

- 5.1 The Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by matters discussed in this report. Council has completed early engagement on the Council goals, contained within the Strategy. As mentioned in paragraph 4.1, the public will have a further opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed goals when they are included in the draft 2027–37 Long-term Plan for public consultation in March 2027.

Māori and Cultural Engagement

- 5.2 Early engagement on the draft Council goals was open to the wider community but did not include engagement specifically targeted at Māori or other cultural groups. Targeted engagement will form part of consultation on the draft 2027–37 Long-term Plan, including specific opportunities for iwi and Māori to participate. Feedback received through this engagement will inform the final Long-term Plan and community outcomes.

Community Engagement

- 5.3 As outlined in the Background section of this report, early engagement was undertaken between 20 March and 24 April 2026 to test the draft Council goals with the community. This engagement indicated broad support for the overall direction of the goals.
- 5.4 The early engagement focused on the draft Council goals and did not extend to all elements of the Council Strategy. It also did not constitute formal consultation on the community outcomes proposed for inclusion in the 2027–37 Long-term Plan. The community will have a further opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed goals through consultation on the draft Long-term Plan in March 2027.

6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 Endorsement of the Council Strategy does not have any significant immediate implications for staff resourcing or organisational capacity. The Strategy will, however, provide the strategic framework for the development of the 2027–37 Long-term Plan and will need to be reflected in the advice and analysis provided to Council throughout that process.
- 6.2 If the Strategy is adopted alongside the Long-term Plan, progress against the metrics within it will be reported through the Annual Report process. These requirements are expected to be accommodated within existing organisational planning and reporting processes.
- 6.3 Any staffing or organisational capacity implications associated with new initiatives or changes to levels of service arising from the strategic direction set by the Strategy will be considered through the 2027–37 Long-term Plan process.

7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications from endorsing the Council Strategy. Some of the strategic priorities may require additional funding to deliver, but decisions on whether to fund these will be made through the 2027–37 Long-term Plan process, alongside Council's other priorities and affordability considerations.

8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

- 8.1 Clause 1, Part 1, Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 requires a Long-term Plan to describe, to the extent determined appropriate by the local authority, the community outcomes for its district or region. The proposed Council goals within the Council Strategy (Annex A) are intended to become the community outcomes for the 2027–37 Long-term Plan, replacing those contained in the 2024–34 Long-term Plan.
- 8.2 Clause 2(1)(b), Part 1, Schedule 10 also requires the Long-term Plan to identify the rationale for delivery of each group of activities, including the community outcomes to which that group primarily contributes. The 'why' statements, strategic priorities and Council work areas within the Strategy will help provide a clear line of sight between Council's goals and the activities delivered by Council and support the rationale for delivery of those groups of activities.

- 8.3 Clause 23, Part 3, Schedule 10 sets out related requirements for the Annual Report. For each group of activities, Council must identify the community outcomes to which it primarily contributes and report the results of any measurement undertaken during the year of progress towards achievement of those outcomes. The metrics contained within the Council Strategy are intended to provide a means of measuring and reporting progress towards the proposed community outcomes.

9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

- 9.1 If the Council Strategy is endorsed, it will guide the strategic direction for development of Council's 2027–37 Long-term Plan and will be made available as a supporting document during consultation on the draft Plan.
- 9.2 Further feedback on the proposed Council goals will be invited through public consultation on the draft Long-term Plan in March 2027. Following consideration of submissions and Council's final decisions on the contents of the Long-term Plan, the Council Strategy will be updated as necessary and adopted alongside the 2027–37 Long-term Plan.

10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Annex A – Council Strategy