

Council

Meeting of 21 October 2026

Business Unit: Corporate

Date Created: 28 September 2026

Resident Satisfaction Survey Yearly and Benchmarking Reports

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

To present the Manawātū DC Resident Survey Final Yearly Report 2025-26 and the Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2025-26 for endorsement, ahead of publication on the MDC website.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohunga

That the Council:

1. Receive the Manawātū DC Residents Survey Final Yearly Report 2025-26 (Appendix A) and the Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2025-26 (Appendix B) prepared by Key Research.

AND

2. Approves the uploading of these documents to Council's website.

Report prepared by:

Jeena Baines

Data, Insights and Research Analyst

Approved for submission by:

Ash Garstang

Acting General Manager – Corporate

1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 The residents' satisfaction survey is carried out on a quarterly basis by an external company, Key Research. It is an independent survey, with questions designed to obtain insights and feedback from our community on a range of topics relating to Council's strategic priorities and adopted levels of service.
- 1.2 Many councils across the country carry out resident surveys, with another 22 councils also using Key Research. The survey provides Council with an understanding of residents' perceptions across a range of Council activities and services, helping identify areas that are performing well and those where improvement may be required. Council also considers trends in the data to help distinguish individual fluctuations or outliers from sustained changes in satisfaction that may require intervention.
- 1.3 The annual satisfaction survey results are used as performance measures for some activities in Council's Annual Report. The quarterly results are shared across the organisation and many are used as part of quarterly reporting as well as team discussion points. Some survey measures, such as satisfaction with enquiry handling, also contribute to the Chief Executive's KPIs.
- 1.4 Data collection is managed to achieve defined quota targets based on age, gender, and location (northern and southern communities as well as the Feilding community). Post data collection, the sample is weighted to make it representative of key population demographics based on the 2023 census. The results are therefore weighted to better reflect the demographic and geographic profile of the Manawatū District.
- 1.5 Key Research is contracted to provide the Manawatū District Council with an annual report, quarterly dashboards, and an annual benchmarking report which rates our Council's performance against the 22 other local authorities that also contract Key Research services for their Resident Surveys.
- 1.6 At an aggregate level, the survey has an expected 95% confidence interval (margin of error) of $\pm 4.57\%$. Results based on small respondent numbers should be interpreted with caution as they are subject to greater variation.
- 1.7 Once each quarterly report is received, the results are summarised and presented to Council. This helps Council understand how satisfaction rates are tracking over the year and how they compare with the previous year's benchmark. Comments from each survey also provide useful insight into the general sentiment around the topics raised. Results were presented to Council on 3 December 2025, 18 March 2026, 20 May 2026 and 5 August 2026.
- 1.8 Survey comments are analysed and those that require action or response are included within the presentation. The number of actionable comments generally ranges from 1 to 4, but for the majority of 2025-26 there were none. Raising awareness of these comments means that council is able to fix an issue, investigate a potential problem or improve residents' satisfaction in a particular activity. There were three actionable comments recorded over this 12-month period, and the council officer responses to these comments are included in Appendix C to this report.

2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 This is largely an operational item. Its purpose is to inform the community about council's performance, as perceived by those residents surveyed. This report most closely aligns with council priority of "Value for money and excellence in local government," as these surveys help council monitor performance, and identify issues with current service performance that may need improvement.

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

Key findings from the Manawatū DC Residents Survey Final Yearly Report 2025-26 (Appendix A):

- 3.1 The survey results show an increase of 6% in overall satisfaction between 2025 and 2026. Among those respondents who provided a comment, 25% expressed positive views, stating the "*Satisfied with Council/ Council actions/ enjoy living in the area*".
- 3.2 The three areas with the largest increases in satisfaction rates between 2025 and 2026 were enquiry handling/customer service, stormwater maintenance and overall water management. This past year saw a significant increase in the number of people answering the questions related to customer service.
- 3.3 Of the 90 measures included in the survey, 81% recorded an increase in satisfaction between 2025 and 2026.
- 3.4 In 2025-26, five new questions were introduced asking residents whether they considered Council spending on different service areas to be too much, about right or too little. Overall, the majority of respondents who expressed a view considered spending to be about right across four of the five service areas. "Roads, footpaths and cycleways" was the exception, with 54% considering Council spending to be too little. Further analysis of these results, including differences by location, is provided in Appendix D.

Key findings from the Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2025-26 (Appendix B):

- 3.5 Across the 23 councils included in the Key Research benchmarking report, changes in average satisfaction between 2024/25 and 2025/26 were mixed. For example, average satisfaction with core service deliverables increased from 69% to 71%, while satisfaction with the performance of elected members decreased from 52% to 47%. Overall satisfaction remained relatively stable, increasing from 56% to 57%.
- 3.6 MDC performed above the all-council average across most measures included in the benchmarking report. Overall satisfaction with MDC was 75%, compared with the benchmark of 57%, while overall reputation was 72% compared with 54%. Satisfaction with core service deliverables was 88%, compared with the benchmark of 71%.
- 3.7 The Benchmarking Report highlights the following measures where MDC achieved the highest reported satisfaction score among the 23 councils included in the benchmarking report:
- Reliability of water supply, 96% (benchmark 89%)
 - Treating and disposing of sewage, 96% (benchmark 83%)

- Kerbside rubbish collection, 89% (benchmark 81%)
- Maintenance/quality of roads, 67% (benchmark 51%)
- Parks, reserves and green spaces, 94% (benchmark 83%)
- Sports fields, 93% (benchmark 85%)
- Public toilets/ public conveniences, 86% (benchmark 71%)
- Quality of services, 78% (benchmark 63%)
- District/City is going in the right direction, 77% (benchmark 57%)

3.8 Measures where MDC's satisfaction rating was within five percentage points of the highest reported score:

- Overall water management, 81% (benchmark 70%, top score 86%)
- Clarity of water, 87% (benchmark 81%, top score 91%)
- Overall sewerage/ wastewater systems, 96% (benchmark 84%, top score 97%)
- Reliability of sewerage system, 95% (benchmark 88%, top score 97%)
- Overall roading infrastructure, 69% (benchmark 55%, top score 73%)
- Provision of dedicated walkways and cycleways, 70% (benchmark 66%, top score 75%)
- Availability of parking, 77% (benchmark 61%, top score 80%)
- Playgrounds, 91% (benchmark 84%, top score 93%)
- Cemeteries, 93% (benchmark 85%, top score 98%)
- Dog and animal control, 78% (benchmark 56%, top score 81%)
- Food safety and alcohol licensing, 87% (benchmark 69%, top score 89%)
- Overall reputation, 72% (benchmark 54%, top score 74%)
- Financial management, 59% (benchmark 40%, top score 60%)
- Rates being fair and reasonable, 45% (benchmark 35%, top score 48%)

3.9 The following were topics where MDC's satisfaction rating has either fallen below the benchmark or remained below the benchmark. Included below is the MDC satisfaction rating, rationale as to why the rating is below the benchmark (if known), and what actions council is taking to help improve these satisfaction scores.

- Overall stormwater, 64% (benchmark 65%, top score 77%)

Council has included a significant programme of stormwater upgrades within the Long-Term Plan 2024 – 2034 to address ponding and flooding issues being experienced in Feilding and some of the district's village areas such as Halcombe. Long-term solutions are currently being planned, with several requiring land access and consenting. In the meantime, Council is working to also implement more near-term solutions to provide short term improvements. Satisfaction with the overall stormwater system increased by 14 percentage points between 2025 and 2026.

- Kerbside recycling collection, 76% (benchmark 82%, top score 92%)
- Green waste management, 67% (benchmark 75%, top score 91%)

Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Activity aims to enable a circular economy for all waste streams in the district. Green waste management has seen an increase of 3 percentage points between 2025 and 2026.

- Safety of the roads, 63% (benchmark 64%, top score 79%)

- Availability of footpaths, 60% (benchmark 66%, top score 79%)
- Maintenance/quality of cycleways, 59% (benchmark 61%, top score 75%)

Many of the road safety concerns relate to intersections on State Highways through Feilding. These are challenging for Council to address directly, as Council relies on NZ Transport Agency recognition and partnership to develop long-term improvements. At present, these issues do not meet NZTA's high-priority threshold. The safety of roads saw an increase of 2 percentage points between 2025 and 2026.

Feedback about footpaths mostly comes from rural townships where footpaths don't currently exist. Funding has not been secured to increase levels of service to meet these community expectations.

Feedback on cycleways is mixed, with some residents seeking greater provision while others question the current level of provision.

4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

- 4.1 Not applicable. The recommendations relate to receiving and publishing the independently prepared Resident Satisfaction Survey and Benchmarking Report.

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. No stakeholder engagement is required.

Māori and Cultural Engagement

- 5.2 There are no specific Māori or cultural engagement requirements associated with receiving and publishing these reports.

6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 Council staff will manage any tasks that arise from any resident satisfaction survey as part of a routine work programme.

7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 There are no financial implications with this report, beyond those already being considered by Council as part of the usual Annual Plan and internal improvement processes.

8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

- 8.1 The results of the customer satisfaction survey will inform our reporting against Levels of Service and performance measures set in the LTP 2024-34 in accordance with the LGA 2002.

9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

- 9.1 Once received and endorsed by council, these reports will be uploaded to MDC's website, with some supporting information.
- 9.2 As part of making these reports public, council will release a news item on the website.

10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Appendix A: Manawatū DC Residents Survey Final Yearly Report 2025-26
- Appendix B: Manawatū DC Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2025-26
- Appendix C: Actionable comments and Council responses 2025-26
- Appendix D: Resident perceptions of Council Spending 2025-26