Council

Meeting of 04 November 2026

Business Unit: Community
Date Created: 22 October 2026

Adoption of the Tree Management Policy

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's adoption of the revised Tree Management Policy 2026 (Annex A), which replaces and supersedes the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines. The revised policy modernises Council's approach to tree management, broadens its scope to trees on Council-owned and managed land, and establishes a clearer governance and decision-making framework for planting, maintenance, retention, removal and long-term tree stewardship.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohinga

1. That Council adopts the Tree Management Policy 2026 (Annex A), replacing and superseding the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines (P282).

   AND

2. That Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive to make minor editorial amendments to the Tree Management Policy prior to publication, provided those amendments do not alter the policy's intent.

   AND

3. That Council notes that operational guidelines, technical standards and supporting tools may be maintained and updated administratively in accordance with Council delegations and do not form part of the Council-adopted policy.

   OR

4. That Council does not adopt the proposed Tree Management Policy 2026 and retains the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines pending further review.

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1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

1.1 Council's existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines was originally adopted in 2003 and was most recently reconfirmed on 4 February 2021. The policy provides direction for roadside planting and associated tree management activities.

1.2 The existing policy primarily focuses on roadside planting and combines overarching policy direction with extensive operational guidance, technical specifications and supporting information.

1.3 Since the policy was developed, expectations around environmental resilience, biodiversity, urban amenity, infrastructure protection and community engagement have evolved. Council's tree management responsibilities also extend beyond roadside planting to trees located across Council-owned and managed land.

1.4 The review has therefore focused on modernising the existing policy, broadening its scope and providing a clearer governance framework for tree management decisions. The intent is not to fundamentally change Council's existing responsibilities, but to improve clarity, consistency and transparency in how trees are managed.

1.5 The revised Tree Management Policy provides a framework for planting, establishment, maintenance, retention, removal and replacement. It also establishes long-term outcomes relating to urban canopy and amenity, environmental resilience and biodiversity, place and access, and long-term asset stewardship.

2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

2.1 The Tree Management Policy supports the priority *An environment to be proud of* by providing a framework for the responsible management of trees on Council-owned and managed land. It recognises the contribution of trees to biodiversity, environmental resilience, urban amenity and the long-term stewardship of the District's natural and physical resources.

2.2 The policy supports *Infrastructure fit for future* by establishing clearer principles for managing trees alongside roads, footpaths, utilities and other public infrastructure. Appropriate species selection, maintenance and replacement planning help balance the benefits of trees with infrastructure protection and public safety.

2.3 The policy supports *A future planned together* by recognising the importance of community involvement in tree planting and management decisions. It provides for community engagement appropriate to the nature and significance of decisions, particularly where trees contribute to the character and amenity of public spaces.

2.4 The policy supports *Value for money and excellence in local government* by providing a clearer and more consistent framework for tree management decisions. Separating governance-level policy from operational guidance and technical standards also enables

supporting documents to be maintained and updated administratively, within Council delegations.

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

3.1 The review has resulted in a revised policy that provides a broader governance framework for managing trees across Council-owned and managed land, supported by separate operational guidance and technical standards.

3.2 Two options have been considered.

Option 1 – Adopt the revised Tree Management Policy (recommended)

3.3 Under this option, Council would adopt the Tree Management Policy 2026 (P282), replacing and superseding the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines. The policy would be supported by separate operational guidelines, technical guidance and supporting tools maintained administratively in accordance with Council delegations.

3.4 This option would:

- provide a clearer and more consistent governance framework for tree management;
- broaden the policy's scope to trees across Council-owned and managed land;
- strengthen decision-making criteria for planting, maintenance, retention, removal and replacement;
- clarify decision-making responsibilities, community engagement and escalation arrangements;
- support biodiversity, environmental resilience and long-term tree stewardship; and
- distinguish governance-level policy direction from operational and technical requirements.

Option 2 – Retain the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines

3.5 Under this option, Council would retain the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines (P282) and continue managing trees under the current policy and operational arrangements.

3.6 This option would avoid the need to implement a revised policy but would retain the existing limitations, including:

- a relatively narrow focus on roadside planting;
- the combination of governance direction with extensive operational and technical material;
- less comprehensive guidance for tree management decisions across Council-owned and managed land; and
- reduced flexibility to update operational and technical requirements independently of the Council-adopted policy.

Preferred Option

3.7 Officers recommend Option 1. The revised Tree Management Policy provides a more comprehensive and adaptable governance framework while retaining established principles relating to road safety, infrastructure protection, appropriate planting and tree retention.

3.8 Adoption of the policy would not, in itself, authorise the removal of particular trees, commit Council to additional planting programmes or establish new levels of service. Individual tree management decisions would continue to be assessed on their merits, in accordance with applicable statutory requirements and Council delegations.

3.9 The decision before Council is whether to replace the existing Road Planting Policy and Guidelines with a broader governance framework for tree management. Adoption would support more consistent, transparent and accountable decision-making and improved long-term tree stewardship, without predetermining individual tree management decisions.

4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

4.1 The principal risk associated with adopting the revised policy is that community expectations regarding tree retention, removal and engagement may differ from Council's operational responsibilities and decision-making requirements. This could result in dissatisfaction or reputational impacts, particularly where decisions involve established trees valued by the community.

4.2 This risk is mitigated through clearer assessment criteria, defined decision-making responsibilities and provisions for community engagement and escalation appropriate to the nature and significance of individual decisions.

4.3 There is also a risk in retaining the existing policy. Its relatively narrow scope and combination of governance, operational and technical material may contribute to inconsistent interpretation and decision-making. Adoption of the revised policy would reduce this risk by establishing a clearer and more comprehensive governance framework.

5 Engagement Te Whakapānga

Significance of Decision

5.1 The Adoption of the revised Tree Management Policy is not considered to trigger the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy. The policy establishes a governance and decision-making framework but does not itself authorise the removal of particular trees or materially change existing levels of service.

Māori and Cultural Engagement

5.2 No specific Māori or cultural engagement requirement has been identified for adoption of the revised governance framework. Future tree management decisions involving particular sites or culturally significant trees would be assessed for appropriate engagement at the time.

Community Engagement

5.3 No formal community engagement has been undertaken as part of the development of the policy.

6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

6.1 Adoption of the revised policy is not intended to create significant new operational requirements. Council already undertakes the core tree management activities addressed by the policy, including planting, maintenance, assessment, removal and replacement.

6.2 The policy will, however, provide clearer direction for these activities, particularly in relation to decision-making criteria, responsibilities, community engagement and escalation.

6.3 Operational guidelines, technical guidance and supporting tools will be maintained separately from the Council-adopted policy, in accordance with Council delegations.

7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

7.1 Adoption of the revised Tree Management Policy does not, in itself, commit Council to additional expenditure or establish new levels of service.

7.2 Tree planting, maintenance, removal and replacement activities will continue to be considered through Council's existing operational budgets, asset management planning and relevant Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan processes.

8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

8.1 There are no statutory requirements for this report.

8.2 Tree management activities remain subject to applicable legislation and statutory planning requirements, including relevant provisions of the Manawatū District Plan.

8.3 The revised policy does not override statutory protections applying to trees or Council's separate regulatory responsibilities concerning trees on private land.

9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

9.1 Subject to Council adoption of the Tree Management Policy, staff will:

- Finalise and publish the adopted policy;
- Update Council's policy register to reflect the replacement of the Road Planting Policy and Guidelines;
- Communicate the revised framework to relevant staff and contractors; and
- Maintain supporting operational guidelines, technical guidance and tools in accordance with Council delegations.

10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Proposed Tree Management Policy 2026 (Annex A)