

## Council

Meeting of 17 December 2025

Business Unit: People and Corporate

Date Created: 02 December 2025

## Endorsement of the Environmental Scan

### Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the final version of the Environmental Scan and its supplementary Infographic, and to use these as supporting documents for early engagement on the 2027-37 Long-term Plan. These documents will be made publicly available on Council's website and used during early engagement as background information for those interested in the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

### Recommendations Ngā Tūtohinga

That Council:

1. Endorse the Environmental Scan (Annex A) and the Infographic (Annex B) as supporting documents for the Manawātū District Council's 2027-37 Long-term Plan and agrees that these documents be made publicly available for early engagement and on the Council's website.
2. Agree that the Chief Executive make any minor edits to the Environmental Scan (Annex A) and the Infographic (Annex B) prior to publication.

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Approved for submission by:

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## 1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 The Environmental Scan is a snapshot-in-time document that provides an overview of how the District is functioning in relation to the wider region and nationally. It identifies key trends and outlines internal and external influences that are expected to affect the Manawatū District Council's 2027-37 Long-term Plan. The findings help elected members, Council officers and auditors understand the operating environment in which the Long-term Plan will be developed.
- 1.2 While the Environmental Scan is not a legislative requirement, it is considered best practice by Taituarā, the professional body for local government in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The Environmental Scan provides the foundation for developing Council's strategic direction, including Financial and Infrastructure Strategies and the forecasting assumptions that will underpin the 2027-2037 Long-term Plan. Making the Environmental Scan publicly available also supports transparency and assists the community to understand the environment in which Council operated and the factors influencing long-term planning.
- 1.3 During the induction retreat over 3-4 of November 2025, Elected Members participated in a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental) brainstorm to identify factors they considered relevant to the District now and into the future. Council officers reviewed this information and incorporated any relevant updates into the draft Environmental Scan.
- 1.4 The Environmental Scan was introduced to Elected Members at the workshop on 19 November 2025. Feedback provided during and following the workshop has been incorporated into the final version of the document.
- 1.5 The Environmental Scan has been updated to reflect recent legislative changes and government announcements. Notably, the section on rates capping has been renamed rates banding, with updated information included to reflect the latest policy direction. The Water Reforms section has been updated to note that MDC's Water Services Delivery Plan has been formally accepted. A new section, *Simplifying Local Government*, has also been added to outline the Government's recent announcements regarding proposed changes to local government structures and functions.
- 1.6 Following the completion of the final draft, a supplementary Infographic was developed to provide a one-page visual summary of the key insights from the full Environmental Scan.

## 2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 The Environmental Scan forms an essential early step in the development of the 2027-37 Long-term Plan. Its purpose is to provide a clear and evidence-based understanding of the internal and external factors influencing the District over the next decade. This understanding helps inform Council's strategic priorities, the development of forecasting assumptions, and the overall strategic direction that will shape the Long-term Plan.
- 2.2 The Environmental Scan directly supports all six of Council's current outcomes by identifying trends, risks, and opportunities that influence the wellbeing of the District. The insights it provides will also inform the review and refinement of Council's strategic

priorities as part of the Long-term Plan process. Specifically, the Environmental Scan contributes to each outcome as follows:

- 2.3 **A place to belong and grow:** By analysing demographic changes and social trends, the Environmental Scan helps Council understand the evolving needs of the community and the implications for social, cultural, and recreational services.
- 2.4 **A future planned together:** The Environment Scan provides key information for planning with the community, ensuring that engagement and decision-making are informed by accurate data about the District's opportunities and challenges.
- 2.5 **An environment to be proud of:** Environmental and natural hazard information within the Environmental Scan supports planning that protects the District's natural and physical resources and builds environmental resilience.
- 2.6 **A prosperous, resilient economy:** Economic trends and regional project data in the Environmental Scan highlight factors affecting business growth, workforce capacity, and employment, helping Council plan for a strong, resilient local economy.
- 2.7 **Value for money and excellence in local government:** The Environmental Scan supports evidence-based decision-making, enabling Council to prioritise investment, manage risk, and deliver services effectively and efficiently.

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

- 3.1 Endorse the Environmental Scan and supplementary Infographic in its current form (Recommendation 1). This option enables the documents to be finalised and published immediately, providing a timely evidence base for early engagement and Long-term Plan development.
- 3.2 Endorse the Environmental Scan and supplementary Infographic with minor amendments, delegating authority to the Chief Executive to finalise these changes (Recommendation 2). This option allows Council to make refinements while maintaining momentum and avoiding delays to the Long-term Plan process.
- 3.3 Council could choose to defer endorsement of the Environmental Scan due to the request to allow for significant change. However, if Council was to choose this option rather than delegating authority to the Chief Executive, we would need to present the updated version to Council in early 2026. This could delay publication of the documents, impacting on the early engagement timeline.
- 3.4 The Environmental Scan is a point-in-time document containing the most up-to-date information available to officers at the time of drafting. Because, the information is continually evolving, a decision to defer endorsement may result in further updates being required.
- 3.5 While the Environmental Scan is not a legislative requirement, it is considered best practice and provides essential context to inform forecasting assumptions and support early engagement scheduled for March 2026.

## 4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

- 4.1 There is a reputational risk that some members of the community may disagree with the content of the Environmental Scan; this is mitigated by using evidence-based information and by the document undergoing review by the Strategy Team, wider Council teams, the Executive Leadership Team and Elected Members.
- 4.2 There is a cultural risk that tangata whenua may disagree with the content or narrative in the section on engaging with tangata whenua, especially considering recent changes to Māori representation in local government; this is mitigated through engagement and review by the Kaitohu Aporei (Principal Advisor – Māori).
- 4.3 Overall, the Environmental Scan is considered a low-risk document, and existing mitigations are appropriate and aligned with Council's risk appetite.

## 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 No external engagement with Māori or other cultural groups was undertaken in preparing the Environmental Scan, as the document is a point-in-time summary of the current internal and external operating environment rather than a project requiring consultation. Relevant sections received input and review from Council's Kaitohu Aporei (Principal Advisor – Māori) for accuracy and appropriateness.

### Community Engagement

- 5.3 No external community engagement was undertaken in preparing the Environmental Scan, as this document is a point-in-time summary of the District's current operating environment and does not propose any changes requiring consultation. The Environmental Scan is intended to inform early engagement on the 2027-37 Long-term Plan, at which point the community will have the opportunity to provide feedback.

## 6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 There are no operational implications arising from this report. All work to prepare the Environmental Scan and supplementary Infographic has been completed within existing staff resources. Endorsement of the documents will enable early engagement on the 2027-37 Long-term Plan to proceed in a timely and coordinated manner.

## 7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 The resource requirements are in accordance with existing budget allocations for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

7.2 If Council endorses the recommendation to publish the Environmental Scan and Infographic, any hard copies that are printed will be funded from the existing consultation budget for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

## 8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

8.1 Endorsing the Environmental Scan has no legislative or statutory obligations attached. The document is not required under the Local Government Act 2002 but is recognised as good practice to support Long-term Plan development.

## 9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

9.1 The Environmental Scan and the Infographic will be published on the MDC website and available on site at the MDC building. They will also be used as supporting documents during the early engagement phase of the on the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

## 10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Annex A - Environmental Scan document
- Annex B - Infographic