



# Significance and engagement policy

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## Policy statement

- Council has developed this policy because –
  - community participation in the democratic process is inherently valuable, and
  - community engagement can support robust decision making, and
  - section 76AA of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) requires the policy.

## Operation of the policy

### Date policy becomes effective

- This policy takes effect when adopted by Council.

### Interpretation of terms in this policy

- The following terms and their interpretation apply to this policy:

**decision** means any decision made by or on behalf of Council including decisions made by officers using powers delegated by Council. Management decisions made by officers using delegated powers in order to implement a Council decision are not significant.

**significance**, in relation to any issue, proposal, decision, or other matter that concerns or is before a local authority, means the degree of importance of the issue, proposal, decision, or matter, as assessed by Council, in terms of its likely impact on, and likely consequences for, –

- the District or region:

- any persons who are likely to be particularly affected by, or interested in, the issue, proposal, decision, or matter:
- the capacity of Council to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so.



**significant**, in relation to any issue, proposal, decision, or other matter, means that the issue, proposal, decision, or other matter has a high degree of significance. If something is “significant” then it has a high degree of importance:

- a significant activity is one with a high degree of importance.
- a significant decision is a decision with a high degree of importance.



**Significant decision = high degree of importance**

**strategic asset** refers to an asset or group of assets that Council needs to keep in order to maintain its capacity to achieve or promote its outcomes, and that may be important to the current or future well-being of the community. This includes –

- the assets listed in clause 17; and
- any land or building owned by the local authority and required to maintain the local authority’s capacity to provide affordable housing as part of its social policy; and

- any equity securities held by the local authority in –
  - a port company within the meaning of the Port Companies Act 1988:
  - an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966.

## Purpose

- The purpose of the policy is-
  - to enable Council and its communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular issues, proposals, assets, decisions, and activities; and
  - to provide clarity about how and when communities can expect to be engaged in decisions about different issues, assets, or other matters; and
  - to inform Council from the beginning of a decision-making process about –
    - the extent of any public engagement that is expected before a particular decision is made; and
    - the form or type of engagement that is required.

## Policy principles

- Council is committed to engaging with communities that are directly affected by an issue, matter or proposal.
- Council will engage with communities in different ways because of the diversity of the District’s communities and the expanding number of ways that people communicate.

7. Council will use the special consultative procedure when required to do so by legislation.
8. Council acknowledges the unique perspective of Māori, who are more than an interest group.
9. Council's engagement planning on an issue will take account of –
  - a) Council's prior and current knowledge about the views and preferences of affected or interested parties; and
  - b) the expected costs and benefits of engagement.

### Policy operation

10. All decision-making bodies of Council will decide on the degree of significance of a matter in the course of making a decision or dealing with a matter.
11. Council may reassess the significance of a matter at any point during a decision making process.
12. Any report to Council that requires a decision will include –
  - a) an assessment of the significance of the matter; and
  - b) advice on how Council can meet its engagement obligations.
13. If Council is called upon to make a significant decision quickly and the likely cost of delay will outweigh the benefits of consultation, it may make a decision without the usual public consultation. In these circumstances Council will still engage with District communities by providing information about the decision.
14. Council will publish guidance on the operation of this policy on its website.

### Exclusions

15. This policy does not cover any engagement process that may be required under the Resource Management Act 1991.

### Review and amendment

16. Council will consult on any proposed amendments to the policy in accordance with section 82 LGA unless it considers on reasonable grounds that it has sufficient information about community interests and preferences to enable the purpose of the policy to be achieved.

### Significance

#### Strategic assets

17. Council's strategic assets are significant to Council and its communities. They are –
  - a) water treatment plants, reservoirs and water reticulation system as a whole, including all land, structures, tanks, pipes, pump stations and other plant.
  - b) wastewater treatment plants and reticulation systems, as a whole, including all land, buildings, pipes, pump stations and plant
  - c) stormwater reticulation system as a whole, including all land, structures, pipes, pump stations and other plant
  - d) roading system as a whole including bridges, footpaths, lighting, signs, and off-street parking
  - e) amenity parks, sports fields and facilities under the Reserves Act 1977, as a whole
  - f) District library, as a whole, including branch library buildings, books, the Māori

collection, other special collections, and other lending resources

- g) District swimming pools, as a whole
- h) housing for older persons, as a whole.
- i) other Council properties, as a whole, including all land, buildings and structures
- j) refuse transfer stations
- k) landfills
- l) cemeteries, including all land, buildings and structures owned by Council.

18. Council manages its strategic assets "as a whole". While the asset as a whole is a strategic asset, some components are not necessarily strategic. For example, the roading network is a strategic asset, but individual sections of the network might not be. That means the sale or purchase of individual parcels of land is unlikely to constitute a significant decision.

#### General approach to assessing significance

19. Council's general approach to determining the significance of proposals and decisions in relation to issues, assets, and other matters is to consider the following matters –
  - a) the consequences for a strategic asset
  - b) the financial impact on Council, including the impact on debt
  - c) the impact on rates
  - d) the impact on levels of service, as specified in the current long term plan
  - e) the size of the directly affected community
  - f) mana whenua's relationships with land and water
  - g) the level of community interest.

## Criteria for assessing significance

20. In order to assess extent to which an issue, proposal, asset, decision, or activity is significant or may have significant consequences, Council will consider the following set of criteria. The criteria are a set, and no single point automatically makes a matter significant.

Criteria	
Strategic assets	Does the matter affect a strategic asset?
Financial impacts	What impact would there be on Council's finances? What would be the impact on Council's debt? What would be the impact on rates?
District strategy	How consistent is the matter with Council's long term plan, annual plan or another major Council plan that may be relevant to the matter?
Public interest	How widespread is the public interest?
Mana whenua's relationships with land and water	Is this consistent with the values and aspirations of tāngata whenua with regards to the sustainable management of the District? What impact would this have on mana whenua's relationships with land and water?
Legislation	Are there any legislative requirements that indicate the significance of the matter?

## Thresholds for assessing significance

21. These thresholds provide an initial indication that a matter may be significant:

Thresholds	
Strategic assets	Council would incur capital expenditure of more than 25% of the value of the strategic asset relevant to the decision.
Finances	Council would incur capital expenditure of more than 1% of the total value of Council's assets; or Council would incur operational expenditure of more than 5% of its annual budget for that year; or Council would breach its long term plan debt limit; or Council would reasonably expect to breach its long term plan cap on rates increases in the next year
District strategy	Council would reduce its share in any Council controlled organisation to the point where it no longer had a controlling interest
Public interest	There is District-wide public debate.
Mana whenua's relationships with land and water	The matter relates to the Memorandum of Partnership with tāngata whenua, co-management opportunities and ongoing formal agreements with tāngata whenua.

## Significance and engagement in relation to decisions on water assets

### Significant decisions for water assets

22. Council's Standing Orders require a 75% majority of members present and voting to make a significant decision in relation to water assets.
23. Council will hold a referendum before making any significant decision in relation to water assets.
24. Any of the following decisions in relation to Council's water assets is significant:
- divest ownership of the assets
  - transfer assets and services to a local government organisation
  - contract the management or operation of the supply system as a whole, either to a private interest or a local government organisation
  - establish a joint local government arrangement
  - transfer control of any of the following to any other local government organisation or private interest –
    - the funding policy
    - pricing
    - charging responsibilities
  - depart from Council's not-for-profit charging regime.
25. For the avoidance of doubt, clause 24 c does not apply to contracts for maintenance, renewal and upgrade works, or for professional services, design and contract management.

## Engagement

### Community preferences for engagement

26. To identify community preferences for engagement, Council will draw on feedback and advice from elected members, District stakeholder groups, the District's communities, and the professional expertise of Council's advisers.

### General approach and framework for engagement

27. Council will use the following framework for engagement, taking account of
- a) the significance of the matter
  - b) Council's familiarity with the views and preferences of persons who would be affected by a proposal
  - c) community preferences for engagement
  - d) the types of engagement that are suitable for the matter
  - e) the costs and benefits of any consultation process or procedure
  - f) any legislative requirements for particular forms of consultation

### Engagement principles

28. Council is committed to engaging with communities on issues of concern to them, and especially when they are directly affected by an issue, matter or proposal.
29. Council will determine who it will engage with on any issue bearing in mind the communities that may be affected by a matter.

Purpose of Engagement	Description	Practices
Empower	<p>Council empowers stakeholders and communities to make some decisions directly.</p> <p>Communities elect representatives to make decisions on behalf of the whole District.</p>	<p>Council delegates decision-making powers to community boards.</p> <p>Council is elected to make decisions on behalf of the District.</p>
Collaborate	<p>Council and stakeholders work together from the initial concept to achieve mutual goals.</p>	<p>Memoranda of partnership</p> <p>Working parties</p> <p>Groups established to address specific issues.</p>
Involve	<p>People participate in the process and work directly with the Council to try to identify the best solution.</p>	<p>Council may test policies in the early stages of development with major stakeholders.</p> <p>Council may seek community views on a new community recreation facility.</p>
Consult	<p>Council provides information to communities and consults with them to get feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals. That consultation, together with specialist or technical advice, then informs Council's decision making.</p>	<p>Council uses both formal and informal consultation mechanisms to learn about community views.</p> <p>Informal consultation can take many forms, according to the issue, matter or decision, including, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community meetings</li> <li>• public meetings</li> <li>• feedback via social media</li> </ul> <p>Formal consultation mechanisms include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the special consultative procedure</li> <li>• written submissions</li> <li>• and hearings.</li> </ul>
Inform	<p>Council informs communities by providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened.</p>	<p>Council uses a wide range of tools to inform communities including:</p> <p>Council website and publications including plans, reports, pamphlets, posters, etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public meetings</li> <li>• local newspapers</li> <li>• social media,</li> <li>• and others as required.</li> </ul>

30. Council works in partnership with the tāngata whenua of the District, being the iwi and hapū of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongatai, Ngā Hapū o Otaki (Ngāti Raukawa) and Ngati Toa Rangatira. Te Whakaminenga o Kāpiti will advise on how best to manage the consultation process and to facilitate the relationships between Council and iwi exercising mana whenua.
31. Council will work with other organisations as part of its engagement approach
32. Council will use a range of engagement methods and processes with District communities because –
  - a) different matters have different degrees of significance
  - b) the District has a diverse range of communities
  - c) the District's communities have a wide range of engagement preferences
  - d) Council and the District's communities are increasingly using an expanding range of digital communication channels.
33. Council will support meaningful engagement by defining issues and providing information so that communities may make informed responses.
34. When project consultants are involved in community engagement as part of a project, Council will oversee the process to ensure that the agreed engagement process is followed, and the information is gathered in a way that is valuable to Council.
35. Council will consult on service levels as part of its long term activity planning, and will then continue to maintain District assets without further consultation.

### Engagement planning

36. Council's engagement planning on an issue will take account of –
  - a) Council's knowledge about the views and preferences of affected or interested parties, and
  - b) the expected costs and benefits of engagement.
37. Engagement plans may be changed from time to time to take account of changing circumstances.
38. Engagement plans will be made available on request.
39. Council will use the following *(below)* Engagement decision tree to guide its engagement planning.
40. Council may choose to limit its engagement when –
  - a) it already has a good understanding of the views and preferences of those who are affected; or
  - b) personal information and commercially sensitive information are protected under various statutes; or
  - c) the matter has already been addressed in a Council policy or plan; or
  - d) an immediate or speedy decision is required for public health or safety; or
  - e) emergency works are required; or
  - f) the matter relates to the operation and maintenance of a Council asset and responsible management requires the work to take place, or
  - g) costs are expected to outweigh the benefits.

### Special consultative procedure

41. Council will use the special consultative procedure when required to do so by legislation. This includes reviewing, adopting, amending, or revoking many policies and plans, including –
  - a) the long term plan
  - b) bylaws, (s156(1)(a), LGA 2002)
  - c) a local alcohol policy
  - d) the local approved products (psychoactive substances) policy
  - e) the class 4 venue policy (Gambling Act 2003)
  - f) and others.
42. Council may also use the special consultative procedure when it considers it to be appropriate.

### Explanations for decisions

43. If Council makes a decision that is not consistent with the bulk of public submissions it will explain the reasons for the decision.  
If a Council decision is significantly inconsistent with a policy or plan it has already adopted, it will explain –
  - a) the inconsistency
  - b) the reasons for the inconsistency
  - c) how the policy or plan will be modified to accommodate the decision.

## Engagement decision tree

