OIR: 2627/146

30 October 2026

[redacted]

Tēnā koe [redacted],

Request for Information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) (the LGOIMA)

Thank you for your email of **5 October 2026** requesting the following information:

Regarding the changes to the Otaki pool upgrade and design some in the community feel like they have not been informed about the significant changes to the plan. I have had many enquiries from the Otaki public, questioning when and why it has been changed and who has been consulted on this. It seems a missed opportunity for council to take the community, especially the significant user groups of the pool, along on the journey. Of significance to the community is the shortening of the pool, which was consulted on and not supported by the community.

So in light of this can you please tell me

1. ***When were the plans for the Otaki pool upgrade changed and who was consulted on this change***

   Initial concept plans presented to the Ōtaki Community Board in August 2023 included splitting the existing 33m pool into separate lap and programme pools. While the concept generated discussion, patronage levels at the time were relatively low and did not justify the additional investment required.

   An update was presented to both the Ōtaki Community Board and Council in November 2024 there was no change to the pool configuration.

   On 28 May 2026, there was a public briefing outlining a request that the date for the construction of Ōtaki Pool be brought forward to commence in 2027. The project had progressed to detailed design and did not include splitting the pool. At that time, staff advised Council of significant attendance growth of approximately

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65% since 2023, particularly in Learn to Swim, Water Safety and Kauora programmes.

Staff also highlighted increasing asset renewal risk, escalating energy and maintenance costs, and the need to bring the project forward due to concerns about future capital renewal expenditure.

During that briefing, councillors requested that staff investigate potential enhancements to the facility's water spaces and recreational offering before the design was finalised.

This included;

1. revisiting the pool split concept
2. assessing options for a deep-water pool
3. and investigating the feasibility of a hydroslide.

2. ***Were the original stakeholders and significant user groups included in the discussion around the change in plans, in particular shortening of the pool.***

Following Council's request for staff to investigate potential changes to the pool's water spaces and recreational features in May 2026, informal engagement was undertaken through in-person discussions with representatives from key user groups.

Feedback was specifically sought from youth, Learn to Swim and water safety users, as these groups do not typically participate through the Community Board forum. Support was received from the Youth Council, Learn to Swim parents and the Kauora founder, and was reinforced by messages from local kura and the Kauora founder at Council's September 2006 meeting. The canoe club was also engaged.

3. ***Does this change in plan trigger the Significance & Engagement Policy 2024, particularly because the scope, cost, facilities and period of closure appear to have changed materially from the proposal that was previously presented to the Ōtaki community.***

The project has been included in and consulted on through the last two Long-term Plans (LTPs), and the additional funding approved by Council in September 2026 will come from the existing capital works budget.

There's also a need to progress the work quickly, as ageing plant and equipment are already failing regularly. Delays could lead to further disruptions and additional costs.

Following Council's request in May 2026 to investigate potential changes to the pool's water spaces and recreational features, staff carried out informal

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engagement with key user groups, including youth, Learn to Swim and water safety users. This was reinforced by feedback from local kura and the Kauora founder at Council's September meeting. The canoe club was also engaged.

Given the previous consultation, targeted engagement with pool users and the urgent need to replace failing equipment, progressing without further engagement is consistent with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

4. ***With new investment being available was there any other design ideas put forward that would enable the length of the pool to not be compromised? Such as relocating the learn to swim pool to connect with the toddler pool as they both work off the same temperature, this idea was put forward by the community board of the time. The deep dive pool could be connected to them too.***

   The Community Board did suggest looking at other locations for the programmes pool when the splitting of the pool was originally discussed in 2023. This was investigated, however the most economical way to create a programmes pool is to split the pool, as it also needs to be separate bodies of water to manage water quality incidents. Creating a new pool by the learn to swim pool would be cost prohibitive due to the structural changes required to the building, and the size would be limited.

5. ***How has a deep dive pool been added when there was community desire for a Hydroslide but no money at the time?***

   During the briefing to Council in May 2026, councillors requested that staff investigate potential enhancements to the facility's water spaces and recreational offering before the design was finalised.

   This included;
   1. revisiting the pool split concept
   2. assessing options for a deep-water pool
   3. and investigating the feasibility of a hydroslide.

   Council proceeded with the deep-water/manu pool because it provided the stronger overall investment case. It supports a wider range of uses, including recreation, manu, boat safety, water safety, deep water fitness and is attractive for hirers. It was therefore assessed as meeting Council's Aquatics Finance Policy for cost recovery, whereas the hydroslide did not. Delivering the deep-water pool as part of the main redevelopment is also more cost-effective and less disruptive while the facility is closed.

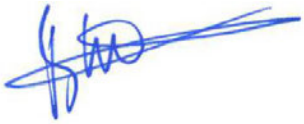
   A hydroslide remains a potential future standalone addition because it can be added later without materially changing the core pool redevelopment.

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I am getting feedback from the community that is very negative. This is due to the lack of understanding and engagement of the new plans with the significant user groups, this should be standard council practice. If properly engaged and consulted with, these groups may well become advocates for the councils plans or alternatively may have practical ideas to put forward.

Thank you for this feedback. On Wednesday 21 October 2026, staff presented to, and engaged with, interested stakeholders and user groups. It was a very well attended and productive meeting. Council has committed to numerous initiatives to keep the community informed moving forward through the project.

Ngā mihi,



Brendan Owens
Group Manager Customer and Community
Kaiwhakahaere Rōpū - Kiritaki me te Hapori

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