OIR: 2627/133

20 October 2026

Ōtaki Community Board

Tēnā koe

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

The Ōtaki Community Board has requested the following information in relation to the Ōtaki Pool project:

1. ***the rationale for the redesign;***

   The redesign reflects changes in community demand and the need to provide a broader range of aquatic services over the facility's next 35 to 50 years life. The proposed configuration improves programme delivery, increases operational flexibility, supports cost recovery, and provides stronger long-term value than retaining the existing layout.

   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.

   Given the complexity of the project and the need to prioritise renewal of the existing facility, staff recommended deferring the pool split. It was noted that the enhancement would be reconsidered in the future should participation and demand increase.

   Accordingly, the developed design presented to the Ōtaki Community Board and Council in November 2024 excluded the pool split and focused on renewing and modernising the existing facility footprint.

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By May 2026, 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 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.

Pool split concept

Staff recommended splitting the pool into 2 zones, a 25m lap pool heated to 27.5^{o}C and a 7m programme pool heated to 32^{o}C.

The 25m lap pool is the standard offering supporting competitive and recreational swim club activities and will enable local swim carnivals to be hosted.

The warmer programmes pool addresses a long-standing limitation of the current facility by providing dedicated warm water space for Learn to Swim, Kauora, hydrotherapy, rehabilitation and wellness programmes. It also improves accessibility for tamariki, older adults and less confident swimmers, while allowing multiple activities to operate simultaneously without competing for the same water space.

Critically, the proposal also improves financial sustainability by enabling additional user-pays programmes and reduces future capital costs through installation of a pool liner, which avoids approximately $450,000 of pool painting renewals over the liner's expected life.

Deep water/manu pool

The deep water / Manu pool was assessed alongside a hydroslide following Council's request for staff to investigate additional aquatic and recreational opportunities.

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The deep water / Manu pool was preferred because it provides a multi-purpose water space that supports water safety education, fitness programmes, aqua jogging, community recreation and leisure activities, while also creating a unique offering not currently available within the local and regional pool network. It also aligns more closely with Council's Aquatics Finance Policy through lower operating costs and broader utilisation / hire opportunities.

Council also considered that the deep water / Manu pool is most cost-effective to deliver now, while the facility is closed and construction works are underway. By comparison, a hydroslide can be added at a later date as a standalone project with relatively limited disruption to pool operations.

For these reasons, Council determined that the deep water / Manu pool provided greater long-term community benefit, operational flexibility and value for money than the hydroslide option.

2. ***the consultation undertaken with user groups and stakeholders prior to the redesign being progressed;***

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

   Particular attention was given to feedback from youth, Learn to Swim and water safety users, as these groups do not typically engage through the Community Board forum. Positive feedback was received from the Youth Council, Learn to Swim parents and the Kauora founder. This was reflected in messages of support from local kura and the founder of Kauora at Council's September meeting. The canoe club was also engaged.

3. ***whether the user groups consulted during the original design process, and the Ōtaki Community Board, were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the revised design;***

   As outlined in the response to question 2, informal feedback was sought from representatives of key user groups following Council's request to investigate changes to the facility's water spaces and recreational features. This included feedback from the Youth Council, Learn to Swim parents, the Kauora founder, and the canoe club.

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4. ***how the outcomes of the original consultation were considered in the redesign process; and***

   The outcomes from the original engagement, especially the need for a warmer programmes pool, contributed to the final design for splitting the pool.

   The Ōtaki Community Board suggested considering other locations for the programme pool when the pool split was originally discussed. This was investigated. Splitting the existing pool was identified as the most economical way to create a programme pool, as constructing a new pool beside the Learn to Swim pool would be cost prohibitive due to the constrained site and the structural changes required to the building.

5. ***what steps will be taken to ensure stakeholder feedback is appropriately incorporated into future project decisions***

   Council acknowledges that meaningful engagement with past, current and future stakeholders is essential when planning community assets with a lifespan of 35 to 50 years. Community feedback will continue to inform project decisions. Council must also balance stakeholder views with contemporary industry expertise, evidence-based planning, and emerging activation and programming trends to ensure facilities remain relevant, financially sustainable, and capable of meeting the needs of future generations.

   To support this, future project decisions will be informed through a combination of stakeholder engagement, specialist aquatic and recreation industry advice, asset and demographic analysis, and consideration of current and emerging participation trends. This approach helps ensure that community assets deliver the greatest long-term value, remain fit for purpose throughout their lifecycle, and appropriately balance the needs of both current and future residents.

Ngā mihi,

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