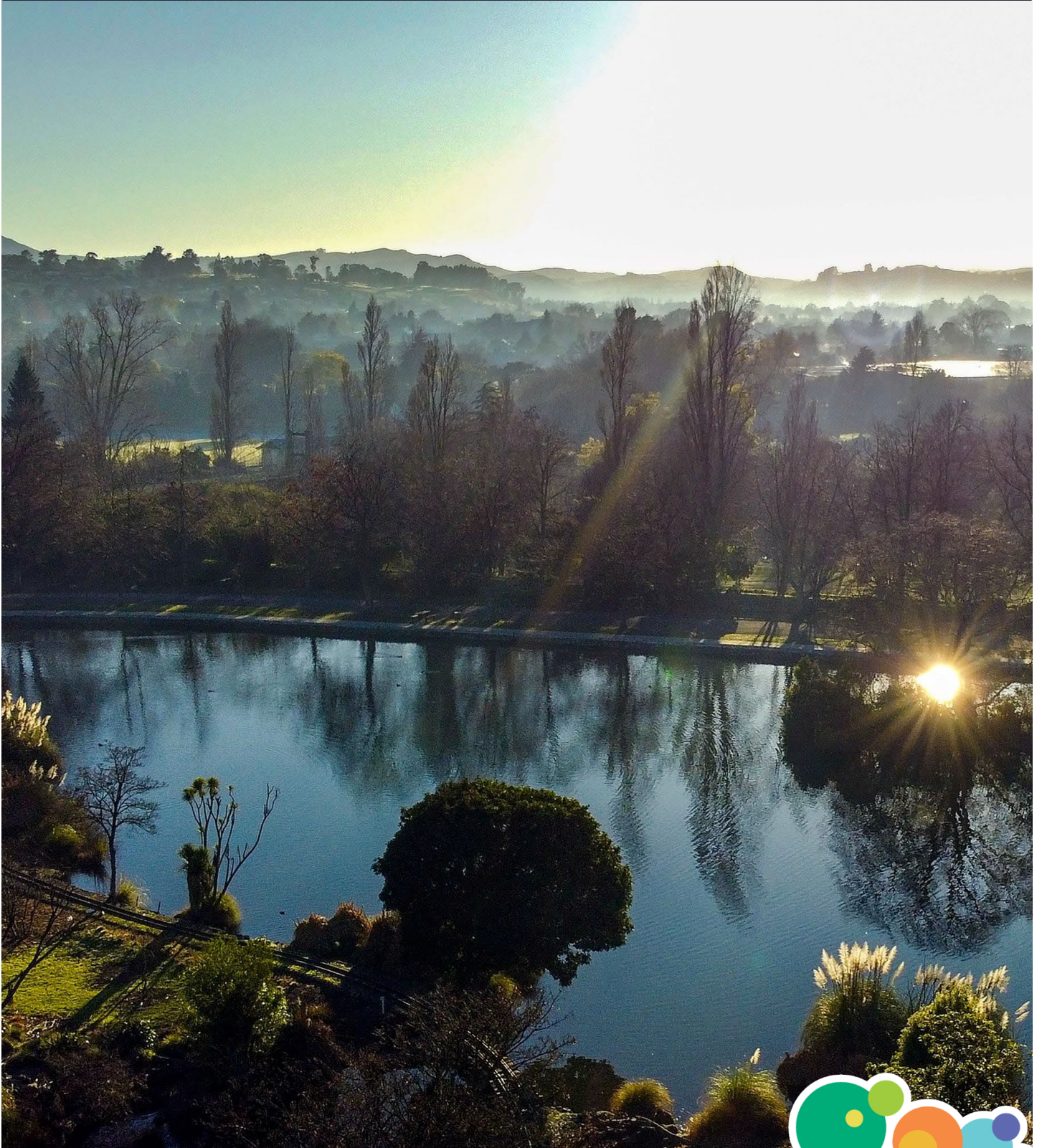


# SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY 2023



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## Policy Statement

The Masterton District Council (the Council) is committed to the local community being involved in making decisions about things that affect their lives. To do this, we aim to genuinely engage the community in a way that reflects the importance of issues, proposals or decisions being considered.

## Purpose

Under the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), Council is required to develop a policy on significance and engagement. That is, how we determine the importance (significance) of an issue, proposal or decision, and how we go about engaging the community as part of decision-making.

## Scope

This policy applies to all Council decisions and activities.

## Principles

This policy is guided by the following principles:

- Engagement with Māori is based on the commitment to establish relationships that go beyond
- Legislative commitments.
- The Council will use a consistent approach to establish the significance of a matter requiring a decision.
- How we engage, and the extent that we engage on matters, will be tailored to reflect the level of significance.
- Our community will be able to easily understand the different ways we, as Council, will seek to engage them on matters.
- Engagement is proactive, inclusive, accessible, a two-way dialogue, and people are aware of and understand the final decisions taken.
- Our decision-makers are well informed, aware of and take into account the community's views.
- Decision-making and engagement processes are clear and transparent.

## Engaging with Māori

Engagement with Māori will be guided by an Iwi, Hapū, Marae, Hapori Māori Engagement Framework, being co-designed by Council and Mana Whenua. The framework will take into account any co-governance or co-management arrangements established by legislation (including Treaty of Waitangi claim settlement legislation) and/or the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga.

# How we determine significance and level of engagement

We will follow a three-step process to determine the significance of a matter under consideration, and how we will engage on that matter, including the extent of the engagement:

1.	<b>Determine significance</b>	We will use agreed criteria to decide if a matter is of higher or lower significance.
2.	<b>Link level of significance to level of engagement</b>	The level of significance will link to a corresponding level of engagement to be undertaken <sup>1</sup> .
3.	<b>Deciding how we will engage</b>	Different methods may be used for different levels of engagement <sup>2</sup> .

## 1. Determine Significance

We will assess the importance of (therefore, the significance of) an issue, proposal or decision by considering how much it could impact people, either people expected to be most affected, or those that have an interest in the matter. We will also consider whether there is any impact on our ability to perform our role, or the costs involved in us performing our role.

The greater the impact, the more significant the issue, proposal or decision will be. We will think about the following things when determining the significance of an issue, proposal or decision:

- number of people affected and/or with an interest,
- level of impact on those people affected,
- level of community interest already apparent for the issue, proposal or decision; or the potential to generate community interest,
- level of impact on Māori, Māori culture and traditions,
- likely impact and consequences on the current and future social, economic, environmental, or cultural well-being of the district or region,
- possible costs/risks to the Council, ratepayers and wider community of carrying out the decision,
- possible benefits/opportunities to the Council, ratepayers and wider community of carrying out the decision,
- level of impact on the capacity of the Council to carry out its role and functions,
- whether the impact of a decision can be easily reversed,
- whether the ownership or function of a strategic asset(s) is affected.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a highly significant issue will prompt more engagement, while a matter of low significance may prompt limited, or targeted engagement.

<sup>2</sup> For example, for a limited or targeted engagement, advertising and website updates may be used. Meanwhile, a more extensive engagement may include mailbox drops, face to face community meetings, and/or Council stalls at community events.

## 2. Link the level of significance to level of engagement

The significance of the issue, proposal or decision will influence how, and to what extent, we engage the Masterton community. That includes how much time, money and effort we will invest in exploring and evaluating options and seeking thoughts and feedback. An important part of this process is ensuring the costs of engagement are appropriate for the level of significance of an issue/matter.

We will think about the best ways to engage people in the conversation, relevant to the issue under consideration, while also considering the extent that community engagement is able to influence the

decision - therefore the value of investing in engagement (e.g. if there is only one or very limited viable options such as a specific change required by new legislation).

We use the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum (Appendix One) to help guide the extent of engagement, and the best ways to engage. Typically, the more significant an issue, the higher the level of engagement, as outlined from left to right in the IAP2 spectrum. This is a baseline, and there will be times when we decide to engage with our community at a higher level, even if not indicated by this policy.

## 3. Deciding how we will engage

There are different ways that we can engage our community. Once we know how significant an issue is, and the extent that our community should be engaged, we will consider the ways that we might do this.

We will build on existing relationships and networks with people and communities and look to extend the range of parties involved in the community engagement as appropriate.

Differing levels and forms of engagement may be needed during the varying phases of consideration and decision-making on an issue or proposal, and for different community groups or stakeholders. Throughout the process, we will review whether the way we're seeking to engage the community is still effective, or whether other methods might work better.

As a general rule, an issue that is determined to be of lower significance will have a less intensive method of community engagement. This might be because it only relates to a small subsection of the community or is at the more operational end of the Council's activities. However, even for these less significant items the Council may still choose to engage widely, or over a longer time via several different engagement methods.

In every case, we will work to ensure the community is sufficiently informed to understand the issue(s) or proposal, options and impacts and has time to respond, so they are able to participate in engagement processes with confidence.

A more detailed explanation of the engagement matrix is provided in **Appendix Two** as well as some examples of how we have applied this policy previously in **Appendix Four**.

## Urgency and Confidentiality

Sometimes the nature and circumstances of a decision could mean that we can't seek community feedback before making a decision. It could be that we need to act quickly, or there are commercial sensitivities involved.

The health and safety of people or the immediate need to protect property are reasons for making urgent decisions, as well as to avoid missing out opportunities that may help us achieve our strategic objectives.

Confidential decision-making may be required when engagement is likely to considerably increase the cost of a commercial transaction to the Council.

In these situations, we will either not engage at all, or we may tailor engagement to suit the circumstances.

## Strategic Assets

An important objective of the Council is to achieve or promote outcomes that are important to the current or future well-being of our community. Achieving these outcomes may require the Council to hold assets that are needed to maintain roads, water, wastewater and stormwater collection. It may also include reserves and other recreational facilities and community amenities, and assets needed for libraries, archives – for example, a book in the library is not a strategic asset, but an historic document in the Archives may be.

Council-owned assets that allow or provide these services are considered to be of strategic value and the Council has determined they need to be retained to help meet its objective. These assets must be listed in this policy.

A decision to transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset cannot be made unless it is explicitly provided for in the Council's Long-Term Plan (LTP) and the public is consulted through the Special Consultative Procedure (SCP).

The Council's strategic assets are set out in **Appendix Three** to this policy.

## Legislative Considerations

Many of the Council's decisions are prompted or guided by particular legislation and some of the legislation will dictate the process for consultation and decision-making<sup>3</sup>. This includes how the public should be informed, how public submissions are considered, and how decisions are made.

Even if a decision is clearly a significant one, this policy does not apply to the requirements for decision-making prescribed in any other enactments, such as the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Biosecurity Act 1993 on the following matters:

- resource consents or other permissions,
- submissions on plans,
- decisions required when following the procedures set out in Schedule 1 of the RMA,

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of such legislation are the Resource Management Act 1991, the Biosecurity Act 1993, the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, or the Land Transport Act 1998

- references to the Environment Court,
- decisions about enforcement under various legislation including bylaws (unless these are specifically included in this policy).

There are a number of decisions that can only be made if they are explicitly provided for in the Council's

LTP as set out by the LGA. These are:

- to significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council, including a decision to commence or cease any such activity,
- to transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

In addition, the Council is required to use the Special Consultative Procedure set out in section 83 of the LGA (with the modifications set out in section 93A) in order to adopt or amend an LTP. If the Council is carrying out consultation in relation to an amendment to its LTP at the same time as, or combined with, consultation on an Annual Plan, the Special Consultative Procedure must be used for both matters. There may be other situations where the Council deems it appropriate to use a Special Consultative Procedure.

## Definitions

TERM	MEANING
<b>Community</b>	A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. Includes interested parties, affected people and key stakeholders.
<b>Consultation</b>	A subset of engagement; a formal process where people can present their views to the Council on a specific decision or matter that is proposed and made public.
<b>Decisions</b>	Refers to all the decisions made by or on behalf of Council, including those made by delegation.
<b>Engagement</b>	The process of seeking information from the community to inform and assist decision-making. There is a continuum of community involvement.
<b>Significance</b>	The degree of importance (of the issue, proposal, decision, or matter) as assessed by the Council. This includes consideration of its likely impact on or consequences for the current and future well-being (social, economic, environmental, or cultural) of the district or region, any people or groups who are likely to be particularly affected by or interested in the matter, the capacity of the Council to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so (as described by section 5 of the Local Government Act).
<b>Significant Activity</b>	Is an activity (or group of activities) where the annual operating expenditure for the current financial year is equal to or greater than \$5 million.

TERM	MEANING
<b>Special Consultative Procedure (SCP)</b>	<p>Describes the minimum requirements for a formal consultation process (as per section 83 of the Local Government Act) that must be met when consulting on particular matters prescribed by legislation.</p> <p>The special consultative procedure may be supplemented by the Council, for example, by expanding the timeframes for feedback and providing multiple opportunities to seek clarification and voice feedback in person. The minimum requirements, in summarised form are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councils must prepare a statement of proposal setting out the issue or decision to be made;</li> <li>• the community must be made aware of the issue and how they can make submissions on it;</li> <li>• every submitter must be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard, if requested.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Asset</b>	<p>An asset, or group of assets, that the Council needs to retain if it is to maintain the capacity to achieve or promote any outcome determined to be important to the current or future well-being of the community (as described by section 5 of the Local Government Act).</p>

## Related Documents

- Masterton District Council Iwi, Hapū, Marae, Hapori Māori Engagement Framework (in development)
- Masterton District Council Communications and Engagement Strategy

## References

- IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement
- Local Government Act 2002


## Review

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years as part of the Long-Term Plan process.



# Appendix 1: IAP2 spectrum of engagement

The table below is the IAP2 public participation spectrum is a guide that can be used to define roles in engagement processes.

<b>IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM</b>					
The IAP2 foundation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.					
<b>Increasing Impact on the Decision</b> 					
	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<b>Public Participation Goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<b>Promise to the Public</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

## Appendix 2: Examples of Engagement Activities

The table below includes examples of engagement activities and have been adapted based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement.

ENGAGEMENT LEVEL					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>What does it involve?</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<b>Examples of the tools Council might use</b>  (NB: These tools may be applicable across many levels of engagement)	Email newsletter to local communities and networks; Information flyers to neighbourhoods; Public notices/info in Community newspapers, website	Formal submissions and hearings or the Special Consultative Procedure; Focus groups; Community meetings; Online opportunities to submit ideas/ feedback	Workshops Focus/ stakeholder groups' meetings; Public meetings; drop-in sessions; Online surveys/forums	External working groups (involving community experts) Community Advisory Groups (involving community representatives) Forums	Binding referendum in Local body elections; Delegation of some decision- making to a community
<b>Examples of matters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report</li> <li>Infrastructure upgrades</li> <li>Results of hearings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rates reviews</li> <li>Bylaw reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-Term Plan development</li> <li>Infrastructure projects that impact on people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource consents</li> <li>Shared services issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local body elections</li> <li>Locally based policies, bylaws and initiatives</li> </ul>

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
When the community is likely to be involved	Once a decision is made and is being implemented.	Once the Council has determined an initial preferred position it would endeavour to provide the community with sufficient time to participate and respond.	The community or specific communities could be engaged throughout the process, or at specific stages of the process as appropriate.	The community or specific communities will be engaged from the outset, including the development of alternatives to the identification of the preferred solution.	The community or communities will be engaged throughout the process to ensure ownership of the development of alternatives, identification of the preferred solution(s) and delegated decision-making on the preferred solution.

## Appendix 3: List of Strategic Assets

The following assets held by the Masterton District Council have been identified as strategic assets if it is to maintain the capacity to achieve or promote any outcome determined to be important to the current or future well-being of the community:

- Utility Networks (as a whole)
- Urban Water Supply Network
- Wastewater Treatment and Reticulation Network
- Roothing Network
- Stormwater Network
- Archives Assets
- Hood Aerodrome
- Senior Housing
- Cemeteries
- Council Reserves Network (including parks, reserves, walkways and sports fields under the Reserves Act 1977)
- Recreation Centre (including the War Memorial Stadium)
- Mawley Park Campground



## Appendix 4: Examples of Engagement undertaken by the Council

Examples of how the Council has applied the Significance and Engagement Policy previously:

<b>Smokefree Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant as there was likely to be community interest and would affect a particular demographic (smokers)</li> <li>• Low-moderate significance as community interest was expected to be minor and the policy is easily reversible</li> <li>• Engagement methods: informal consultation with interested community groups and food premises with outdoor dining, informing the community via our website.</li> </ul>
<b>Long-Term Plan 2018-28</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Government Act 2002 requires council to consult with the community, using the Special Consultative Procedure.</li> <li>• Hearing and Deliberations processes held.</li> <li>• Engagement methods: radio and newspaper advertising, hardcopy and online submission process, website information, email promotion, pop up stalls at different locations in the district, attending meetings held by community organisations.</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Housing Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant as it is related to a strategic asset and affects a particular demographic (seniors)</li> <li>• Low significance as there was no impact on the asset itself, the community impact was minor and the policy is easily reversible</li> <li>• Engagement methods: informal consultation with interested community groups (e.g. Age Concern), informing the community via the website.</li> </ul>