

# Te Whiringa

## Our Engagement Framework





# Ngā Hua o Roto

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This framework is structured to guide our approach, ensuring engagement is meaningful, consistent, and impactful.

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# Horopaki

## The context

Te Whiringa is how Hutt City Council plans to reconnect with the community and rebuild trust by involving people more in decisions. Many residents feel disconnected from decision-making, with varying levels of distrust across wards and demographics.

Feedback highlights a strong desire for more accessible, transparent, and meaningful engagement – where people see their input reflected in outcomes, are informed early, and can participate in ways that suit their needs. The framework responds to this by aiming to build trust through more inclusive, responsive, and visible Council-community relationships.

**Trust in local government is low across the country.** Across 8 cities surveyed in 2024, only 28% of people rated local government positively for trust, with 45% indicating some level of distrust<sup>1</sup>.

**Hutt City Council is trusted by our community a bit more compared to other city councils,** but overall, more people don't trust us than do (32% trust vs 40% don't trust). While trust in our city may be higher than in others, there is still plenty room for improvement<sup>1</sup>.

**This trust varies widely between locations and demographics in our city.** The Northern Ward (Taitā and Stokes Valley) reported 59% distrust, while the Harbour Ward (Eastern Bays, Petone, Korokoro) reported only 28% distrust<sup>1</sup>. Māori and Pacific respondents also showed higher distrust (50% and 45%), as did those aged 25–34 (54%)<sup>1</sup>.

**54%<sup>1</sup> of residents feel they have little or no influence on Council's decisions.** When asked whether they were confident that Council takes community feedback into account when making decisions 32% agreed versus 44% disagreed<sup>2</sup>.

### Satisfaction with Council's Communications and Engagement<sup>2</sup>

Follow up feedback after interacting with Council



The ease in which community can have a say on Council activities and proposals



The accessibility of information from or about Council



The information that Council provides about its activities and projects



1. Source: Ipsos Quality of Life Survey 2024  
2. Source: Hutt City Council Resident's Satisfaction Survey 2024

# Ngā kōrero kua rāngona e mātou

## What we've heard

We've heard from our community how they'd like to see our engagement improve. Here are some of those insights:

People want to be engaged within their own spaces, with Council coming to them. Places like libraries, parks, markets, schools, places of worship and events.

***"All residents should have equal ability to engage and be considered regardless of where they come from."***

- Tirohanga Resident



People want to be able to see the response to their feedback, and the impact that it has on Council decision-making. Engagement shouldn't feel like a tick-box exercise where nothing changes.

***"...You need honest listening and an ability to understand the lived perspectives of other, sometimes less fortunate people."***

- Stokes Valley Resident

People want to be informed of what Council is engaging on well in advance, so that they can decide how much they want to be involved.

***"There is a very low level of trust with HCC among people I know. You need to do much better..."***

- Wainuiomata Resident



People want to see more kinds of engagement. Online surveys are fine, but there also needs to be in-person discussions, workshops, community forums etc. These need to be at times that most people can make, like evenings and weekends.

***"Make sure there are diverse ways to send or gather feedback. Face to face, meetings, email, paper responses. Not everyone can afford a computer..."***

- Waterloo Resident



People are worried that some groups are heard from or listened to more than others. They want more transparency around how Council weighs up the feedback it receives and ensures fairness.

***"We need to work together to make the best decisions so people can feel positive about changes in their communities"***

- Naenae Resident



The quotes throughout this document have been shared by residents through different Council engagement activities.

# Ngā Hapori o Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai

## The communities we serve

### Population:

Census 2023



**107,562**  
residents

**42,504**  
dwellings

### Projected population:

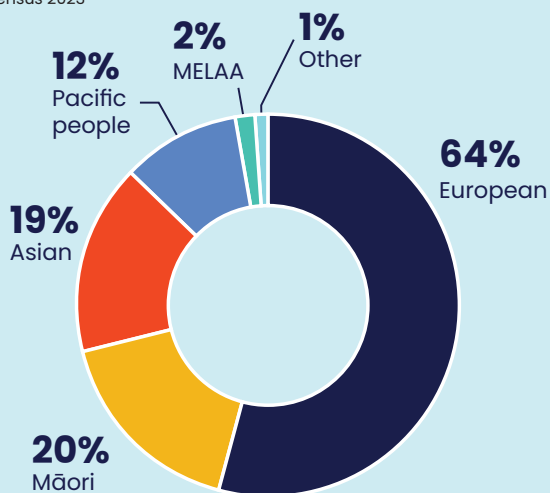
Sense Partners 2023



**125,000 – 150,000**  
projected population by 2054

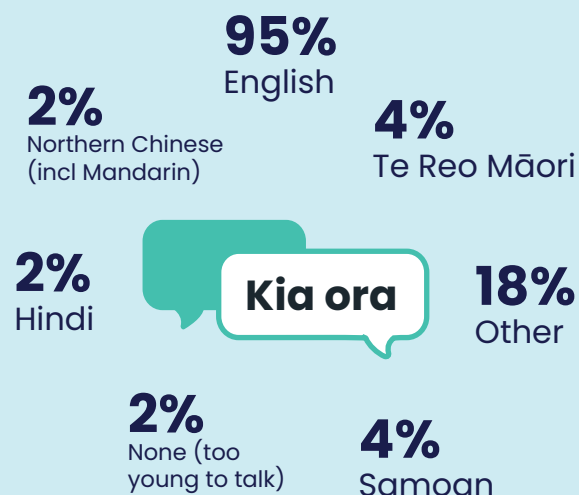
### Ethnicity:

Census 2023



### Languages we use:

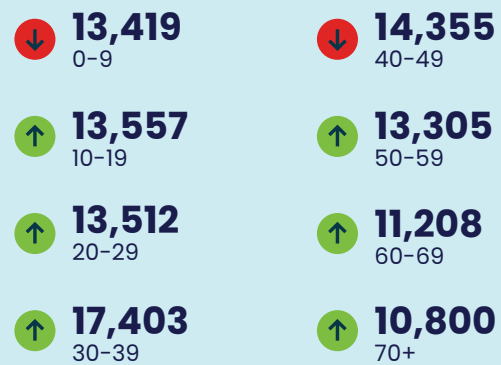
Census 2023



### Population by age:

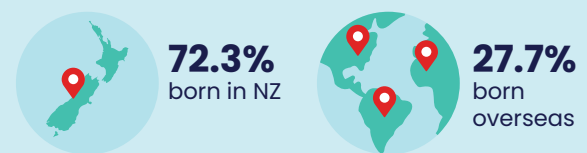
Census 2023

↑ ↓ Increase/decrease compared to 2013



### Birthplace:

Census 2023



### Businesses:

Census 2023



# He Whakatakinga

## Introduction and purpose

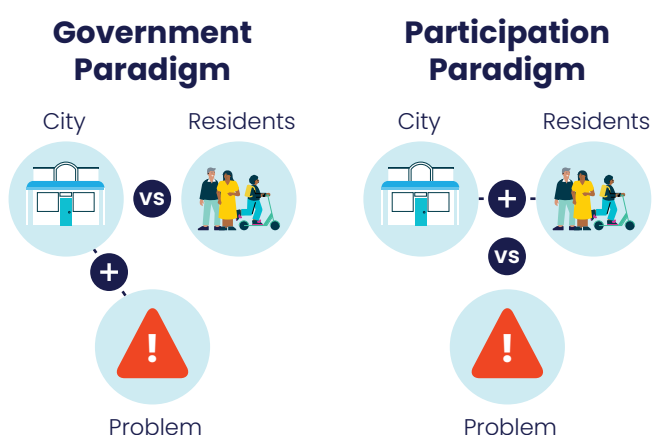
Hutt City Council's vision is a connected, resilient and inclusive city where everyone thrives.

We've heard that people want more meaningful involvement and better experiences with Council. Feedback shows a clear opportunity to do things differently, build trust, and support stronger participation.

We acknowledge engagement hasn't always met expectations. This Framework sets a new direction. It helps us engage in ways that are inclusive, transparent, and collaborative, and gives us a clear plan to improve how we work with our community. It's grounded in best practice, including International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and public innovation from Harvard Bloomberg, and shaped by what we've heard from the community. It's underpinned by our Engagement Principles and Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview).

We're building on strong foundations to work more closely with our community. We recognise not all voices start from the same place. This Framework helps by prioritising inclusion and influence for underrepresented communities. This shift is about partnership - combining community and Council insight to tackle shared challenges.

The diagram below illustrates a shift: from a traditional model where Council and community sit apart, to one where we work together to solve problems.



### Te Whiringa - Our Engagement Framework

Te Whiringa speaks to the act of weaving - the deliberate twisting and plaiting of individual strands into a unified whole. In Te Ao Māori, this process is not just physical, but deeply symbolic. It is through whiri that strength is created, relationships are honoured, and kaupapa are bound together. This name reflects our engagement framework: a living braid of voices, values, responsibilities, and relationships. Each thread - whether community, Mana Whenua, or Council - contributes to the integrity and resilience of the whole.

Te Kaunihera o Te Awa Kairangi Hutt City Council respects and upholds its commitments as a Tiriti partner by honouring the status and authority of Mana Whenua and tangata whenua. The Local Government Act 2002 mandates Council to enhance outcomes for hapori Māori (Māori communities) and our dedication extends beyond these statutory obligations. We recognise Mana Whenua and hapori Māori as our partners - they are kaitiaki (guardians), knowledge holders and leaders whose intergenerational expertise shapes the historical, cultural, natural, physical, economic, and social identity of Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt.

Our Tākai Here (Memoranda of Partnerships), Te Herenga Kairangi (Māori Strategy), and this document provide a foundational understanding of our Tiriti-based relationships to guide the future of our community - through strengthened governance, shared decision-making processes, and an investment in Council's capability to partner authentically. These reflect our enduring commitment to collaborate between Māori and Council, and effectively outlines our ambitions to improve the way we engage with our community.

### Strategic Alignment

Our framework aligns to all of Council activity, key strategic plans and policies, and supports us in meeting our legal obligations, specifically under the Local Government Act 2002.

#### References:

1. International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org) - IAP2's Core Values, Code of Ethics, and Quality Assurance Standard.
2. Bloomberg Harvard's Path to Public Innovation

# Te Hiranga o Te Whiringa

## Why engagement matters



Engagement means more than just asking for feedback. It's about listening, learning, and working together. When done well, it builds trust, improves decisions, and creates a stronger, more connected city - where every voice helps shape the future.

Like every strong structure, the top (Impact) relies on a solid foundation (Values) and effective processes (Process). Without our values driving us and robust engagement processes in place, we cannot deliver what we aspire to (Impact). This pyramid makes clear that what we achieve depends entirely on why and how we do it.

The Framework rests on three core elements to ensure our approach is consistent, credible and community-led:

- ➔ **Engagement Principles** ([page 9](#)):  
What our commitments to communities are
- ➔ **Practices for meaningful engagement** ([page 10](#)):  
How we embed those principles every day
- ➔ **Action Plan focus areas** ([pages 14-15](#)):  
Where we prioritise change and invest in engagement quality

# Ngā Mātāpono o Te Whiringa

## Engagement Principles

We will...



### Engage when it counts, in ways that work for you

We'll share clear, early updates about the council work you can help shape and offer a range of ways to have your say – so you can decide what matters and how you'd like to take part.



### Be inclusive and accessible

We want to hear from everyone in Lower Hutt, especially people who haven't been heard before or have struggled with council processes. We'll listen at times and places that work for you.



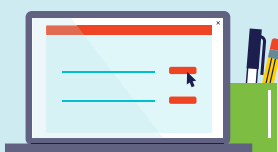
### Be responsible partners under Te Tiriti

We recognise the unique role that Mana Whenua play and are committed to engaging with Mana Whenua and hapori Māori in good faith, upholding tikanga and our commitment to Te Tiriti.



### Engage genuinely with clear intentions

We'll be clear about why we're asking for your input and what influence you have in each decision. We'll listen, make room for new ideas, and be upfront when we need to change direction and why.



### Be clear about the impact of your feedback

We'll share what we heard and how it shaped our decisions – focusing on key themes and insights. When feedback isn't used, we'll explain why.

### These principles act as our commitments to our community.

Shaped by community input and endorsed by Mana Whenua, these principles reflect what our community value in engagement. These principles guide how we work – and are the foundation for our organisation-wide approach to engagement.

# Te kawe i Te Whiringa

## Our engagement approach

### Our practices for meaningful engagement

Our engagement practices describe how we will transform the way Council engage. They put our Engagement Principles into action, and guide the priorities in our Action Plan. Together, they support a shift toward more inclusive, transparent and trusted relationships between Council and our community.

While individual practices may reflect some principles and action plan focus areas more strongly, together they support all aspects and are guided by our shared commitment to meaningful, inclusive, and transparent engagement.

Practice	What this means
<b>Grow capability across Council</b>	Build the mindsets, skills, and support to embed consistent, best practice engagement.
<b>Use community voices and experiences to guide our work</b>	Use lived experience, feedback, and data to shape engagement and inform decisions.
<b>Expand and adapt our tools and methods</b>	Provide a wider range of inclusive, accessible, and culturally responsive engagement methods.
<b>Plan early, keep improving, and show how feedback is used</b>	Engage early with clear purpose, use what we learn to improve each step, and always show how feedback shapes decisions.
<b>Rebuilding and earning trust</b>	Go beyond individual relationships to build trust. Show up consistently, listen, follow through, and create spaces where people feel seen, safe, and valued.
<b>Measure what matters and keep improving</b>	Track what's working, share results, and use feedback to continuously evolve how we engage.

# Te Whakamahinga

## How we apply this

### IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

The IAP2 Spectrum helps determine how much influence the community has in each engagement - from informing to empowering. Influence doesn't always mean decision-making, but the spectrum helps match the right level of engagement to the issue's purpose, impact, and who's affected.

Council uses this alongside our Significance and Engagement Policy to decide when, how, and how much to engage. It supports our principles and is built into our engagement cycle, helping us plan well and set clear expectations.

Increasing impact on the decision					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	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.
Promise to the public	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 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 the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

*IAP2 International Federation 2018. All rights reserved. 20181112\_v1*

### Our approach to engagement

Good engagement doesn't just happen, it requires thoughtful planning and a consistent approach. We are implementing a structured, stepped process that all teams will follow to ensure engagement is inclusive, purposeful, and impactful.

This process is grounded in best practice and integrates all aspects of this Framework, from our principles and engagement practices to the use of the IAP2 Spectrum and our Significance and Engagement Policy.

It helps us plan early, tailor our approach to the community and kaupapa, adapt based on what we learn, and close the loop by showing how feedback has influenced decisions.

By embedding this consistent way of working, we can improve transparency, build trust, and support better outcomes across all engagement activity.

# Ngā tūranga me ōna haepapa

## Roles and responsibilities

While Council leads engagement processes, there is a role for everyone in effective engagement between Community and Council, and increased civic participation.

Roles	Responsibilities
<b>Mayor and Elected Members (Councillors and Community Board members)</b>	<p>Leads by example, actively connects with the community, encourages participation, seeks out feedback, and ensures community voices are heard and considered in key decisions.</p> <p>This includes our Community Boards who play a key role in listening to local concerns, representing community needs to the council, and advocating for improvements in their areas.</p>
<b>CEO and Corporate Leadership Team</b>	<p>Lead a culture of best-practice engagement by ensuring structures are in place to support effective, inclusive participation and feedback use.</p>
<b>Council Staff</b>	<p>Designs and delivers fit-for-purpose, inclusive, and transparent engagement. This includes sharing clear information, enabling participation, collecting and sharing insights, and helping ensure engagement is measured, reported on, and continuously improved.</p>
<b>Mana Whenua</b>	<p>Te Tiriti partners in design and decision-making; guide engagement in accordance with tikanga and aligned with kaupapa Māori.</p>
<b>Advisory Groups</b>	<p>Provide advice based on lived experience or expertise, encourage participation, and help shape engagement approaches (within agreed operating requirements).</p>
<b>Stakeholders (e.g. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), Greater Wellington, advocacy groups, business, delivery partners etc.)</b>	<p>Collaborate on issues of shared interest, contribute insights, encourage participation, and help inform solutions.</p>
<b>Community Members</b>	<p>Participate in decisions that affect them by focusing on the decisions to be made or questions being asked, share their perspectives, recognise Council need to consider the needs of the whole community, and hold Council accountable.</p>

# Te tātari me te pūrongo

## Monitoring and reporting

Delivering on our commitments matters. Meaningful change starts from within, so we have begun by strengthening how we measure and monitor engagement.

We have analysed Quality of Life and Resident Satisfaction Survey data to better understand current trust levels and opportunities for improvement.

To track and improve our engagement work, we have developed an internal measurement process. At the end of each engagement phase, project teams will review their work against the Key Success Indicators, identifying strengths as well as areas for improvement. These results will feed into an internal dashboard so we can spot patterns, build a baseline, and see how engagement is working across Council. This process will guide continuous improvement and lay the foundation for future reporting.

Our Key Success Indicators draw on our Engagement Principles (page 9) and the Power Metrics model developed by Professor Liz McKenna (Harvard University) and Joy Cushman (Democracy & Power Innovation Fund).

By taking a targeted approach to measuring and improving engagement, we can give council staff practical tools to monitor, evaluate, and adapt their practices in real time. Over time, this will enable more targeted, effective, and impactful engagement, helping more of our communities to understand and participate in council processes.

We are not yet setting formal targets for our success indicators. Instead, we are using the first phase to establish a baseline across engagements. This baseline will give us a clear picture of where we are now and allow us to set meaningful, evidence-based targets in the future.

This is only our first step. We will review the approach in late 2026 and consider introducing public dashboards to report on progress. In the meantime, we will share quarterly updates with the community so you can see how we are tracking against our Action Plan on the following pages.

### Key Success Indicators

<b>Reach &amp; Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the groups and individuals we engage</li> <li>Measure demographic and geographic representativeness</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Communities of Interest (COI) are meaningfully involved</li> <li>Provide genuine opportunities to influence decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate cultural and language needs</li> <li>Remove barriers that limit participation</li> </ul>
<b>Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge and act on community feedback</li> <li>Clearly communicate how feedback informs decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure engagement's influence on Council decisions</li> <li>Ensure equitable and fair resource allocation</li> </ul>
<b>Learnings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capture and share practitioner insights</li> <li>Apply lessons learned for continuous improvement</li> </ul>

# Mahere mahi

## Action plan

The Engagement Framework sets the strategic direction for community engagement, while the Action Plan outlines the practical steps to achieve these goals. Together, they ensure our engagement practices are consistent, effective, and aligned across the organisation.

We've developed an action plan to lift the quality and consistency of engagement. It's built around 6 key focus areas, each with clear actions to strengthen how we work with community.

Here's what the Action Plan focuses on:

### 1. Strategic planning & Governance

- Improved planning so fewer projects need your feedback all at once, giving you time to be more involved.
- Engaging earlier when there is more opportunity for change.
- Plan engagement consistently, allowing for flexibility in how we engage to best suit different communities' needs.
- Trial new ways of engaging that give the community more voice - like Citizens Panels, where community help explore issues and make recommendations.
- Trial participatory budgeting where community choose how funds are spent.

### 2. Mana Whenua Partnership

- Supporting marae-based engagement hubs and kaupapa Māori initiatives.
- Embedding tikanga and kaupapa Māori as essential principles across engagement approaches, guided by our Mana Whenua partners.
- Planning engagement with Māori around a calendar of significant Māori events and opportunities.
- Providing Mana Whenua partners with feedback and insights from consultation where appropriate.

### 3. Inclusive & Accessible Participation

- Making information easier to find and understand, using plain everyday language.
- Offering engagement face to face and online, at spaces and times convenient to all our communities.
- Trialling new and consistent ways of communicating to both educate and share updates.
- Creating a space for community to easily share ideas, vote for ideas they like and track how their feedback shapes decisions.
- Involving community when designing projects and solutions.
- Supporting community and youth-led projects that help people get involved and understand how decisions are made.
- Keep asking for community feedback where it's required but also ask what else community want to have a say on.



#### 4. Relationships & Community Outreach

- Building trust and enduring relationships through outreach to communities (especially those underrepresented).
- Hosting drop-in sessions where we're just there to listen and answer questions.
- Learning more about our various communities and their wants and needs.
- Partnering with representatives from the community to be directly involved in projects and engagement.

#### 5. Engagement Tools, Resources & Capability

- Giving Council staff the right tools, training and resources to plan good engagement with the community.
- Consistently applying best practice around cultural, accessibility and privacy needs.
- Helping Council staff choose the right way to engage, depending on the topic and the community.
- Providing cultural competency and Te Tiriti training.

#### 6. Quality, Standards & Internal Culture

- Setting and applying minimum standards for all engagements.
- Consistently applying our Significance & Engagement Policy and IAP2 Spectrum to choose the right approach.
- Monitoring and reporting on engagement performance to look for opportunities to improve.
- Using existing information and data to help with making engagement more suited to our communities.
- Clearly showing how community input influences each decision.
- Using shared planning tools and engagement calendars.
- Building a culture where engagement is seen as everyone's job.

Please note, this summary highlights the focus areas and high-level actions we'll take. Some actions will be implemented in the short term, while others will take longer to achieve. A full detailed action plan has been developed for internal operational purposes that will guide our work to deliver on these priorities.

References: 1. International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org) - IAP2's Core Values, Code of Ethics, and Quality Assurance Standard.  
2. Bloomberg Harvard's Path to Public Innovation

# Kaputaka Glossary

## Te Reo Māori terms

<b>Hapori Māori</b>	Māori communities; groups of Māori people connected by genealogy, location, or a shared purpose.
<b>Kaitiaki</b>	Guardians or stewards who protect and care for people, places, taonga (treasures), often with spiritual or cultural responsibility.
<b>Kaupapa</b>	A guiding principle, purpose, topic, policy or matter for discussion, proposal, agenda.
<b>Mana Whenua</b>	Local Māori with territorial rights and responsibilities over the land and its natural resources.
<b>Marae</b>	A communal and sacred meeting place that serves as the focal point for Māori social, cultural and spiritual life.
<b>Tangata whenua</b>	Literally 'people of the land' and refers to Māori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
<b>Te Ao Māori</b>	The Māori worldview.
<b>Te Whiringa</b>	The name of Hutt City Council's Engagement Framework, which speaks to the act of weaving (refer page 7).
<b>Tikanga</b>	Customs, protocols, and correct practices that guide behaviour in accordance with cultural values.
<b>Tiriti / Te Tiriti o Waitangi</b>	The Treaty of Waitangi, Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document.
<b>Whiri</b>	To twist, plait, or weave strands together.

## Other terms

<b>Citizens Panels</b>	Groups of residents involved in structured discussions or recommendations on issues.
<b>Civic participation</b>	When community members get involved by sharing their views, voting, joining local activities, or working with council to help shape the place they live.
<b>Communities of Interest (COI)</b>	Groups of people connected by place, identity, or shared needs. These include both local communities (our wards: Northern, Central, Western, Harbour, Wainuiomata, and Mana Kairangi ki Tai Māori) and city-wide communities such as tangata whenua, ethnic and migrant groups, Pacific peoples, youth, disabled people, and the rainbow community (as identified in the Representation Review 2023-24).
<b>Community Engagement</b>	An intentional process with the purpose of working in inclusive and respectful ways to shape decisions, actions, impacts or change (IAP2 definition).
<b>Culturally responsive</b>	Recognising, respecting, and responding to the different cultural values, traditions, and needs of people in the community.
<b>Engagement Framework</b>	A guiding approach and set of principles used to plan, carry out, and evaluate how Council connects with, listens to, and involves our communities in decision-making.
<b>IAP2</b>	International Association of Public Participation. An international organization advancing the practice of public participation (reference: <a href="http://www.iap2.org">www.iap2.org</a> ).
<b>IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation</b>	Framework describing levels of community influence: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower.
<b>Key Success Indicators</b>	Metrics used to measure effectiveness of engagement.
<b>Lived Experience</b>	Firsthand knowledge or perspectives based on personal life circumstances.
<b>Participatory Budgeting</b>	A process where community members help decide how public funds are allocated.
<b>Public Innovation (Harvard Bloomberg)</b>	Refers to methods/tools developed through the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative aimed at equipping city leaders with tackling complex issues and transforming communities for the better.
<b>Significance and Engagement Policy</b>	A Council policy that helps determine how important different matters are and sets out how and when people will be involved in shaping decisions.
<b>Underrepresented communities</b>	Groups or individuals that have limited or lesser representation or voice in Council processes.





