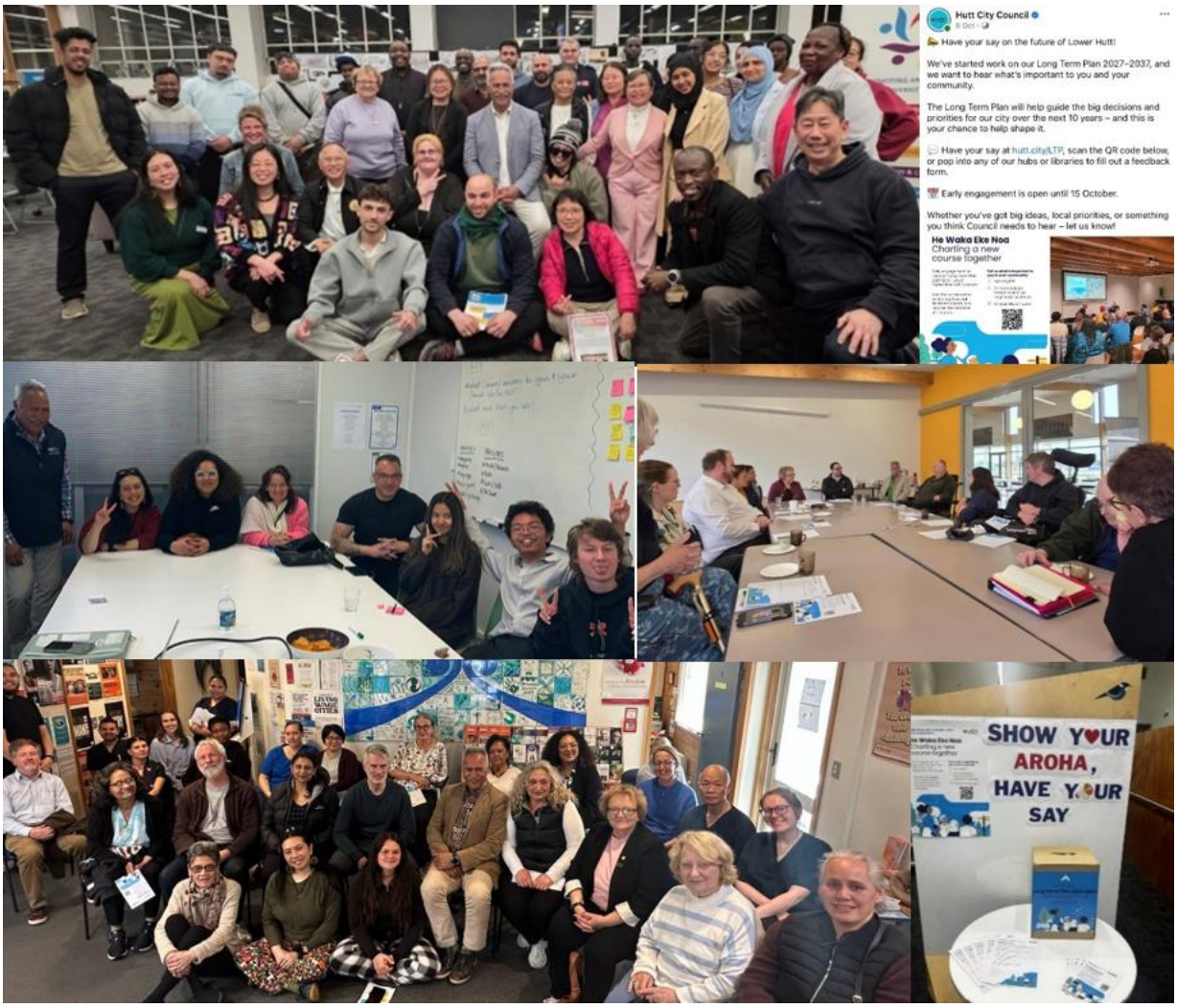
Draft Long-Term Plan 2027-2037

Early engagement report

October 2026



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Introduction

From 17 September to 15 October, Hutt City Council ran early public engagement to help elected members form proposals for the draft Long-Term Plan (LTP) 2027-37 ahead of public consultation in early 2027.

The engagement was not asking about specific decisions, instead we sought to understand what people value about Council services and facilities, how they use them, and their views on potential trade-offs and different ways of delivering services in future.

Executive Summary

People recognise the financial pressures facing Council and emphasised the need to keep rates, facilities and activities affordable. Across the survey, stakeholder engagement and interviews, **four key insights stood out.**

1. Keep services affordable and show value for money

Affordability was the survey's strongest priority: 32% of respondents ranked it first. People called for Council to focus on essential services, control costs and make better use of existing resources.

> **"Shifting the focus to critical services … may have to be the compass that sets the direction for future cost saving decisions."** – survey participant

2. Recognise the wider value of local facilities

Libraries, neighbourhood hubs, pools and parks were valued for learning, recreation, water safety, health and bringing people together. While Arts & Culture was not included as a ranking option, written feedback highlighted the importance of arts and community spaces for creativity, social connection and wellbeing.

> **"A service that appears costly to operate may provide significant value by preventing isolation, supporting wellbeing, connecting people to help and strengthening community resilience."** – survey participant

3. Consider who could lose access

People were concerned about the effects of changes on older and disabled residents, families, low-income households and those without reliable transport. Keeping services close to home was especially important where travel is difficult or alternatives are limited.

> **"Services and facilities need to be provided locally to ensure access for all, not just those who are able or can afford to drive to a distant centre."** – survey participant

4. Explore different ways to provide services

Suggestions included sharing spaces, partnering with community organisations, making better use of facilities, reviewing operating costs and adjusting hours or charges.

> **"I would encourage Council to look at a partnership and community-led approach rather than simply cutting services."** – survey participant

Considerations for elected members

- There was no consistent direction or view from respondents on which services should change or how savings should be made. Decisions will need to weigh cost against affordability, access and community wellbeing.
- Preferences for retaining facilities and services were clearly aligned around the local, neighbourhood amenities most closely available to respondents.
- Stokes Valley residents, women and NZ European-identifying respondents were over-represented in the survey, while younger people and some ethnic communities were under-represented.
- The engagement methods provide complementary insights rather than a single measure of community opinion.

A record of all written answers to the survey questions can be viewed at hutt.city/earlyLTPcomments.

How we engaged

1076 Survey responses | **53 In-person engagements** | **27 Online Interviews**

Online and paper survey participation
An online survey was promoted on Council's social media channels, community Facebook groups and via posters, flyers and QR code cards at Council venues, in community spaces, at businesses and at in-person engagements and community events. Paper copies and flyers were available at promotional displays in hubs and pools, and at in-person engagements. We received 1076 surveys in total (297 paper & 779 online).

As part of the engagement, a petition and two letters were received from the residents of Bob Scott Retirement Village in Petone. The petition, with 214 signatures, asked that Hutt City Council proceed with building a replacement Ava pedestrian bridge across Te Awa Kairangi Hutt River. The petition data is not part of the reported results.

Community engagement
Elected members attended 53 in-person events and meetings around the city, with around 1014 people attending. They heard from a wide range of community groups and individuals. Participants were encouraged to complete paper and online surveys, and themes were also collected from conversations between community members and elected members.

Qualifyr participation
Qualifyr, an online qualitative research platform, was used to gather community feedback through two rounds of interviews. A random sample of 106 people was selected from the Hutt City Views Research Panel, using Census data to guide the demographic profile. Of those invited, 16 responded in the first round and 11 in the second, which explored initial feedback in greater depth.

Demographics

Combined demographic results from online and paper surveys are presented below, with comparisons to 2023 Census data. With a couple of exceptions noted below, representation across the community has been broadly consistent with other Council surveys such as the Residents' Satisfaction Survey.

Suburbs

Suburbs were generally well represented in survey results (most within 1 percentage points (pp) of 2023 census). The largest variations above and below Census data are reported in Table 1 below, most notably Stokes Valley which was significantly over-represented. Full details of response distribution across all suburbs are included in Appendix 1.

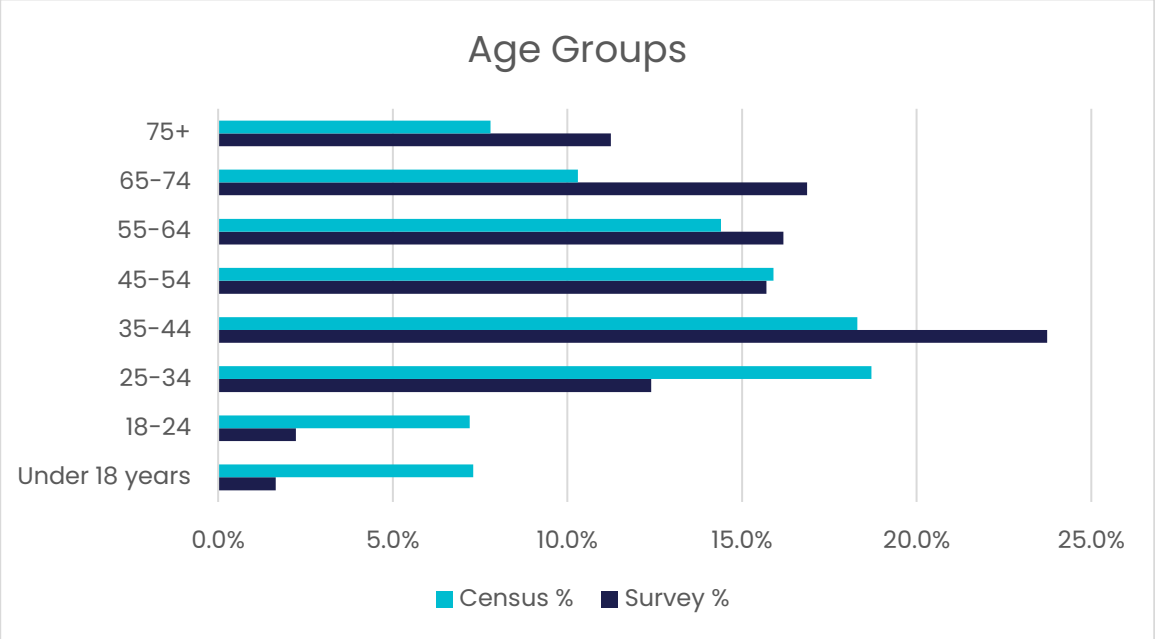
Table 1: Key variance data in representation by suburb

Suburbs over or under-represented	Over/Under-representation
Stokes Valley	+27 pp (36.5% survey / 9.5% census)
Eastbourne and Eastern Bays	+2.6 pp (7.1% survey / 4.5% census)
Wainuiomata	-8.9 pp (9.4% survey / 18.3% census)
Naenae	-3.5 pp (4.7% survey / 8.1% census)
Taitā	-3.3 pp (2.6% survey / 6% census)

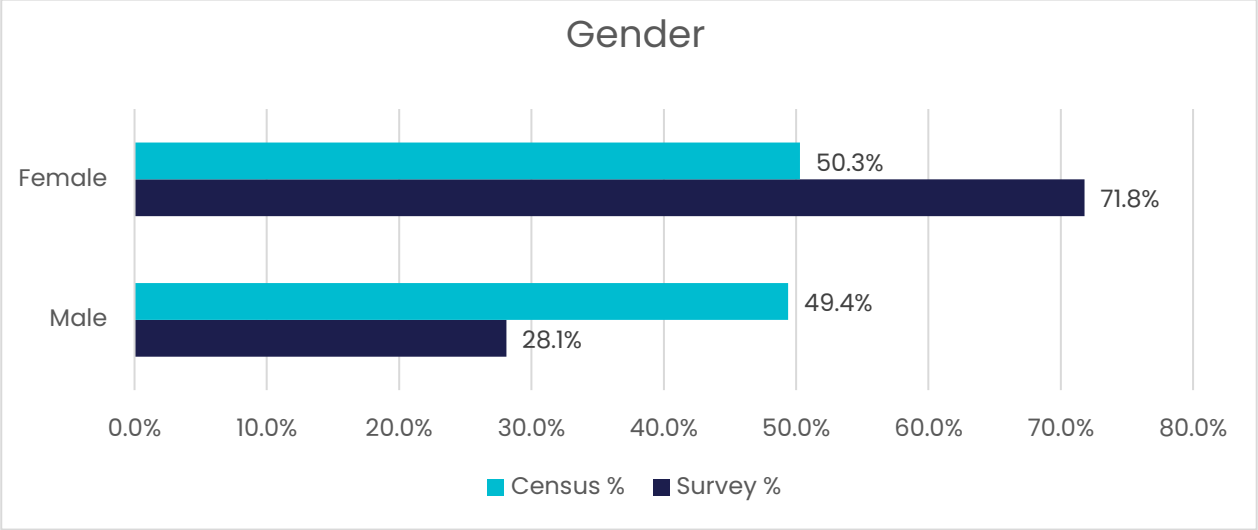
A spike in responses was seen from Stokes Valley following a post in a community Facebook group stating that Council was considering closing Stokes Valley Pool & Fitness and encouraging residents to oppose its closure. This resulted in 164 responses received that day and high numbers over the following days leading to the highest contribution from any suburb with 376 responses in total. More detail is provided in Appendix 2.

Age Groups

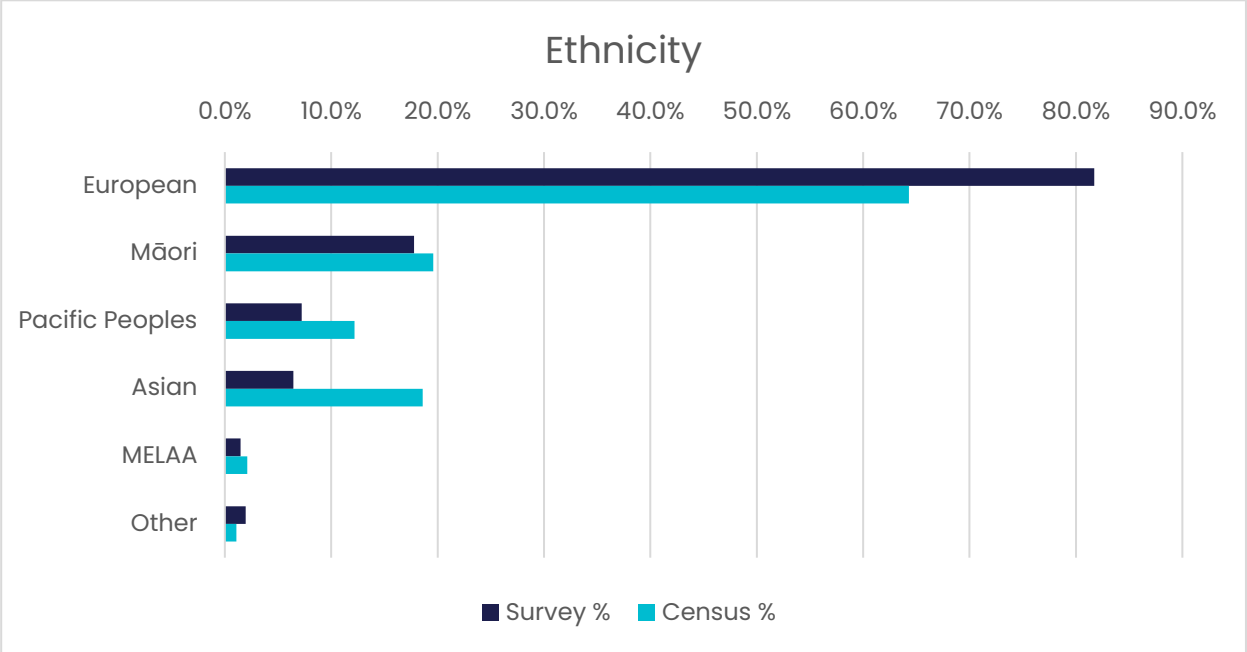
We had representation from all age groups but saw under-representation among younger groups and over-representation in older groups, with only 45-54yrs less than 1 percentage point off census 2023.



Gender representation was significantly unbalanced, with a 43-percentage point gap between male and female.



When measured in the broadest ethnicity categorisation recommended by Statistics NZ, we saw a significant over-representation of NZ European and under-representation of those of Asian ethnicity.



Note: Ethnicity results do not add to 100%. Survey question allowed respondents to select more than one option.

What we heard

Survey responses

How the results were collected and analysed

The survey was available online through Council's *Have Your Say* website and in paper form. Paper responses were digitised using AI tools, and checked by staff, so all responses could be analysed together.

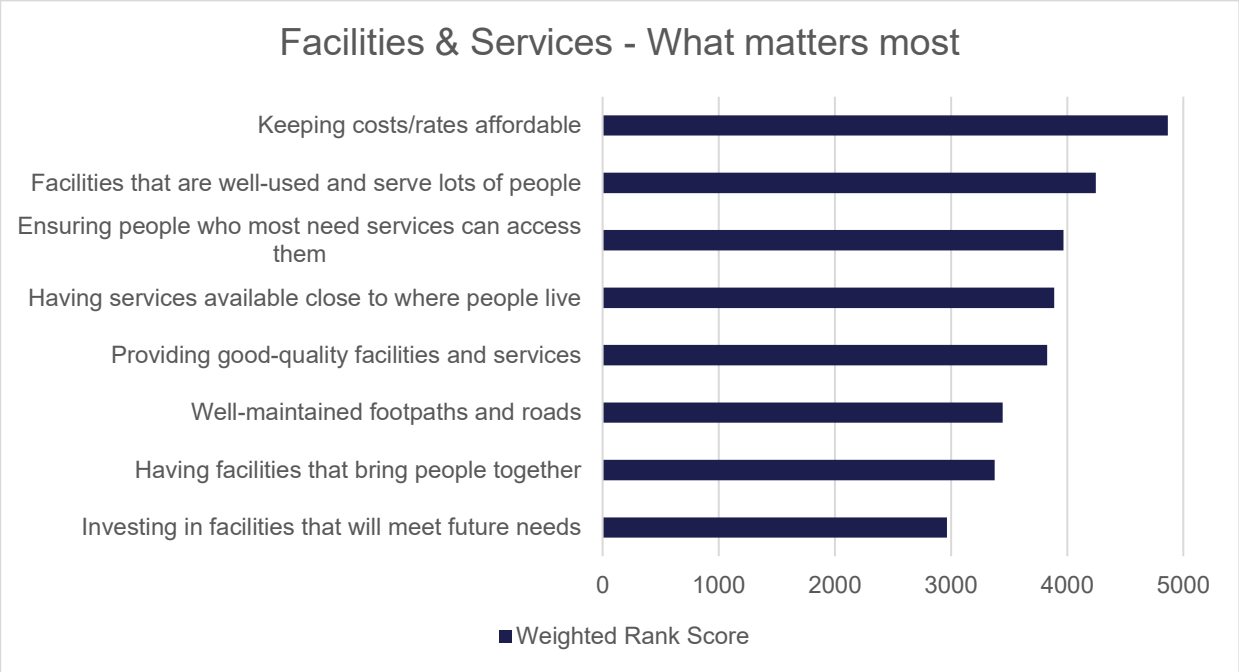
Ranking questions were analysed using weighted scores, giving more points to higher-ranked choices (e.g. first = 8 points, second = 7) with a total weighted rank score calculated for all items surveyed. We also calculated the percentage of respondents who ranked each option first or in their top 3 to provide another measure of priorities.

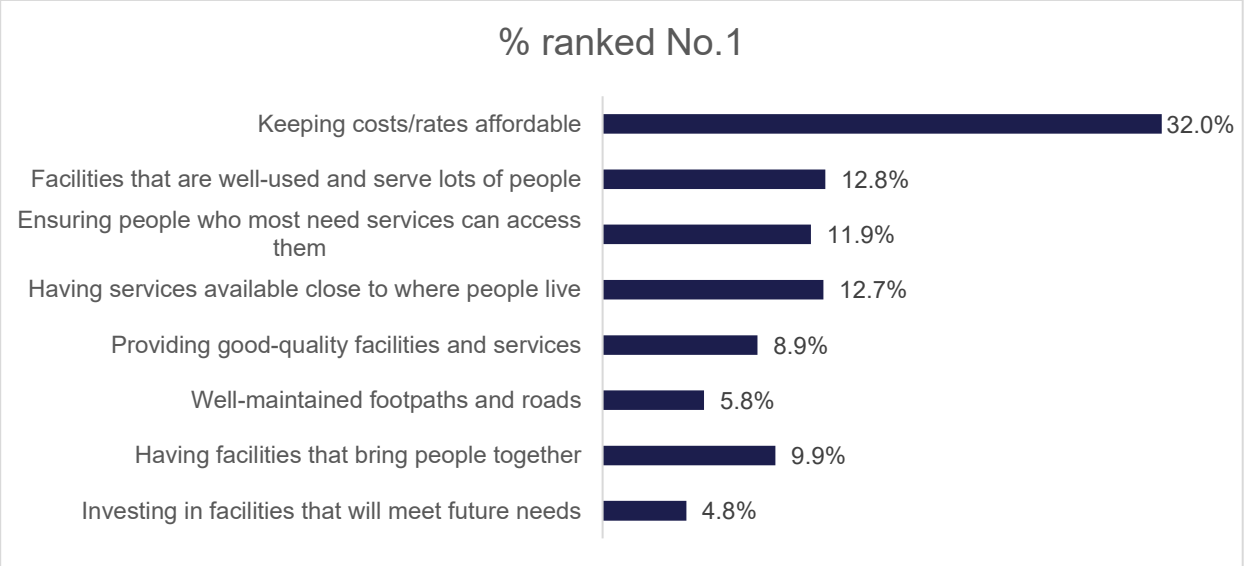
Staff reviewed every written response to identify common themes, sentiments and illustrative quotes. AI was also used to analyse themes, with findings compared against staff analysis for validation.

SECTION 1 – Facilities & Services

Question 1:

Thinking about Council's community facilities and services across Lower Hutt, what matters most to you?

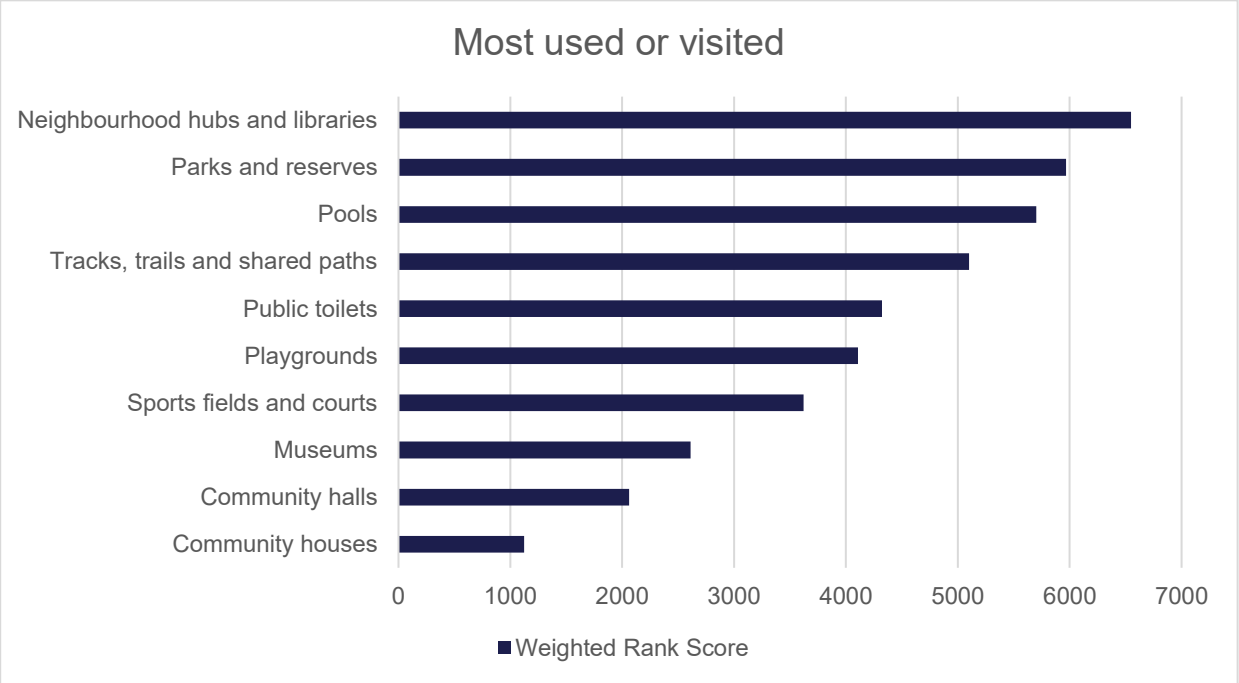


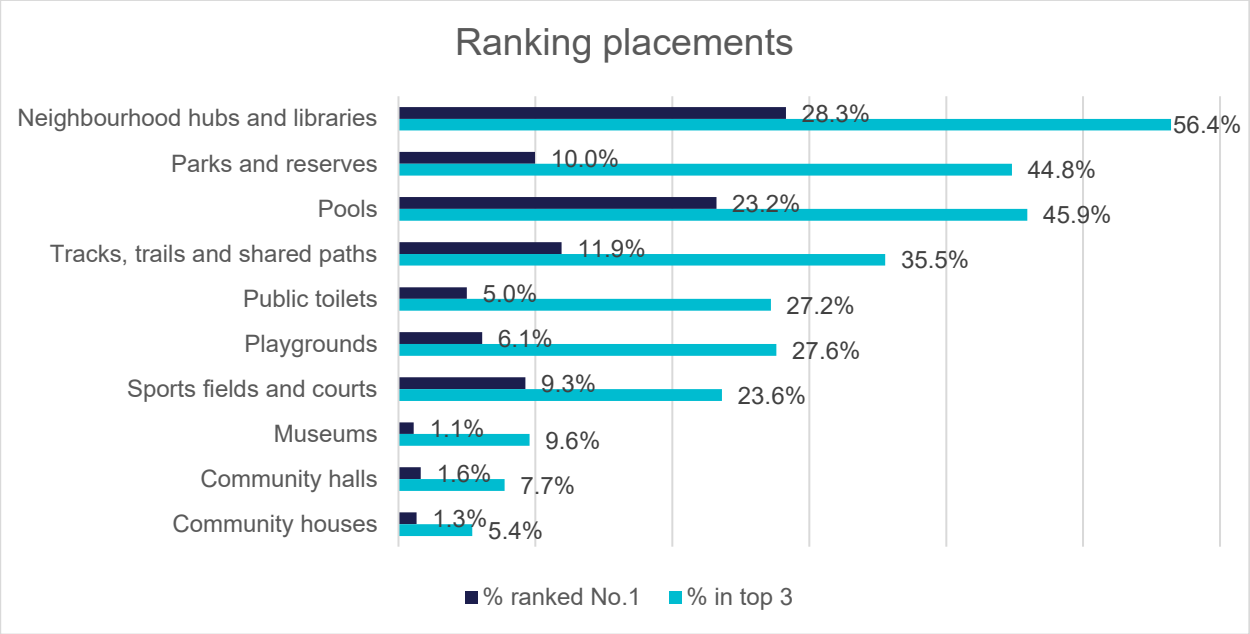


Results showed participants valued a range of factors. 'Having facilities that bring people together' received a higher proportion of first-place rankings relative to its weighted score, suggesting that the sense of community was particularly important to some respondents.

Question 2:

Which of these facilities and services do you USE or VISIT the most?

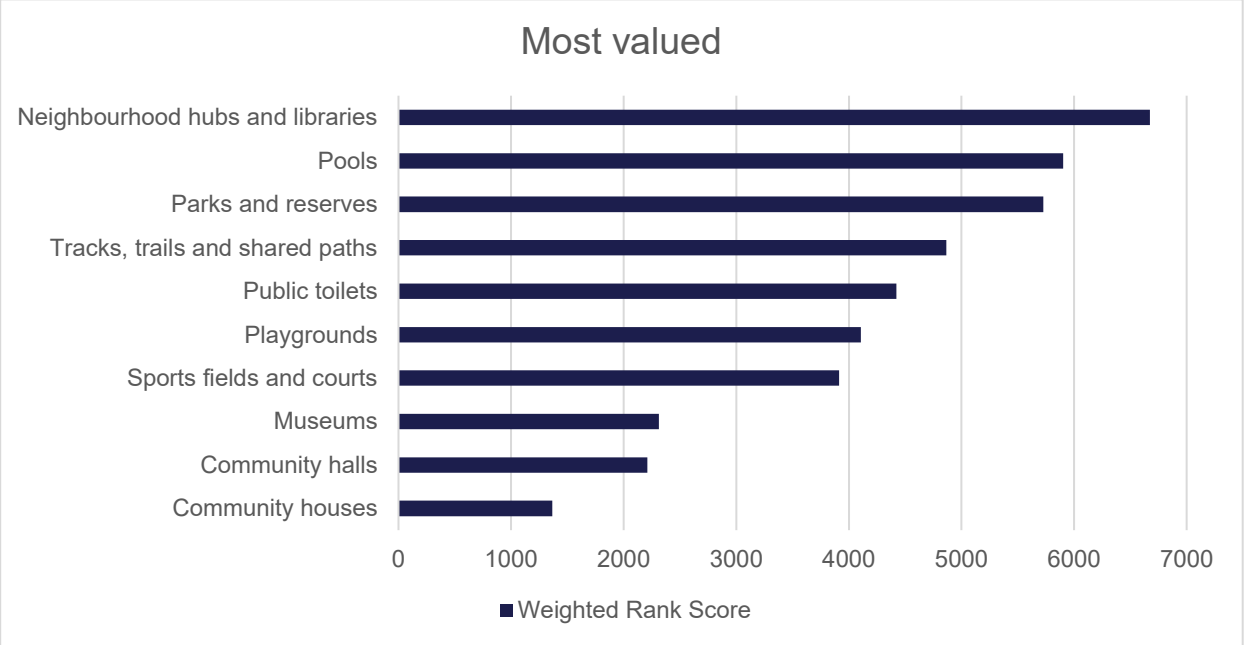


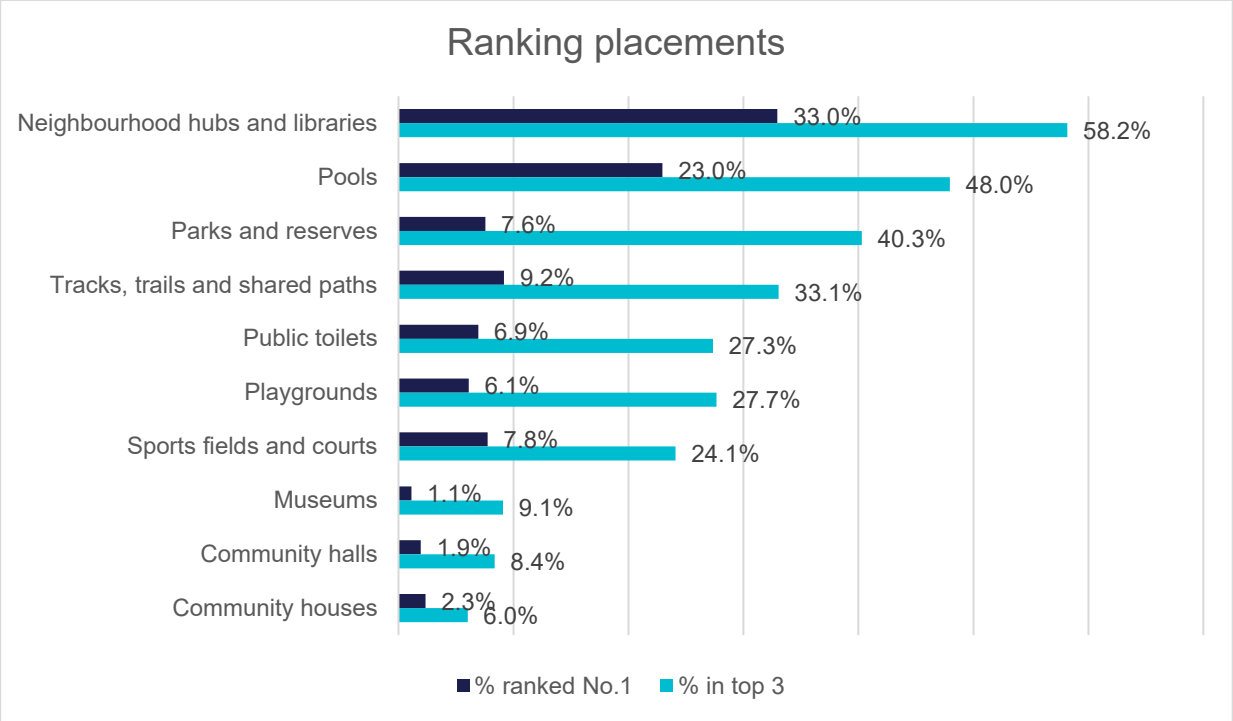


'Neighbourhood hubs and libraries' ranked highest for **most used and visited**, with a weighted score almost six times that of 'Community houses'. They also received the most first-place rankings, followed by pools. Parks and reserves featured in most respondents' top three, followed closely by tracks, trails and shared paths. Museums, community halls and community houses ranked lowest, each receiving fewer than 2% of first-place rankings.

Question 3:

Which of these facilities and services do you VALUE the most?



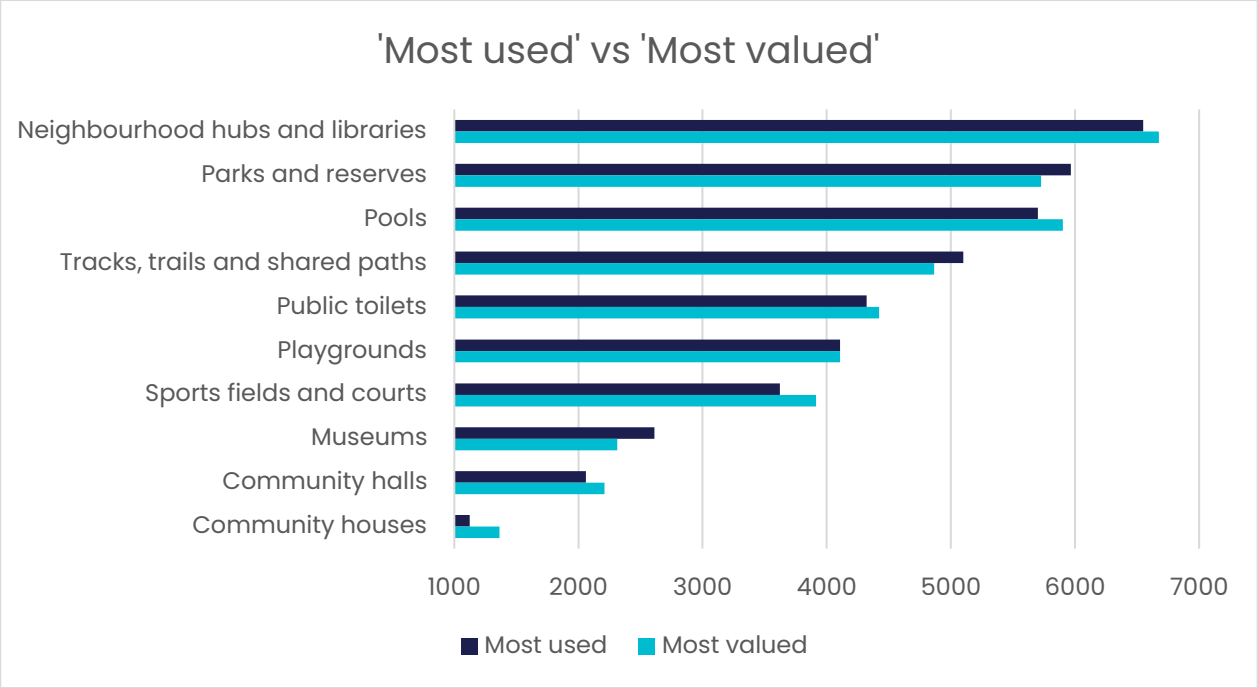


'Neighbourhood hubs and libraries' again ranked highest for most valued, though this time 'Pools' takes second place ahead of 'Parks and reserves' at third.

Museums, community halls and community houses remained the lowest-ranked categories. While museums featured more often in respondents' top three, community houses received more first-place rankings, suggesting they were particularly important to a smaller group.

Comparing use/visits and value

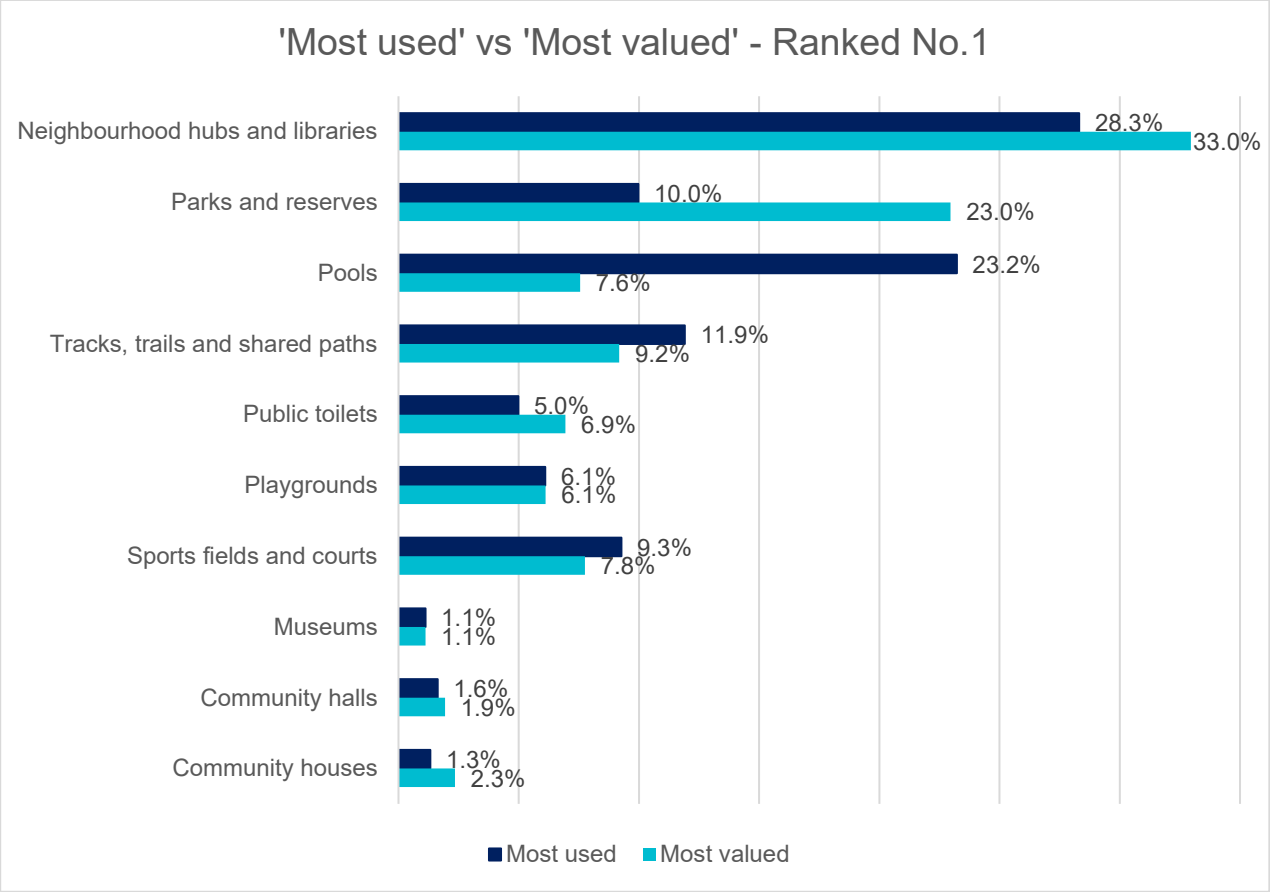
Key insight: there is general alignment between the facilities and services that are used the most and their perceived value.



Participants generally valued facilities they used most, but some facilities were valued more than they were used. Written feedback suggests this reflects recognition of their wider community benefits. Sports fields and courts showed the largest difference between value and use, followed by community houses and pools.

As noted earlier, following the community Facebook post Stokes Valley residents contributed the highest number of survey responses. Respondents from Stokes Valley ranked pools more highly for both use and value than those elsewhere in the city, meaning their over-representation influenced the overall rankings for pools.

If Stokes Valley responses are adjusted to reduce over-representation and be more reflective of population split, pools would move from **third to fourth** in the ranking of **most used** facilities, and from **second to fourth** in **most valued**.



First-place rankings showed greater differences between use and value than weighted scores. Neighbourhood hubs and libraries were ranked most valued more often than most used, while pools, sports fields and courts, parks and reserves, and tracks, trails and shared paths were ranked most used more often than most valued.

SECTION 2 – Your neighbourhood

Question 2: (951 responses)

Thinking about the Council facilities and services in your local area, which one or two do you feel are most important to keep and why?

Feedback highlighted the importance of local facilities for learning, recreation, exercise, social connection and support, with **seven common themes** across the feedback:

Theme 1: Libraries and neighbourhood hubs - Valued for access to books, information, technology, activities, Council services and welcoming spaces that support learning and social connection.

Theme 2: Pools - Valued for swimming lessons, water safety, fitness, rehabilitation and family activities. While some respondents questioned how many pools Council needs, others highlighted the importance of accessibility and location, noting that alternative facilities may not meet their needs due to their location, layout or accessibility.

Theme 3: Local access – Transport costs, limited connections, disability, age and travelling with children can make alternative facilities difficult to access, even when services are available elsewhere.

Theme 4: Parks, reserves, playgrounds, tracks, paths, fields and courts - Valued for exercise, play, relaxation, family activities and access to green spaces, particularly as housing density increases.

Theme 5: Maintaining facilities - Participants emphasised keeping existing facilities safe, functional and accessible, including maintaining buildings, opening hours and practical amenities such as public toilets, bins, seating, lighting, roads and footpaths.

Theme 6: Arts, cultural and community spaces - Hutt Art Society and Hutt Art Centre were valued for creative learning, shared equipment, exhibitions and friendships. Halls, community centres and marae also support cultural events, classes, meetings and access to support. Some noted that arts facilities were not included in the ranking options.

Theme 7: Affordability and spending priorities - Free and low-cost services support participation, particularly for low-income households. Views differed on spending priorities, highlighting the need to consider both Council costs and affordability for users.

Notes

- Stokes Valley accounted for around 36.5% of analysed responses, with its pool and Kōraunui Hub frequently mentioned. Eastbourne Pool, Petone Library and Hutt Art Society also received specific support.
- References to potential closures reflect participants' concerns, not changes that were proposed by Council.

"The place I feel is crucial to keep is Hutt Art … a place of social contact where like-minded people can get together to pursue their creative interests. Both creative expression and companionship are vital for mental health and general well-being." – survey participant

Question 3:

Significant changes are needed to limit future rates increases. What should Council keep in mind about how or where local facilities and services are provided? Are there practical ways of doing things differently that we should consider? (692 responses)

Feedback highlighted the tension between keeping rates affordable and protecting valued services. Respondents frequently suggested prioritising essential services, maintaining existing assets and improving Council efficiency before reducing services.

Respondents shared ideas for alternative funding, shared facilities and different ways of delivering services. Views differed on where savings should come from and which services should change, reflecting local perspectives and individual priorities.

Theme 1: Prioritise essential services and maintain existing assets – Feedback was to focus on core services and maintaining infrastructure before new projects, although views differed on what is essential.

Theme 2: Protect local access and wellbeing - People highlighted transport, cost, disability, age and other barriers, and the value of local services for health, connection and independence.

Theme 3: Explore funding options while keeping services affordable - Suggestions included user fees, sponsorship, fundraising and commercial use, although views differed on higher charges.

Theme 4: Improve efficiency and control Council costs – Requests to review staffing, consultants, procurement, contracts and project oversight, including opportunities for joint purchasing and sharing specialist staff across councils.

Theme 5: Use evidence and explain decisions – Request for decisions to be based on need, cost, usage and long-term impacts, with clearer information about spending and proposed changes shared with community.

Theme 6: Make better use of buildings and review the facility network - Explore shared spaces and multipurpose facilities, with mixed views on consolidation or centralisation.

Theme 7: Work with communities and other organisations - Explore partnerships, community management, shared services and volunteering, with appropriate support to enable community to take on additional responsibility.

Theme 8: Adjust opening hours and schedules - Some preferred shorter or seasonal hours to losing a facility; others wanted more evening and weekend access.

Notes

- Stokes Valley accounted for 36.5% of responses, with its pool, hub, local access and concerns about centralisation frequently raised. Views varied, with some respondents also suggesting reduced hours, higher charges and efficiencies elsewhere.

Question 4:

Any other comments (345 responses)

Responses largely reinforced themes raised in earlier questions, particularly the importance of community facilities, affordability and Council spending. They also provided additional examples, personal experiences and practical suggestions, alongside positive feedback about Council's work.

Key themes included:

- **Council costs and value for money:** Suggestions to review staffing, management costs, consultants, contractors and discretionary spending.
- **Community wellbeing:** The wider benefits of facilities for community connection and wellbeing.
- **Valued services:** Pools, roads and transport, parks, and libraries were frequently mentioned.
- **Arts, culture and heritage:** Recognition of their importance, including concerns that these facilities were not adequately reflected in the ranking options.
- **Consultation and transparency:** Calls for clearer information, meaningful community input and consideration of alternatives before decisions are made.
- **Practical suggestions:** Maintaining existing assets, adjusting hours or charges, involving community groups and volunteers, and improving local access.

A record of all written answers to the above survey questions can be viewed at hutt.city/earlyLTPcomments.

Elected Member In-Person Engagements

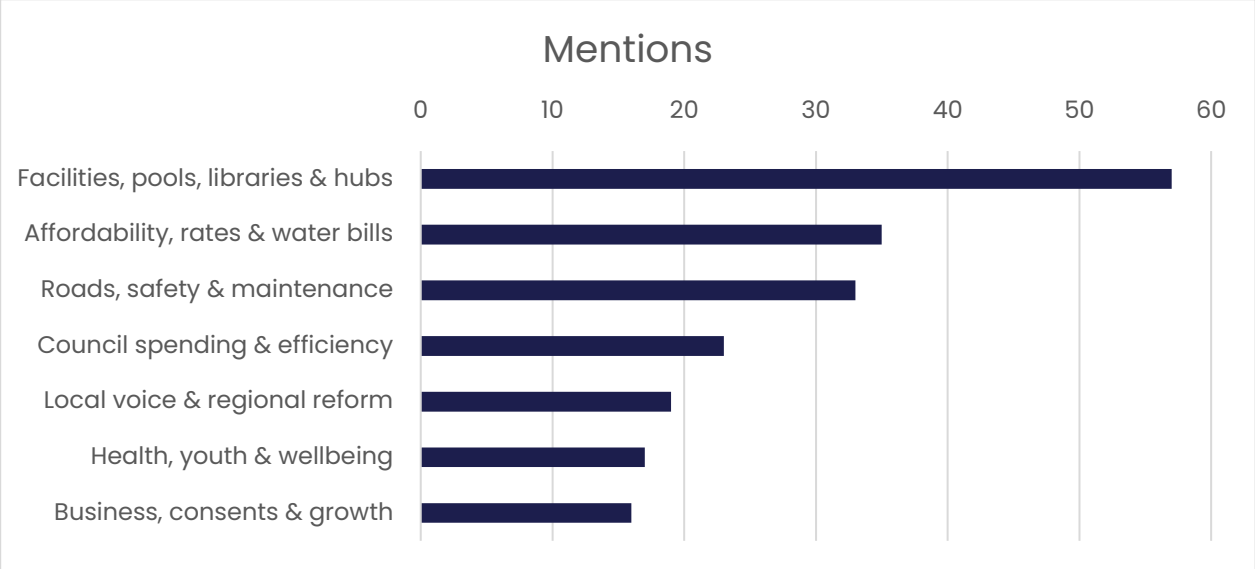
Stakeholder meetings

A total of 1,014 people attended 53 in-person engagements led by Elected Members, including older residents and kaumātua, mana whenua, businesses, neighbourhood groups, sports organisations, education and youth groups, health and social support organisations, and diverse communities.

Participants were encouraged to complete the survey. Three broad themes also emerged through conversations: **affordability, protecting valued services and value for money.**

Participants raised concerns about rates, water bills and wider living costs, while highlighting the importance of pools, libraries, neighbourhood hubs and community spaces. Many also wanted Council to explore efficiencies before reducing services.

The topics of most interest, ranked by number of times mentioned, were:



Different groups highlighted different priorities:

Groups	Key issues
Businesses	costs, consenting, freight, infrastructure and workforce issues.
Older residents and neighbourhood groups	accessible footpaths, safety, affordability and local facilities.
Youth, health and community groups	affordable participation, wellbeing and access to services

Overall, conversations reinforced survey findings around affordability, protecting valued services and making the best use of Council resources. They also highlighted the importance of considering who may be most affected by service changes, assessing alternatives and clearly explaining costs and trade-offs.

More information on the in-person engagements is available in Appendix 3.

Mana Whenua engagement

Council continued to engage with Mana Whenua through established governance and operational arrangements as part of early LTP engagement. The draft LTP remains a standing item for discussion as options are developed.

In-person engagements also included Kōkiri Marae and kaumātua groups at Te Māngungu Marae and Hīkoikoi Tenths Trust.

Qualifyr

Two rounds of online qualitative interviews were run through the Qualifyr tool. These explored what residents value about Council facilities and services, how potential changes could affect them, and opportunities to deliver services differently. Discussions were framed around Council's need to find $10 million in annual cash savings by 2030.

Across both rounds, participants emphasised protecting valued services, considering wider community benefits and exploring ways to reduce costs.

First interview
Questions explored which facilities and services participants use and value, why and how changes could affect their neighbourhoods.

Feedback from 16 participants placed high value on libraries, pools, parks and reserves for their contribution to health, wellbeing and community connection, including benefits for people who do not use these facilities themselves.

There were concerns about losing facilities or allowing them to deteriorate. Suggestions for reducing costs included improving efficiency, reducing spending on new projects, adjusting opening hours, sharing facilities and working more closely with community groups and volunteers.

Second interview
Questions explored what should guide decisions about service changes, including local access, alternatives to closures and which services should remain accessible to everyone.

Feedback from 11 participants included:

- **Community need and facility use** as important considerations when prioritising services.
- **Local access mattered**, particularly for people facing transport barriers. Some participants felt facilities were underused because they were difficult to reach.
- **Alternatives to closures** included reduced opening hours, shared facilities, partnerships and additional revenue.
- **Libraries were most frequently identified** as a service everyone should be able to access, followed by sports fields.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Demographic Data

Respondents by suburb

Suburb	Survey Count	Survey %	Census Count	Census %	Variance	Relative representation
Alicetown	18	1.7%	2694	2.5%	-0.8 pp	-30%
Ava	2	0.2%	N/A			
Avalon	30	2.9%	5247	4.9%	-2.0 pp	-40%
Belmont	22	2.1%	2688	2.5%	-0.4 pp	-15%
Boulcott	17	1.7%	2697	2.5%	-0.9 pp	-34%
Eastbourne and Eastern Bays	73	7.1%	4782	4.5%	2.6 pp	59%
Epuni	34	3.3%	3267	3.0%	0.3 pp	8%
Fairfield	17	1.7%	3174	3.0%	-1.3 pp	-44%
Gracefield	2	0.2%	102	0.1%	0.1 pp	104%
Harbour View	4	0.4%	N/A			
Hutt Central	28	2.7%	4185	3.9%	-1.2 pp	-30%
Kelson	28	2.7%	2898	2.7%	0.0 pp	1%
Korokoro	8	0.8%	1515	1.4%	-0.6 pp	-45%
Manor Park	1	0.1%	525	0.5%	-0.4 pp	-80%
Maungaraki	30	2.9%	4005	3.7%	-0.8 pp	-22%
Melling	2	0.2%	N/A			
Moerā	8	0.8%	1734	1.6%	-0.8 pp	-52%
Naenae	48	4.7%	8736	8.1%	-3.5 pp	-43%
Normandale	15	1.5%	2082	1.9%	-0.5 pp	-25%
Pencarrow Head	0	0.0%	N/A			
Petone	48	4.7%	7731	7.2%	-2.5 pp	-35%
Pomare	5	0.5%	N/A			
Seaview	1	0.1%	N/A			
Stokes Valley	376	36.5%	10200	9.5%	27.0 pp	284%
Taitā	27	2.6%	6390	6.0%	-3.3 pp	-56%
Tirohanga	6	0.6%	1254	1.2%	-0.6 pp	-50%
Wainuiomata	97	9.4%	19599	18.3%	-8.9 pp	-48%
Waiwhetū	25	2.4%	4470	4.2%	-1.7 pp	-42%
Waterloo	34	3.3%	5508	5.1%	-1.8 pp	-36%
Woburn	23	2.2%	1731	1.6%	0.6 pp	38%
I live outside Lower Hutt	26					

Respondents by age

Age	Survey Count	Survey %	Census %	Variance	Relative representation
Under 18 years	17	1.6%	7.3%	-5.7 pp	-77%
18-24	23	2.2%	7.2%	-5.0 pp	-69%
25-34	128	12.4%	18.7%	-6.3 pp	-34%
35-44	245	23.7%	18.3%	5.4 pp	30%
45-54	162	15.7%	15.9%	-0.2 pp	-1%
55-64	167	16.2%	14.4%	1.8 pp	12%
65-74	174	16.9%	10.3%	6.6 pp	64%
75+	116	11.2%	7.8%	3.4 pp	44%

Respondents by gender

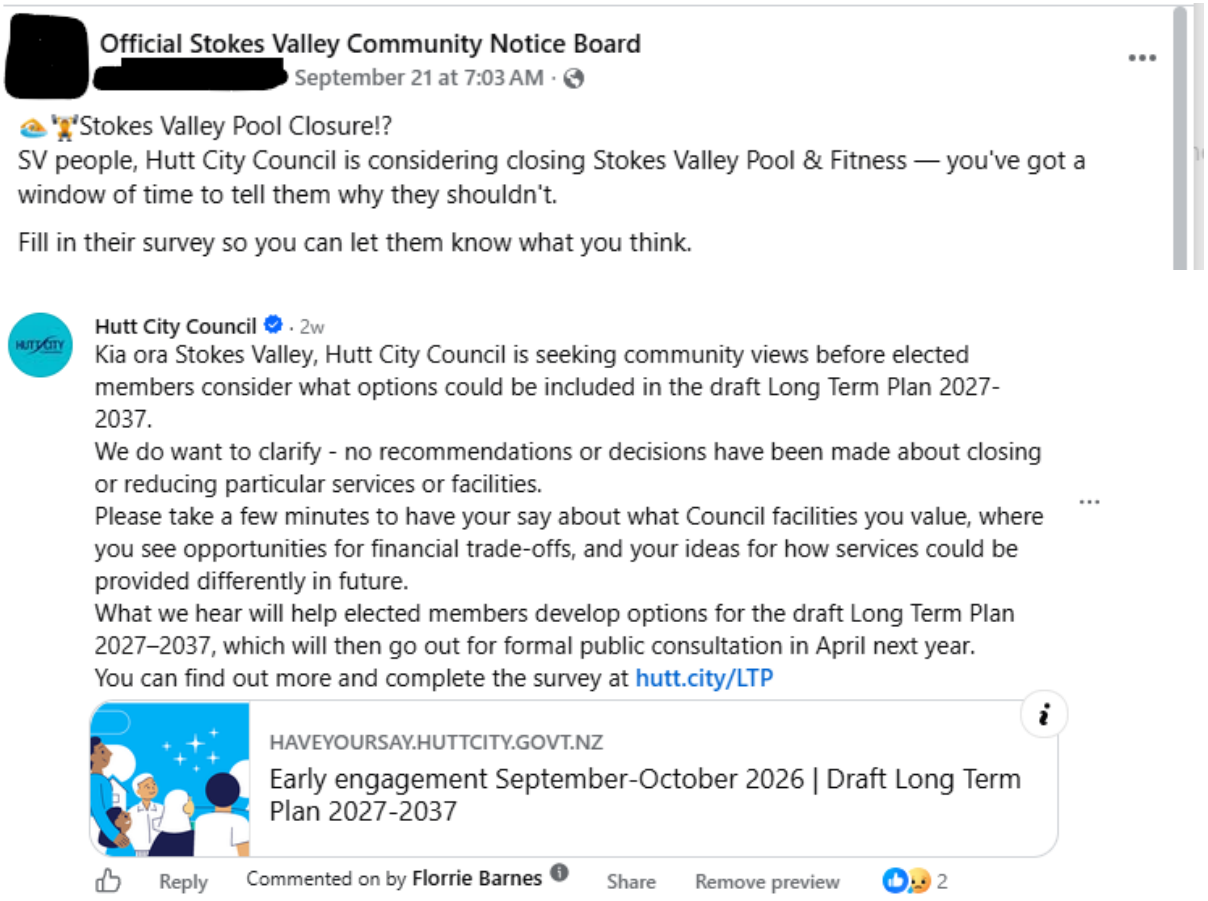
Gender	Survey Count	Survey %	Census %	Variance	Relative representation
Male	279	28.1%	49.4%	-21.3 pp	-43%
Female	713	71.8%	50.3%	21.5 pp	43%
Other	1	0.1%	0.3%	-0.2 pp	-66%

Respondents by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Survey Count	Survey %	Census %	Variance	Relative representation
Level 1					
European	836	81.7%	64.3%	17.4 pp	27%
Māori	182	17.8%	19.6%	-1.8 pp	-9%
Pacific Peoples	74	7.2%	12.2%	-5.0 pp	-41%
Asian	66	6.5%	18.6%	-12.1 pp	-65%
MELAA	15	1.5%	2.1%	-0.6 pp	-30%
Other	20	2.0%	1.1%	0.9 pp	78%

Appendix 2: Stokes Valley over-representation

On 21 September 2026, a community member shared the survey in the Stokes Valley Community Noticeboard Facebook group, stating that Council was considering closing Stokes Valley Pool & Fitness and encouraging residents to oppose its closure. Council posted a clarification that same day.



Survey responses from Stokes Valley increased sharply following the post, with 164 received that day. Stokes Valley respondents ranked pools more highly for both use and value than respondents elsewhere in the city. This affected the overall results.

If Stokes Valley responses are adjusted to reduce their over-representation, pools moved from third to fourth in the ranking of **most-used** facilities, below tracks, trails and shared paths.

The increase in responses following the Facebook post suggests that concerns about potential changes to valued local facilities can motivate participation. This is an important consideration for future LTP engagement, as communities directly affected by proposed changes may be more motivated to participate, potentially influencing the balance of responses.

Appendix 3:

Elected member engagement summary

Elected member Early Engagement

A snapshot of feedback from in-person events

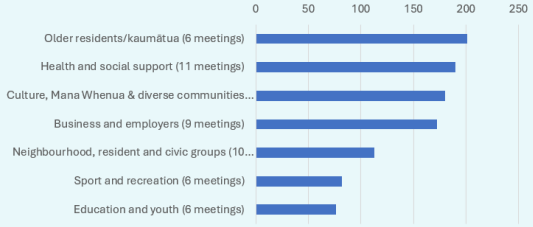
53 Stakeholder engagements

1014 Recorded attendances

9+ Localities/ citywide reach

160 Elected member visits

Engagement by primary host type number attending





Age reach: Approx. 13 to 65+; school-age (2 engagements, 15 attendance), youth/learners (3, 55), older residents/kaumātua (6, 201); adults and whānau represented across mixed-age groups.

Note: Attendance is not unique people; host types are classifications, not individual demographics.

What we heard – priorities, trends and implications

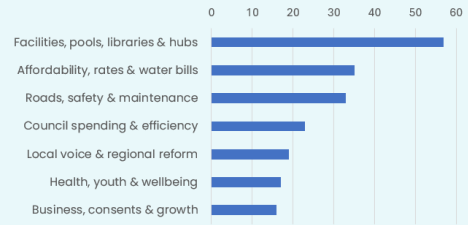
1 Affordability
Rates, water and living costs

2 Valued services
Pools, libraries and spaces

3 Value for money
Test efficiencies before cuts



Most frequently mentioned:



What groups emphasized:

Business
Costs, consents, freight, infrastructure, workforce

Older/Neighbourhoods
Accessible footpaths, safety, affordability, local facilities

Youth/Health/Community
Affordable participation, wellbeing, access to services

What this means for Council:

- Protect access to well-used facilities; prioritise maintenance and essentials; explain costs and trade-offs.
- Assess savings alongside service impacts, alternatives and who would be most affected.
- Publish validated feedback and show how it influences decisions.