AI Strategy for Hutt City Council

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Introduction

Hutt City Council's 'AI Strategy' is our explicit commitment to a future where technology enhances our community's wellbeing and prosperity.

AI, or artificial intelligence, is the use of computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as perception, reasoning, learning, decision making, and problem solving. AI has the potential to transform the way we deliver our services, enhance our staff's effectiveness, and improve our community's wellbeing. However, AI also poses significant challenges and risks, such as ethical, legal, social, and environmental implications. Therefore, we need a robust and comprehensive strategy to guide our use of AI, ensuring that it aligns with our values, policies, and obligations, and that it benefits people.

This strategy has been developed at pace and reflects our commitment to adapt swiftly to the fast-paced evolution of AI, while ensuring our foundational principles of Tika and Pono guide our journey. The execution of our strategy is also intended to be at pace.

Our strategy is built upon key elements that align with our vision of supporting Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and its people to thrive.

Key elements of our AI Strategy include:

- Positioning Hutt City Council as a leader in ethical AI practices within the local government sector.

- Investing in AI capabilities within our teams to foster a culture of curiosity, innovation and responsible AI use.

- Partnering with others to enhance collaboration and share knowledge in our AI journey.

- Honouring the Whakapapa of our data, ensuring its traceability and responsible use.

- Ensuring our AI initiatives lead to tangible community benefits.

Our AI Strategy complements our other key strategies and our Long-Term Plan, all working together to achieve the 'Integrated Vision' for Hutt City. It's crucial that our strategies align, particularly in areas such as urban design, land-use, wellbeing, and risk management.

We will review this strategy annually, allowing us to respond proactively to the rapid advancements in AI, while maintaining a strategy that is both short-term in its adaptability and long-term in setting us up for an AI-enabled future that remains human at its core.

This strategy must be read alongside the AI Policy, and the related documents that are included in Appendix 3 of that Policy.

The Strategy on a Page

We have developed the **AI Strategy on a Page** to encapsulate the strategic intent of Hutt City Council's AI initiatives. This concise guide distils the essence of our strategy, providing a high-level overview which contains the key messages for our staff and stakeholders. While it serves as a quick reference, it is supported by further detail within the broader AI Strategic Framework.

Components				
Our Vision/Purpose	AI helps us support Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive			
Why we are creating this strategy (Our Case for Change)	• We face significant financial pressures in delivering our services. AI offers us a chance to manage our costs more effectively • Our current systems and processes are not fully supporting our staff's effectiveness. By equipping them with suitable AI tools, we aim to enhance their growth, learning, skills, and work experience • The pace of AI technological advancement is remarkable. We aim to lead in adapting to these changes, influencing how they affect our operations and ways of working • Our community expects responsive, quality services tailored to their individual, whānau, and community needs. We may be able to do this through AI-driven solutions			
Goals	We want to be leaders in responsible local government AI use in Aotearoa New Zealand/Australasia	We want our policies, investment and resource decisions to be better informed by evidence and data	We will identify the benefits of our AI initiatives, ensuring that our investments enhance frontline services and lead to measurable community improvement	We will make it easy for our customers/residents to work with us
Our Foundational Principles	**1. Tika and Pono**: Our AI strategy is grounded in the principles of Tika and Pono, ensuring our use of AI is correct, right, accurate, and true. **2. Ethical Use**: We are committed to the ethical use of AI, built on trust and ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in all our AI applications. **3. Mana Enhancing**: Our use of AI will be mana enhancing, uplifting the dignity and autonomy of all people and the communities they belong to. **4. Continuous Improvement**: We will regularly review and update our policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are relevant and effective for an AI-enabled organisation, reflecting our commitment to being Pono and Tika			
Our Enabling Pillars	Governance & Risk systems	People and Culture	Data and Information management	Partnerships and collaborations
Our Key Priorities	• We will develop a robust AI governance framework that aligns with our values, policies, and legal obligations. • We will review and update our policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are relevant and effective for an AI-enabled organisation. • We will identify and improve processes that can benefit from AI solutions and achieve efficiencies and savings. • We will align our AI initiatives with our Long Term Plan commitments. • We will track and measure the benefits of our AI projects and ensure they are realised and communicated.	• We will invest in training and provide our teams with the right tools and skills to use AI effectively and ethically. • We will expect that staff will use AI tools responsibly and in line with the expectations outlined in the AI Policy. • We will create a community of AI Navigators to ensure no one is left behind. • We will experiment appropriately with new AI ideas and learn from the results to improve and innovate. • We will foster a culture of transparency, innovation, curiosity, and learning, and support our staff to adapt to new ways of working with AI.	• We will know and honour the Whakapapa of our data, ensuring we can always trace its origins, context, and usage. • We will begin by automating and digitising our processes, breaking down silos to enable seamless data flow. This will lay the groundwork for future AI integration. • We will establish a continuous data quality management system, using AI to enhance our data analysis and decision-making. • We will create an AI data registry to ensure data quality, accessibility, and security, supporting our evolving AI needs.	• We will share our AI experiences and insights with the local government sector and others and learn from their best practices. • We will develop partnerships with tech providers who can offer us innovative and tailored AI solutions and help us establish our use cases. • We will explore the possibility of a strategic partnership with PwC, who can provide us with expert advice and guidance on our AI journey.

Our Vision

Our vision for AI is to help us support Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive.

Our vision reflects our belief in the transformative benefits of AI technology, and how this can be harnessed for public good and effective delivery of public services through making smarter decisions, and fostering innovation and learning in our teams.

This vision is not standalone; it is intricately linked to our broader purpose and organisational objectives. AI is a strategic tool that can accelerate our journey towards our goals, enabling us to achieve more, faster, and with greater impact. It reflects our commitment to innovation and our dedication to the community, ensuring that every technological advancement translates into real-world benefits for the people we serve.

Our Case for Change

We have four main drivers for creating this AI strategy. They are:

1. **We face significant financial pressures**
   The financial challenges that Hutt City Council and other local government entities face are ongoing and significant. They result from inflation, substantial infrastructure needs, and increased service demands from central government. AI can help us cope with these challenges by making some of our processes more automated and optimal, cutting down on mistakes and inefficiencies, and boosting our output and effectiveness.

2. **Our current systems and processes can better support our staff**
   We have invested in our digital transformation through the Go Digital Programme, where we will integrate digital technology into all areas of our business. Utilising AI will be an important step in this transformation journey. By equipping our staff with suitable AI tools, we aim to further enhance their growth, learning, skills, and work experience. We also want to foster a culture of innovation, curiosity, and learning, and support our staff to adapt to new ways of working with AI. This will increase their current satisfaction at the Council, and develop their skills and knowledge for work opportunities now and in the future.

3. **We don't want to be left behind as technology advances**
   The pace of AI technological advancement is remarkable. We aim to lead in adapting to these changes, influencing how they affect our operations and ways of working. We also want to experiment appropriately with new AI ideas and learn from the results to improve and innovate.

4. **We want to be better at meeting community expectations**
   We're committed to delivering responsive, quality services tailored to the individual, whānau, and community needs. AI-driven solutions may enable us to personalise, customise, and enhance our service delivery, offering

more channels and options for engagement and feedback. With AI, we're likely to achieve these service improvements at a lower cost than would otherwise be possible.

Our Goals

We have four main goals for our AI strategy. They are:

1. We want to be leaders in responsible local government AI use in Aotearoa New Zealand/Australasia. We want to set an example for other councils and organisations on how to use AI ethically, transparently, and accountably, and how to ensure that AI benefits all our stakeholders.

2. We want our policies, investment and resource decisions to be better informed by evidence and data. We want to use AI to enhance our data analysis and decision-making, ensuring that we use reliable, relevant, and accurate data, and that we can explain and justify our AI decisions.

3. We want to use AI to help us tackle financial challenges. We want to use AI to achieve efficiencies and savings, ensuring that our investments enhance frontline services and lead to measurable community improvement.

4. We want to make it easy for our customers/residents to work with us. We want to use AI to improve our customer service, providing more options, convenience, and satisfaction for our customers. We also want to use AI to increase our community engagement, providing more opportunities for feedback, participation, and collaboration.

These goals are not only aspirational, but also operational. They serve as criteria for evaluating our current and future AI initiatives, as well as indicators of our progress and success. Whenever we plan, implement, or monitor an AI project, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- Does this help to position us as technology leaders?

- Does it enhance our data capability?

- Will this help reduce costs?

- Does it improve public engagement and enhance citizen centricity?

By answering these questions, we can ensure that our AI strategy is aligned with our vision, and that we are using AI in line with our Foundational Principles.

Our Foundational Principles

We have four foundational principles that guide our AI strategy. They are:

- **Tika and Pono:** Our AI strategy is grounded in the principles of Tika and Pono, ensuring our use of AI is correct, right, accurate, and true. To be Tika means to be correct, true, fair and accurate. Te be Pono is to be true, valid, honest and genuine. We will use AI in ways that are consistent with our values, policies, and legal obligations, and that respect the rights and interests of all our stakeholders.

- **Ethical Use:** We are committed to the ethical use of AI, built on trust and ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in all our AI applications. We will use AI in ways that are ethical, responsible, and beneficial for all, and that avoid harm, bias, and discrimination. As a public service organisation we see AI as a force for good, but are mindful or its use and application for harm.

- **Mana Enhancing:** Our use of AI will be mana enhancing, uplifting the dignity and autonomy of all people and the communities they belong to. We will use AI in ways that are empowering, inclusive, and respectful, and that acknowledge and support the diversity and needs of all our stakeholders.

- **Continuous Improvement:** We will regularly review and update our policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are relevant and effective for an AI-enabled organisation, reflecting our commitment to Tika and Pono. We will also monitor and evaluate our AI initiatives, ensuring that they are aligned with our goals and vision, and that they deliver the intended benefits and outcomes.

Our Enabling Pillars and Key Priorities

We have four enabling pillars that support us to deliver our AI vision and purpose for Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive.

These pillars are: Governance and Risk systems, People and Culture, Data and Information management, and Partnerships and collaborations. Each pillar includes a set of key priorities that will guide our activities and action plan for implementing AI tools and technology solutions in our organisation.

Our Pillars are all needed to give effect to our strategy. Each one is integral to delivering the full strategy – and investment and resources are essential across all pillars, as they are not optional but rather collectively necessary. Within each pillar, we have identified coordinated actions, identified through extensive stakeholder engagement, which are crucial for realising the full potential and benefits of AI.

1. Governance and Risk systems

The "Governance and Risk systems" pillar is a cornerstone of our AI Strategy. It emphasises the importance of embedding a robust AI governance framework into our current governance framework.

As outlined in our AI Policy, the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) will function as the AI Governance Committee. This will provide clarity for the roles, responsibilities, and processes for overseeing, managing and monitoring our AI initiatives. It will enable us to use our risk management framework and system that identifies, assesses, and mitigates the potential risks and challenges of using AI. Aligning our AI initiatives with Long Term Plan will provide us with a focus on achieving our goals such as those related to carbon reduction, sustainability, and climate change.

The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will develop a robust AI governance framework that aligns with our values, policies, and legal obligations.
- We will review and update our policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are relevant and effective for an AI-enabled organisation.

- We will identify and improve processes that can benefit from AI solutions and achieve efficiencies and savings.
- We will align our AI initiatives with our Long Term Plan commitments.
- We will track and measure the benefits of our AI projects and ensure they are realised and communicated.

2. People and Culture

The "People and Culture" pillar is a crucial aspect of our AI Strategy. It underscores the significance of investing in our people and fostering a culture that values transparency, innovation, curiosity, and learning.

This focus is vital as it ensures the effective, ethical, and responsible use of AI, which is integral to our success. The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will invest in training and provide our teams with the right tools and skills to use AI effectively and ethically.
- We will expect that staff will use AI tools responsibly and in line with the expectations outlined in the AI Policy.
- We will create a community of AI Navigators to ensure no one is left behind.
- We will experiment appropriately with new AI ideas and learn from the results to improve and innovate.
- We will foster a culture of transparency, innovation, curiosity, and learning, and support our staff to adapt to new ways of working with AI.

3. Data and Information management

The "Data and Information Management" pillar is a vital part of our AI Strategy. It underscores the importance of understanding and respecting the Whakapapa of our data, which involves tracing its origins, context, and usage.

This pillar also highlights the need for automating and digitising our processes to enable seamless data flow, laying the groundwork for future AI integration. Furthermore, it emphasises the establishment of a continuous data quality

management system and an AI data registry to ensure data quality, accessibility, and security.

The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will know and honour the Whakapapa of our data, ensuring we can always trace its origins, context, and usage.
- We will begin by automating and digitising our processes, breaking down silos to enable seamless data flow. This will lay the groundwork for future AI integration.
- We will establish a continuous data quality management system, using AI to enhance our data analysis and decision-making.
- We will create an AI data registry to ensure data quality, accessibility, and security, supporting our evolving AI needs.

4. Partnerships and collaborations

This pillar focuses on sharing our AI experiences and insights with the local government sector and others and learning from their best practices.

We will develop partnerships with tech providers who can offer us innovative and tailored AI solutions and help us establish our use cases. We will explore strategic partnerships with the private sector, who can provide us with expert advice and guidance on our AI journey. The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will share our AI experiences and insights with the local government sector and others and learn from their best practices.
- We will develop partnerships with tech providers who can offer us innovative and tailored AI solutions and help us establish our use cases.
- We will leverage a strategic partnership with PwC, who can provide us with expert advice and guidance on our AI journey.

Implementation

An Ambitious Strategy to guide us

This strategy sets out our how we plan to use AI to support Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive. We recognise the transformative potential of AI technology, and how it can help us better support our community. We have articulated our case for change, our goals, our foundational principles, and our enabling pillars, which will guide our actions and decisions as we embark on our AI journey.

This strategy is ambitious and was developed at pace, but we are not complacent about the challenges and risks ahead.

An embedded Governance Framework to keep us safe

We recognise that AI is a fast-changing and complex field, and that we need to be continuously learning, testing, and improving our capabilities and practices.

We also acknowledge that we have a duty to use AI in a responsible and ethical manner to build trust, and to monitor its impacts and outcomes on our community and environment.

Our governance framework will oversee the implementation and evaluation of this strategy and ensure ongoing alignment with our vision and values.

An Action Plan to deliver

This strategy is accompanied by an action plan for 2024-25, which outlines the specific initiatives and projects that we will deliver. The implementation of the action plan will also proceed at pace, but it will also be flexible in response to what we learn.