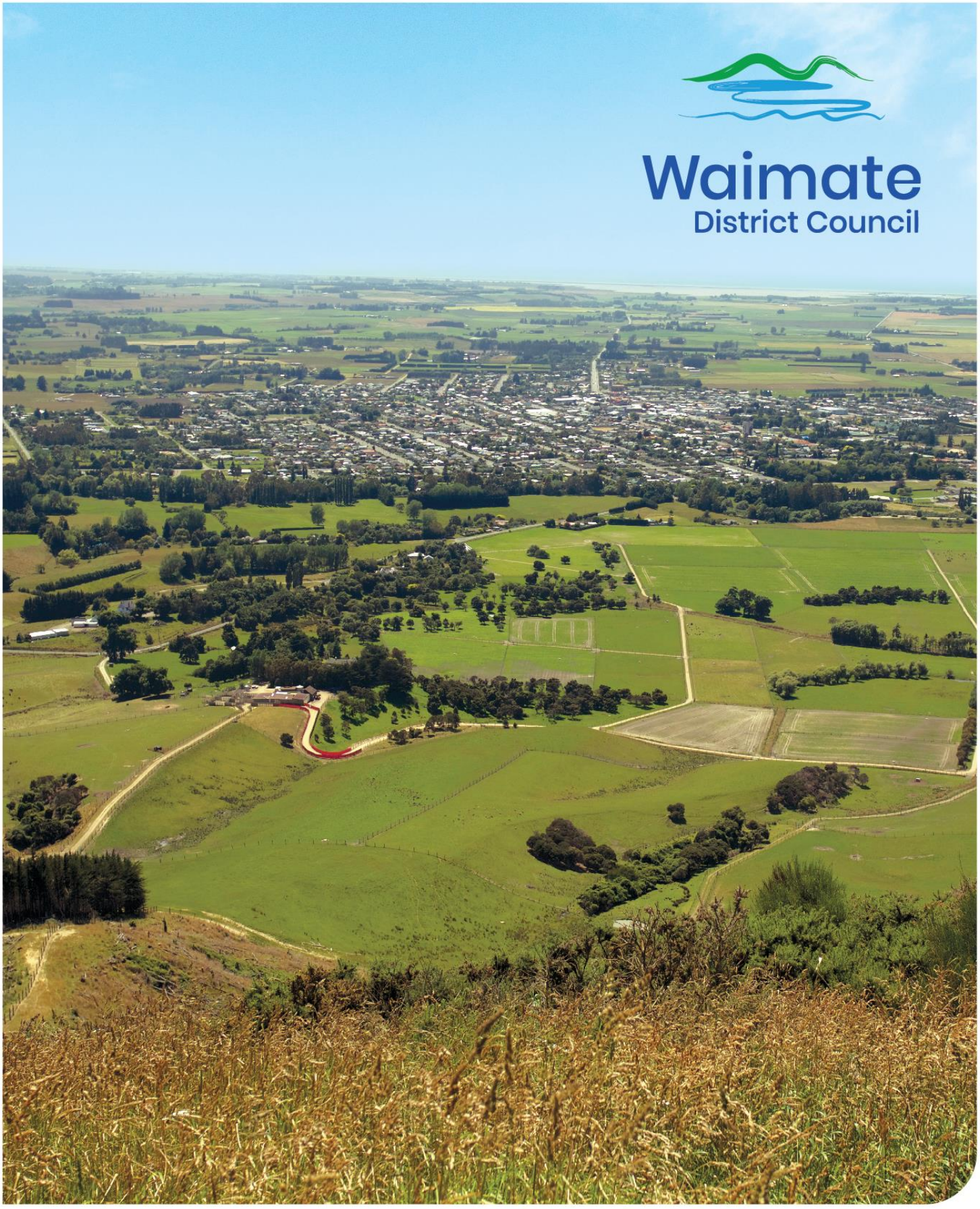
Waimate District Council



30 June 2025

301 Significance and Engagement Policy

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1.0 Purpose

1.1 Waimate District Council has developed the Significance and Engagement Policy (the Policy) to determine the significance of issues/proposals/decisions within the District, and on how to align our engagement with the public based on the degree of significance of any such matters. The Policy aligns with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act), especially Sections 76-82.

1.2 This policy exists:

a. To inform you, the public, what you can expect from the Waimate District Council regarding community engagement and the ways you can influence, and participate in, the decision-making process of the Council, and

b. To provide Council with a tool that guides the assessment of significance during the decision-making process. A decision on significance and engagement provides direction on the most optimal and appropriate level of community engagement in order to enable Council to develop a clear understanding of community views and preferences on an issue/proposal/decision.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 **Consultation**: Denotes a subset of engagement; a formal process where members of the community can present their views to the Council on a specific decision or matter that is proposed and made public. The Council must consult in compliance with the consultation principles outlined in the Local Government Act 2002, Section 82 (1), and any other legislation relevant to the decision/matter proposed.

2.2 **Decision**: Refers to all decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Council, including decisions made by Council officers under delegation.

2.3 **Engagement**: Denotes the essential process of establishing relationships with, and seeking information from, the community, as to inform and assist the decision-making process. Engagement constitutes a vital aspect of the democratic model of governance and is comprised of a continuum of community involvement.

2.4 **Significance**: In relation to any issue, proposal, decision, or other matter that concerns, or is before, a local authority, means the degree of importance of the issue, proposal, decision, or matter, as assessed by the local authority, in terms of its likely impact on, and likely consequences for:

a. The district or region;

b. Any persons who are likely to be particularly affected by, or interested in, the issue, proposal, decision, or matter;

c. The capacity of the local authority to perform its role, and the financial and other costs of doing so.

2.5 **Significant**: In relation to any issue/proposal/decision, means that any such matter has a high degree of significance.

2.6 **Special Consultative Procedure**: Refers to a formal consultation process prescribed in Local Government Act 2002, Section 83, that either must be implemented to consult on certain matters, or can be utilised by the Council to consult on other matters as considered appropriate.

2.7 **Strategic Asset**: In relation to the assets held by an authority, means an asset or group of assets that the local authority needs to retain if the local authority is to maintain its capacity to achieve or promote any outcome that it determines to be important to the current or future well-being of the community.

3.0 General Approach to Determining Significance and Decision-making

DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 On every issue requiring a policy or strategic decision- other than the issues which require processes specified under legislation (refer to Section 7 below)- Council will determine the degree of significance of the issue and the corresponding level of engagement.

3.2 The significance of the issue and appropriate forms of engagement will be considered at the earliest possible stages of a proposal or process, before decision-making occurs. If necessary, levels of significance and engagement will be reviewed as the proposal develops and as the community's views, preferences, and values evolve and/or are better revealed.

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTIONS 76-82 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2002

3.3 In making any decision, Council will comply with the decision-making requirements of the Act, regardless of the degree of significance of the decision or issue. The relevant sections of the Act prescribe procedural steps to be followed as may be applicable, and ensure that Council:

a. Is clear about why it is making the decision, and comprehends issues involved;

b. Has considered and evaluated all reasonably practical options for achieving the objective for which the decision is being made; and

c. Invests appropriate time, money, and effort into researching and evaluating the issues and options, proportionate with the significance of the matter, including its importance to the community.

DECISION-MAKING CHECKS

3.4 In making any decision, Council will be satisfied that:

a. It has necessary and sufficient information on the relevant issues and options; and

b. It knows enough about, and has given adequate consideration to, the views and preferences of affected and/or interested parties.

PROPORTIONALITY

3.5 The significance of the issue, proposal, or decision will determine how much time, money, and effort Council will invest in exploring and evaluating options and obtaining the view of affected and/or interested parties.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MAORI

3.6 Special consideration is to be given to assess the implications of an issue/decision for Ngai Tahu as tangata whenua and kaitiaki of the natural resources.

COVERING DIVERSITY

3.7 There may also be issues or decisions where there are diverse groups within the community with different concerns, interests, views, and preferences, where multiple processes will be necessary and/or appropriate to distinguish and recognise the range of positions.

LIMITATIONS

3.8 The commitment to invest in exploring options and in obtaining views of the communities and affected and/or interested parties does not mean that Council will have to fully consult with the public for every decision it makes, nor does it bind Council to the views of communities and interested and/or affected parties.

OTHER INFLUENCES

3.9 As well as the views of the communities and affected and/or interested parties, there are a wide range of information sources, considerations, and perspectives that will inform Council's decision-making, including the requirements of Government policy, technical matters, and financial implications.

4.0 Criteria and Procedures for Assessing Significance

DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 In considering whether any issue/proposal/decision is of significance under this Policy, Council will be guided by the following criteria:

CRITERIA	MEASURE
The degree to which the issue affects the District	Major and/or long term effect on one or more town/ward/District.
The degree to which the issue affects the community	Major and/or long term effect on a demographic/community/district.
The degree to which the issue affects the level of service of a significant activity	Results in isolation of, or limited access to, core service(s).

CRITERIA	MEASURE
The degree to which the issue has a financial impact on Council, or on the rating levels of communities	>10% of Council revenue (exclusive of investment assets).
The degree to which the issue has cultural relevance	Major and/or long term effect on ethnic or cultural fabric of the community.
The degree to which the issue has potential effect(s) on the delivery of Council policy and/or strategy	Results in major and/or long-term disruption in the delivery of Council's policies and/or strategies.
The degree to which the decision promotes Council's Community Outcomes and Vision, and contributes to the enhancement of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being of the community	Produces major and/or long-term negative impact on the community outcomes and/or the well-being factors.
The degree of the reversibility of the decision	The decision is irreversible.

4.2 A matter will be considered significant when one or more of the above criteria are met.

4.3 If an issue exceeds one or more of the above criteria measures, the matter is more likely to have a high degree of significance.

4.4 All decisions will be made with sensitivity to a decision's potential impact on, and interest held within, the community.

4.5 While this Policy sets out a distinct financial threshold, there may be financial decisions that do not trigger this threshold but need to be considered as significant due to triggering some, or all, of the other criteria listed.

4.6 Generally, the greater the amount of money concerned, the higher the impact on the community, and subsequently a higher degree of public interest, and therefore a higher degree of significance. However, this is not necessarily definitive. There may be some cases in which small financial transactions may attract great public interest, while some large financial transactions may accrue very little attention at all.

4.7 Council may take into account the knowledge it has previously gained about community opinion, as expressed via different channels and mediums (e.g. Long Term Plan consultation, Community Outcomes, previous public debate, media coverage, public submissions to assess significance, etc.).

PROCEDURE

4.8 Council will balance the requirements of efficient decision-making, with the requirements of Sections 76-82 of the Act, as well as any other legislative requirement/consideration, across the different levels of significance from minor to major.

4.9 Reports to Council and Committees proposing policy or strategy decisions will include a statement of Assessment of Significance, comprised of an assessment of level of significance, and recommendation on appropriate and corresponding methods of engagement, where applicable, as outlined in Appendix 3.

4.10 This statement will include:

a. whether or not the matter being reported on is considered significant in accordance with this Policy;

4.11 And if required:

a. an outline of what has been done to ensure compliance with the decision-making requirements of the Act; and

b. a recommendation of further actions required to ensure compliance; and

c. discussion of any issues, and views and preferences of affected and/or interested parties; and

d. a recommendation that Council or the Committee determines the degree of significance of the particular issue or decision.

4.12 In accordance with Section 77(1)(c) of the Act, when significant proposals or decisions relate to land or a body of water, Council will take into account the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna and, other taonga.

4.13 Council officers preparing these reports will have regard to the Significance & Engagement Policy 301 and to all relevant legislative requirements.

5.0 Strategic Assets

5.1 In respect to strategic assets, a key consideration is whether the assets are essential to the continued delivery of Council's Community Outcomes, especially in terms of enhancement of social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being factors. Decisions to transfer ownership or control of a strategic asset to, or from, Council, or to construct, replace, or abandon a strategic asset cannot be made unless they are first included in the Long Term Plan, or consulted through a Long Term Plan amendment.

5.2 For the purpose of Section 76AA (3) of the Act, Council considers the following assets to be strategic assets:

a. Regent Theatre

b. Waimate Public Library - building and collections

c. Resource Recovery Park

d. Parks and Reserves as a whole

e. Knottingley Park & Arboretum, and Victoria Park

f. Cemeteries

g. Roading Networks and connected infrastructure

h. Sewerage Networks and Treatment Plants

i. Norman Kirk Memorial Pool

j. Stormwater Networks

k. Water Treatment, Storage, and Supply Networks

l. Community Housing

m. Local Government Centre

n. Waimate Event Centre

6.0 Engagement

6.1 Once Council has determined the level of significance of a matter and has determined it needs more information on the range of views held, Council will determine how and when it should engage with the community. Depending on the matter being considered, and identified stakeholders involved, the preferred method(s) or combination of engagement tools will be identified and applied to meet the goals of the specific engagement.

6.2 In determining the processes and methods appropriate for engaging with communities on particular proposals and decisions, Council will be guided by the following:

a. the degree of significance of the issue, decision, proposal, or other matters, as determined by the criteria set out in this Policy;

b. the objectives of the engagement- the level of information sought from residents and affected and/or interested parties;

c. the preferences, capacities, views, and values of the community groups and individuals affected by and/or interested in the decision or proposal;

d. the plurality of preferences, capacities, views, and values of the community groups and individuals affected by and/or interested in the decision or proposal;

e. the benefits, limitations, and costs of range of possible processes and methods for engaging with the community groups and individuals affected by and/or interested in the decision or proposal;

f. timing issues, including any concurrent engagement processes on other matters involving the same or similar groups or communities; and

g. opportunities provided by innovative technologies (e.g. modern information technologies, social networking platforms, etc.) for efficient and effective engagement.

METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

6.3 Many methods of engagement can be used by Council, subject to the degree of significance of the issue. It is essential that Council not to use a homogenous approach to engagement, and instead to utilise engagement tools appropriate to the nature and significance of the issue, and to the community affected.

6.4 Council will use an 'engagement spectrum' approach to determine the most appropriate process and methods for engagement on particular decisions or issues. See Appendix 2, *Community Engagement Spectrum*, and Appendix 3, *Toolbox for Engagement*. These are guidelines for approaching engagement and do not limit, nor determine, the methods or degree of engagement.

INFORM COMMUNITIES

6.5 These methods are generally one-way communication approaches that are efficient and practical means to raise public awareness regarding significant issues. The aim is to provide basic information about an issue, and to build community interest accordingly, by means such as:

a. distribution of media releases, advertising, pamphlets, or other material;

b. providing information on Council's website and through social media.

6.6 As the result, communities are kept up to date with developing issues and new proposals, and communications can be targeted to interested and/or affected groups. These methods are essentially a one-way process out to communities, and as such are more useful in the earliest stages of proposals or processes. Other limitations of these methods include the costs of printing and distribution, and the challenges in reaching as widely within the communities as may be necessary.

CONSULT AND INVOLVE

6.7 A range of community engagement tools and methods can be used to have communities and particular interested and/or affected groups contribute their views, priorities, and preferences as part of Council's decision-making process.

6.8 For relatively straightforward issues or proposals, methods such as surveys conducted via various media platforms or focus groups may be effective.

6.9 For more complex issues, particularly significant planning documents and strategies, more comprehensive engagement is required. Engagement approaches used for these types of processes will include printed consultation documents, information on the Council website and social media sites, and community meetings to engage with residents and interested parties. These processes can be costly and time-consuming, and can result in low participation rates with a narrow range of people and groups engaging.

6.10 Council will continue to look for ways to effectively include opportunities for residents and affected groups and organizations to provide feedback on key planning documents.

6.11 Online engagement tools that offer cost-effective and timely feedback channels are likely to enable Council to seek community feedback more frequently on issues being considered by Council.

COLLABORATE AND EMPOWER

6.12 The value of a collaborative approach is increasingly recognised in a wide range of policy and decision-making contexts. The collaborative approach, and its associated methods, are particularly useful when there is a high degree of significance of the issue or proposal, and when there is strong community interest, capacity, and commitment associated with the issue in question. These kinds of issues and proposals tend to be complex with multiple values, perspectives, and interests at stake, and often involve complex technical or scientific questions.

6.13 Methods include, but are not limited to:

a. collaborative working groups including Council and other representatives;

b. multi-stakeholder processes such as citizen juries or panels;

c. multi-stakeholder groups;

d. interactive online tools.

6.14 These methods allow for more comprehensive research, and facilitate the exploration of a wide diversity of implications.

6.15 These processes do require on-going skilled facilitation and considerable time and resourcing in order to be effective.

7.0 Engaging with Communities on Other Matters

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2002

7.1 The Act prescribes the particular processes for councils to follow to consult and engage with communities on particular matters.

Special Consultative Procedure

7.2 The Act specifies that a Special Consultative Procedure (SCP), as defined under Section 83, must be followed for community engagement on certain plans and processes including:

a. Long Term Plan;

b. Annual Plan (if the Annual Plan includes significant new proposals not included in the Long Term Plan); and

c. Bylaws of significant interest.

7.3 Other provisions in the Act specify particular decisions or activities when community engagement is to be addressed through the public consultation for a Long Term Plan. These include:

a. a decision to transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to, or from, Waimate District Council; or a decision to construct, replace, or abandon a strategic asset;

b. a decision to significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by, or on behalf, of Waimate District Council, including a decision to commence or cease any such activity.

OTHER LEGISLATION

7.4 Many decisions made by Council will be made under legislation that prescribes the consultation and decision-making procedures required, including the procedures that must be used for public notification, considering submissions, and making decisions. Such legislation include:

a. Resource Management Act 1991;

b. Reserves Act 1977;

c. Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002;

d. Land Transport Act 1998.

7.5 Even if a decision is clearly a significant one within the meaning of the Act, where procedures for decision-making are set out in other legislation, these will be used.

8.0 Engaging with Iwi/Maori

8.1 The Act provides principles and requirements for Council that are intended to facilitate participation by Maori in local authority decision-making processes.

8.2 Section 81 of the Act states that a local authority must —

a. establish and maintain processes to provide opportunities for Maori to contribute to the decision-making process of the local authority; and

b. consider ways in which it may foster the development of Maori capacity to contribute to the decision-making process of the local authority; and

c. provide relevant information to Maori for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b)

8.3 Section 82(2) of the Act states that Council must ensure that it has in place processes for consulting with Maori in accordance with the principles of consultation (as detailed in Subsection 82 (1) of the Act).

8.4 In compliance with such requirements, Council implements the process outlined in the Waimate District Long Term Plan 2021-2031, Section ‘Statement on Involvement of Maori’.

9.0 When Council May Not Consult

9.1 Information is always necessary for the decision-making process. However, there are times Council will not consult because the issue is routine, operational, or because there is an emergency. If Council chooses not to consult on a matter, this determination will be made in accordance with the criteria below.

9.2 The Council may not consult when:

a. the matter is not of a nature or significance that requires consultation (S82(4)(c)of the Act); or

b. the Council already has a sound understanding of the views and preferences of the parties likely to be affected by, or interested in, the matter (Section 82(4)(b) of the Act); or

c. there is a need for confidentiality or commercial sensitivity (Section 82(4)(d) of the Act); or

d. the costs of consultation outweigh the benefits of it (Section 82(4)(e) of the Act); or

e. the matter has already been addressed by the Council's policies or plans, which have previously been consulted on; or

f. Emergency Management activities during a state of emergency (Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002); or

g. an immediate or quick response/decision is needed, or it is not reasonably practicable to engage given the required response timeframe; or

h. works are required unexpectedly, or following further investigations on projects, already approved by the Council; or

i. the works required are related to the operation and maintenance of a Council asset, and responsible management requires the works to take place (i.e. overall constituting a case of 'business as usual'); or

j. when Council has consulted on the issue in the last 24 months, where there has been no material change to the issue over this period.

9.3 Where the above listed circumstances apply and consultation is not to be undertaken, the Council is still required to give consideration to the views and preferences of parties likely to be affected by, or to have an interest in, the matter (Section 78 (1) of the Act). The Act requires that this consideration be in proportion to the significance of the matters affected by the decision (Section 79 (1)).

10.0 Identification of Inconsistent Decisions

10.1 When Council makes a decision that is inconsistent with this policy, the steps identified in Section 80 of the Act will be undertaken. In such a situation, Council will clearly identify:

a. the inconsistency; and

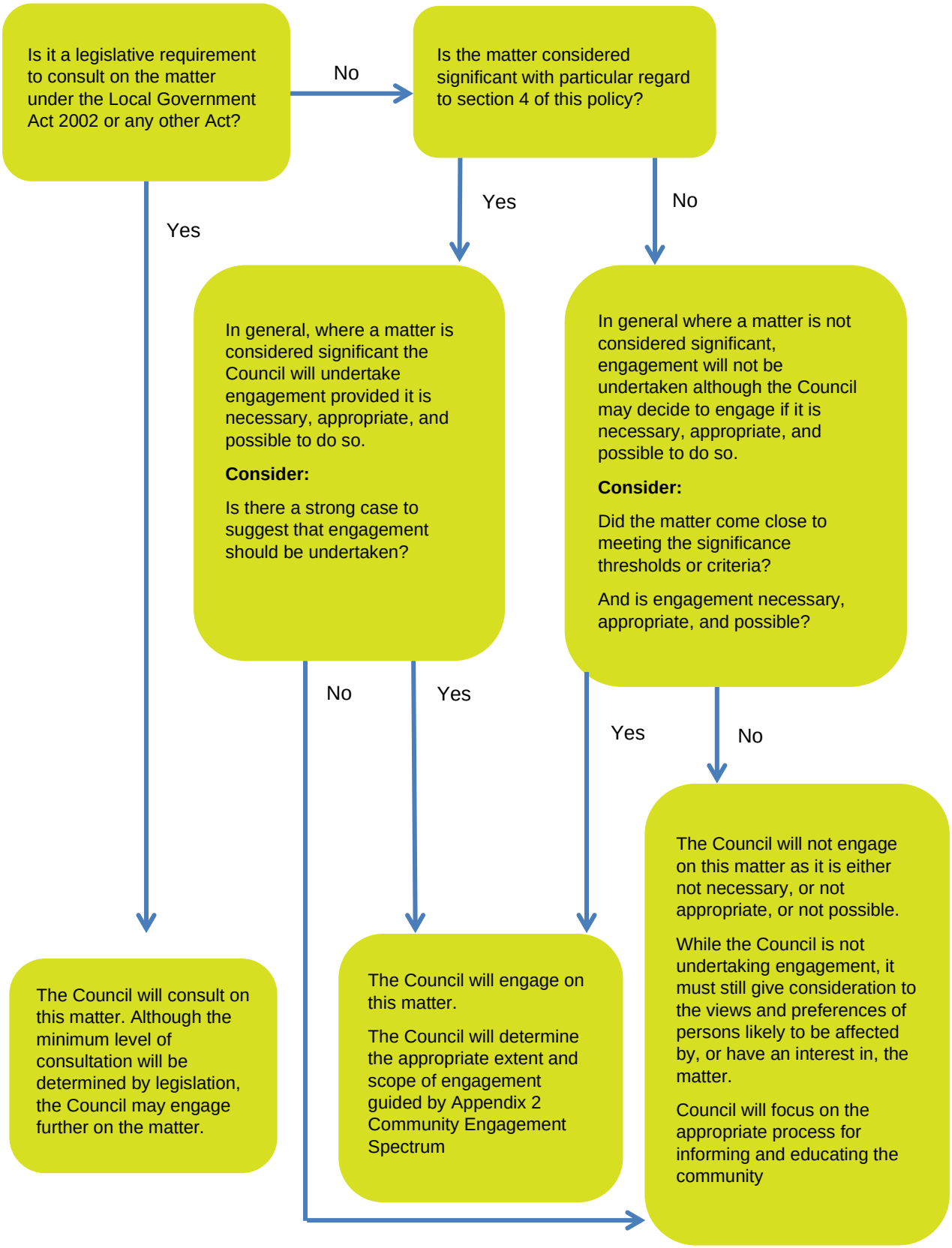
b. the reason for the inconsistency; and

c. any intention of Council to amend the policy or plan to accommodate the decision.

11.0 Document Control

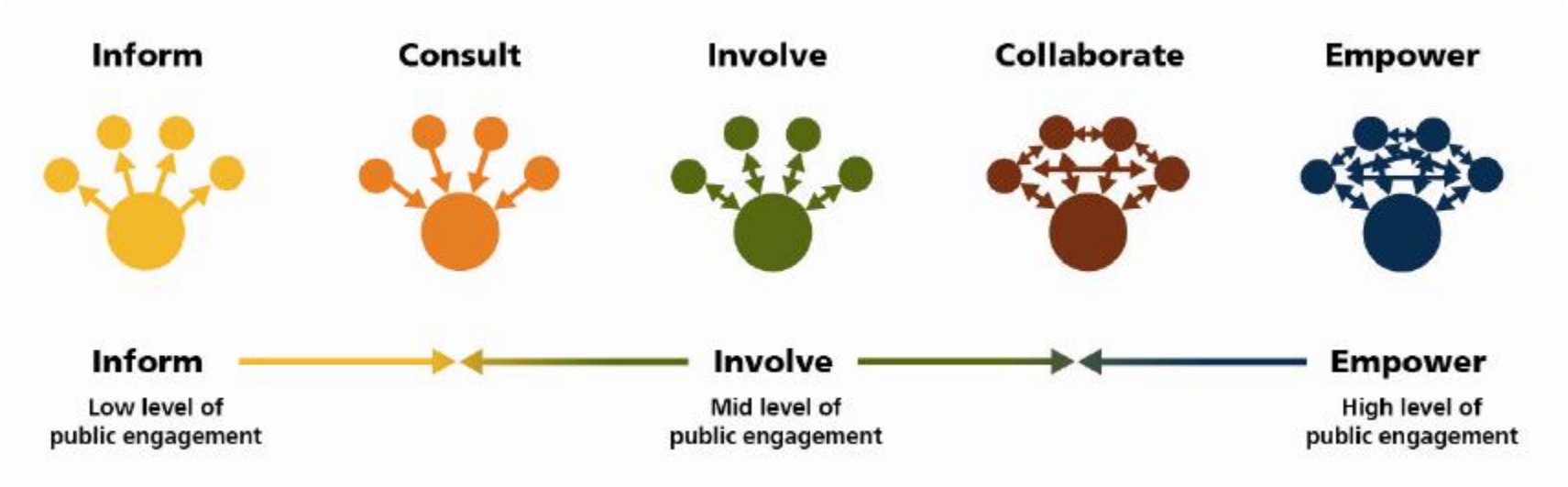
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Council resolution number:	2025/1

Appendix 1: Significance and Engagement Flowchart

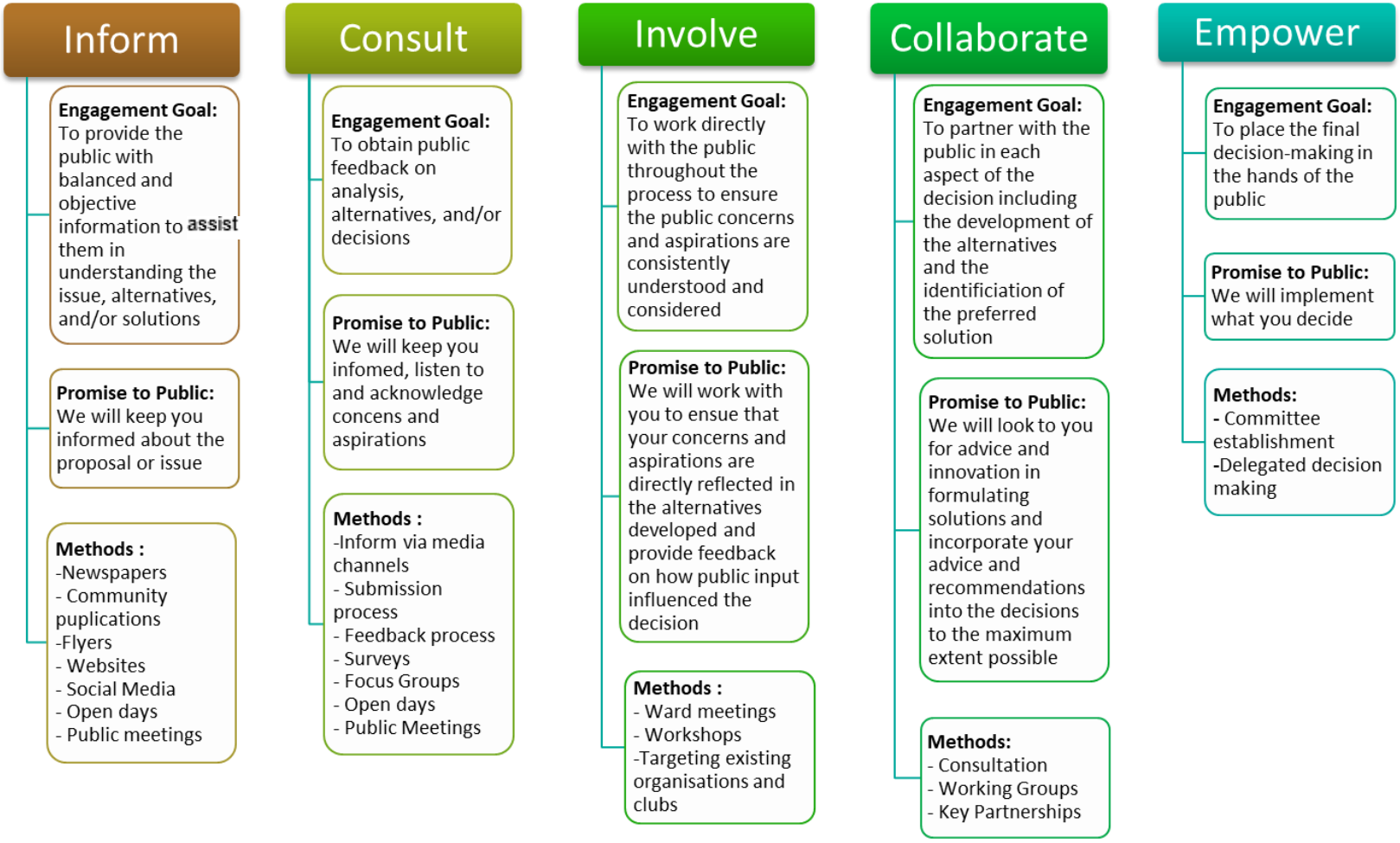


Appendix 2: Community Engagement Spectrum

This diagram details how Council may engage with the public based on the level of significance. Both significance and engagement are flexible along the spectrum, and Council is not limited to these methods of engagement with the public.



Appendix 3: Toolbox for Engagement



Appendix 4: Engagement Channels

Council's primary tools for engagement

'Notify Me' is Waimate District Council's public notification system. All important alerts (civil defence, water alerts) can now be sent via email and text messages. Additionally, stay in the loop with the latest Council news and district-wide events with a fortnightly email. Sign up on Council's website.	'Let's Chat Waimate District' is our primary engagement platform (Engagement HQ) where our community can share ideas, discuss important topics, provide feedback on Council's projects, and help shape the future of our district. LetsChat.waimatedc.govt.nz	Important information and announcements can always be found on Council's Website www.waimatedc.govt.nz --- Council's Facebook page is regularly updated with relevant information and important notices. Facebook.com/WaimateDistrictCouncil