



te kaunihera ā-rohe o  
**matamata-piako**  
district council



# Matamata-Piako District Council Significance and Engagement Policy 2023

**Adopted by Council 23 August 2023**

Department	Strategic Partnerships and Governance
Policy Type	External
CM Reference	2765470
Council Resolution Date	23 August 2023
Policy Effective From	23 August 2023
Engagement	Section 82, Local Government Act 2002
Policy Supersedes	Significance and Engagement Policy 2020
Review Frequency	From time to time, as required by Council or legislative changes
Next Review Date	August 2026



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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Council is committed to engaging with the community to ensure decisions made reflect the aspirations of the community.
- 1.2 This Policy helps Council to determine:
  - What the really important ('significant') issues are to the community, i.e. **when** we will engage, and;
  - How we will go about involving the community in making those decisions ('engagement'), i.e. **how** we will engage.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 To enable Council and its communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities.
- 2.2 To provide clarity about how and when communities can expect to be engaged in Council decisions.
- 2.3 To guide Council in determining the appropriate types and/or level of engagement to support robust decision-making.
- 2.4 To set out assets considered by Council to be strategic assets.

## 3. Application of Policy

- 3.1 This Policy will be applied to all proposals enacted under the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA). It does not affect other legislation that has specific consultation requirements (e.g. the Resource Management Act 1991).
- 3.2 An assessment of the degree of significance and the appropriate level of engagement, will be considered in the early stages of a proposal before decision-making occurs and, if necessary, reconsidered as a proposal develops.
- 3.3 Council is required to follow the special consultative procedure as set out in section 83 of the LGA, or to carry out consultation in accordance with, or give effect to, section 82 of the LGA on certain matters regardless of the degree of significance determined using this Policy.
- 3.4 When Council makes a decision that is significantly inconsistent with this Policy, the steps identified in Section 80 of the LGA will be undertaken.

## 4. General Principles

- 4.1 Council acknowledges its responsibility as a decision-making authority on behalf of the community and recognises that public input into decision-making is an essential part of ensuring that decisions reflect the aspirations of its communities.
- 4.2 Council actively encourages and empowers people to become involved in community issues that may affect them and aims to seek a balanced and representative understanding of views on the relevant issues.
- 4.3 Council acknowledges its responsibilities under the LGA and is committed to the inclusion of Māori in Council's decision-making processes.
- 4.4 Council acknowledges the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and recognise and provide for the special relationship between Māori, their culture, traditions,

land, water and taonga. This includes recognising those who have mana whenua, or inherited rights of land ownership or customary authority.

- 4.5 Where joint management agreements, memorandum of understanding or any other similar high-level agreements exist, these will be considered as a starting point when engaging with Māori.
- 4.6 Council will pay particular regard to iwi aspirations when determining the degree of significance. This is included as a consideration in Schedule 3 of this Policy.
- 4.7 Council recognises that the more significant an issue, proposal, decision, or matter, the more likely Council will need to engage with the community on their views, and the more time and resources will be dedicated towards those engagement processes.
- 4.8 Council will adapt how it engages with communities depending on the target audience and the needs and/or preferences of that audience.
- 4.9 Any engagement Council has with the community will be conducted in good faith and in an open, honest, and transparent manner. Council will be clear about the scope and purpose of the engagement.
- 4.10 Council will consider the views presented, respect and value input, and make decisions with an open mind.

## **5. Determining Significance**

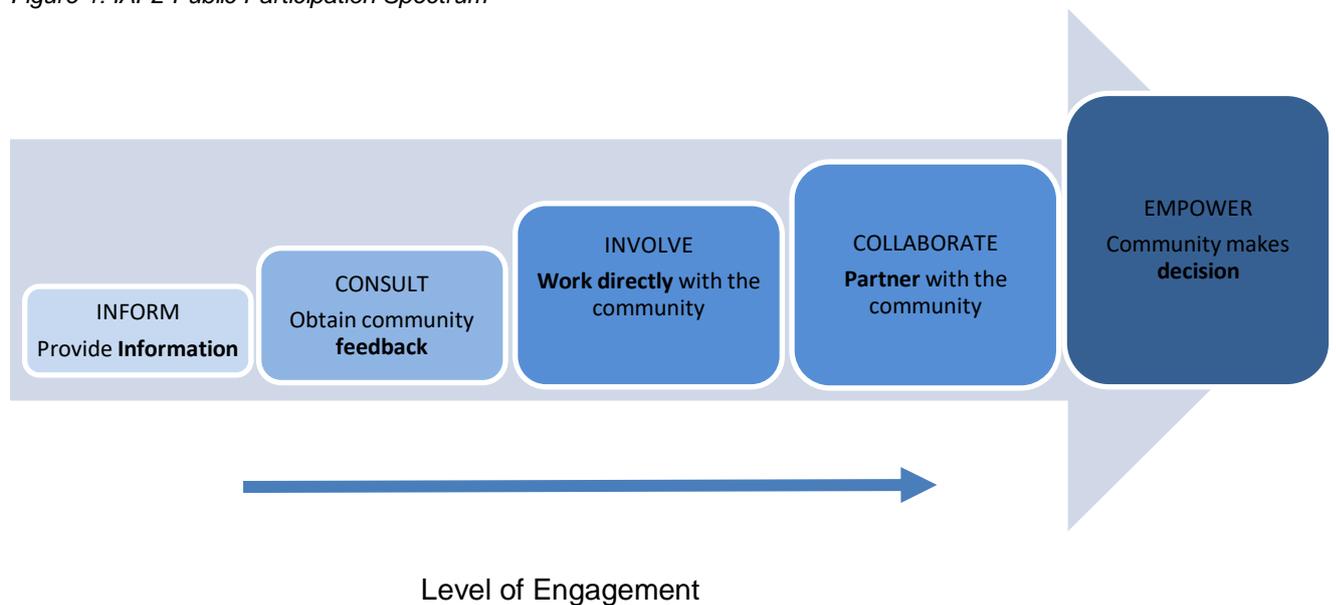
- 5.1 Council will establish the degree of significance of each issue, proposal, decision or other matter on a case-by-case basis using the considerations outlined in Schedule 3 of this Policy.
- 5.2 The criteria listed in Schedule 3 is in alignment with the definition of significance in the LGA in terms of the likely impact and consequences for:
  - a) the current and future social, economic, environmental, or cultural well-being of the district;
  - b) any persons who are likely to be particularly affected by, or interested in, the issue, proposal, decision or matter;
  - c) the capacity of Council to perform its role, and the financial costs of doing so.
- 5.3 The following information will be provided to assist in decision-making for inclusion in Council reports:
  - a) the degree of significance of the issue, proposal, decision or matter (low, medium or high);
  - b) whether the decision involves a strategic asset(s) (Schedule 4 of this Policy);
  - c) the appropriate level of engagement given the degree of significance; and,
  - d) a proposed engagement approach/plan.

## **6. Engagement**

- 6.1 Engagement is a process that involves all or some of the community and is focussed on decision-making or problem solving. Engaging with our community is a vital part of Council's decision-making process.
- 6.2 The Guide to Determining Significance and Engagement (Schedule 3 of this Policy) provides examples of how and when communities can expect to be engaged in the decision-making process and the types of engagement Council may use to respond to specific issues.

- 6.3 Council will seek opportunities to involve or collaborate with our communities, such as through place-making initiatives, community-led planning and other participatory democracy methods.
- 6.4 Reference may be made to the Council's Engagement Toolbox to assist Council in undertaking genuine engagement leading to beneficial outcomes for the communities of Matamata-Piako.
- 6.5 The Public Participation Spectrum from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is a widely accepted framework for comparing the possible types of engagement with the community. This approach indicates different engagement approaches on a spectrum from providing information through to community empowerment. Differing levels of engagement may be required during the varying phases of decision-making on an issue, and for different stakeholders.

Figure 1: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum



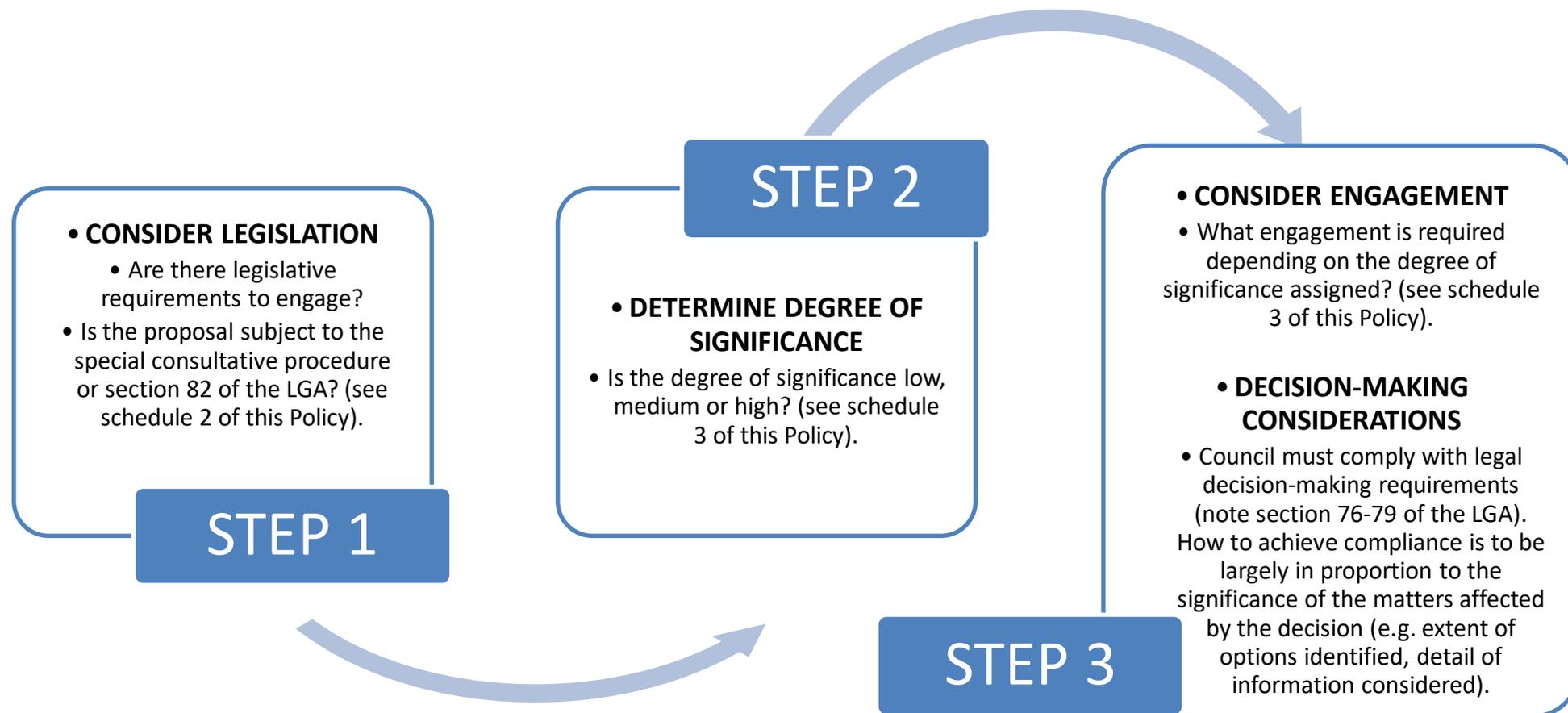
## 7. When will Council not engage?

- 7.1 There are times when it will not be appropriate to engage with the community on certain issues, proposals, decisions, or matters.
- 7.2 Examples where Council won't generally engage with the community include:
- Organisational decisions (e.g. staff changes and operational matters) that do not materially reduce a level of service;
  - Decisions that are consistent with Council's Long-Term Plan or another policy or plan that has already been subject to consultation required by legislation or this Policy;
  - There is already clear direction on a strategy or plan and Council has already made up its mind about an issue and therefore does not have a sufficiently open mind to carry out meaningful engagement;
  - Protection of the privacy and safety of individuals (as provided for in the Privacy Act 2020);
  - Maintenance of confidentiality and/or commercial sensitivity to enable Council to carry out commercial activity or negotiations without prejudice (as provided for in the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987) such as awarding contracts;

- Where Council is acting with urgency in a crisis (for example under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002);
- Decisions taken to manage an urgent issue;
- Decisions to act where is necessary to:
  - Comply with the law;
  - Save, or protect life, health or amenity and prevent serious damage to property;
  - Avoid, remedy or mitigate an adverse effect on the environment;
  - Protect the integrity of existing and future infrastructure and amenity.
- Entry or exit from a development agreement (private contract) under section 207A of the LGA;
- Decisions in relation to regulatory and enforcement activities.

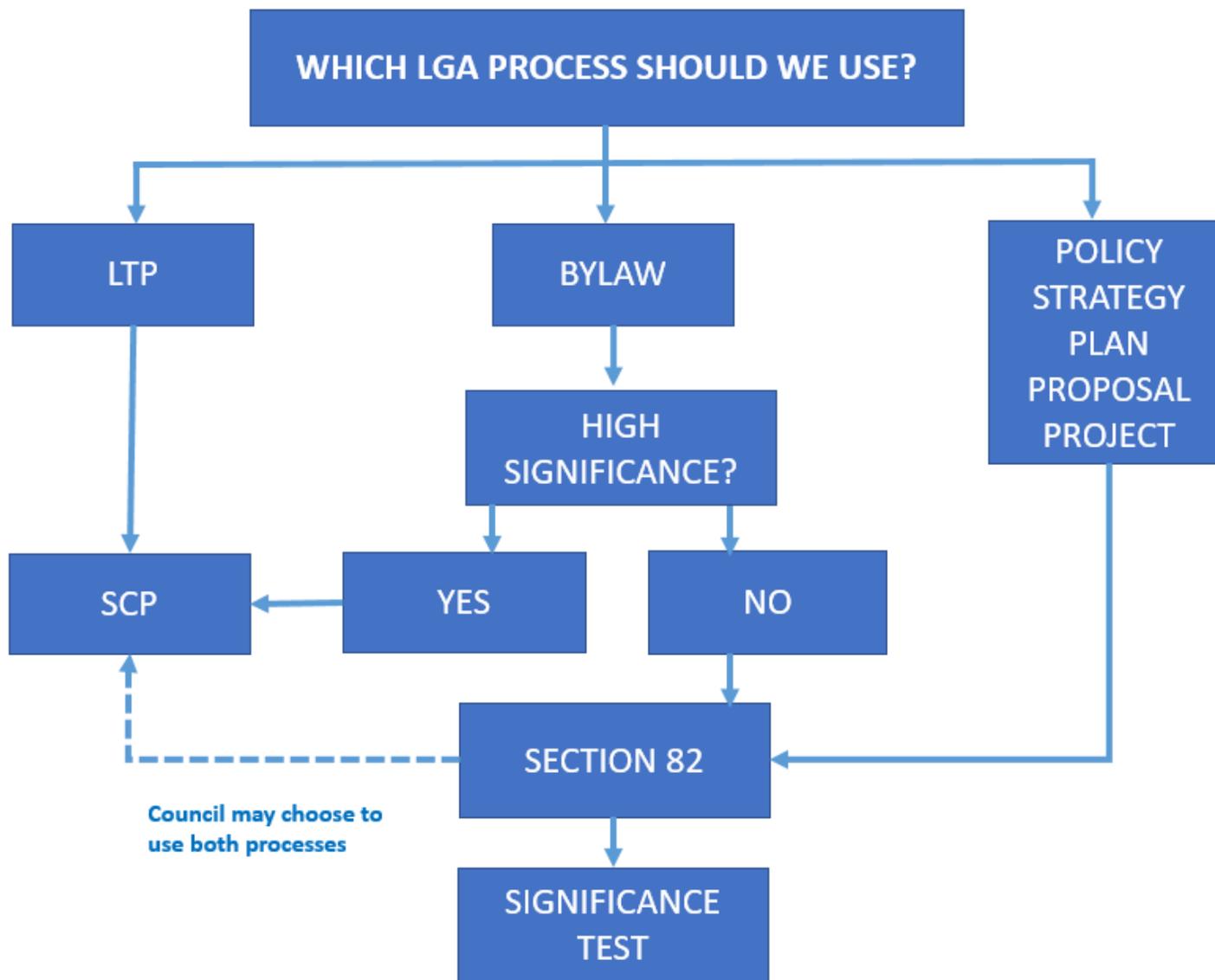
## 8. Schedule 1 – How to Apply the Significance and Engagement Policy

The degree of significance should be considered when first starting a project and revisited at key milestones along the way. This is to help guide engagement from the very beginning. Follow the below steps to understand the degree of significance and what engagement may be required.



Ensure to outline the degree of significance and proposed level of engagement in your reports to Council and clearly document the rationale to support your conclusions.

9. Schedule 2 – Consultation processes under the LGA



## 10. Schedule 3 – Guide to Determining Significance and Engagement

Less time  
Less resources



More time  
More resources

When can the community expect to be involved?		
LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Once a decision has been made, or when action from the community is required.	When there is a draft to provide feedback on, however this may involve pre-consultation with particular interest groups contributing to the draft.	Specific community interest groups would generally be involved from the very beginning and throughout the whole process through to completion.

Degree of significance		
LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Key considerations	Key considerations	Key considerations
Affects a <i>small sub group/s</i>	Affects a <i>large sub group/s</i>	Affects a <i>wide range of people</i>
Likely to have <i>little</i> public interest	Likely to have <i>moderate</i> public interest	Likely to have <i>high</i> public interest
<i>Low</i> consequences for the present and future community (document what these consequences may be)	<i>Moderate</i> consequences for the present and future community (document what these consequences may be)	<i>Large</i> consequences for the present and future community (document what these consequences may be)
The issue, proposal, decision, or matter is <i>unlikely to be of cultural significance</i> to Māori and their relationship to culture, traditions, land, water and taonga	The issue, proposal, decision, or matter is likely to be of <i>moderate cultural significance</i> to Māori and their relationship to culture, traditions, land, water and taonga	The issue, proposal, decision, or matter is likely to be of <i>high cultural significance</i> to Māori and their relationship to culture, traditions, land, water and taonga
The issue, proposal, decision, or matter is <i>strongly aligned</i> with iwi aspirations and/or iwi have expressed support for the matter	The issue, proposal, decision, or matter is <i>moderately aligned</i> with iwi aspirations and/or there is no clear understanding/consensus	The issue, proposal, decision, or matter is <i>not aligned</i> with iwi aspirations and/or iwi have expressed opposition to the matter

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<i>Minimal</i> financial impact (can be funded within existing budgets and/or no or minimal impact on rates/debt levels)	<i>Moderate</i> financial impact (not funded within existing budgets and/or moderate impact on rates/debt levels)	<i>Significant</i> financial impact (not funded within existing budgets and/or significant impact on rates/debt levels)
Decision is <i>easily</i> reversed	Decision is <i>moderately difficult</i> to reverse	Decision is <i>highly difficult</i> to reverse
Decision is likely to have a <i>minimal</i> flow on effect for future plans or budgets	Decision is likely to have a <i>minor</i> flow on effect for future plans or budgets	Decision is likely to have a <i>significant</i> flow on effect for future plans or budgets
Decision is <i>unlikely to affect</i> the level of service of a Significant Activity	Decision is likely to <i>moderately affect</i> the level of service of a Significant Activity	Decision is likely to <i>significantly affect</i> the level of service of a Significant Activity
The decision is considered to <i>strongly support</i> the District adapt to climate change and/or may result in a positive impact on the environmental well-being of communities	The decision is considered to <i>moderately support</i> the District adapt to climate change and/or considered to have a negligible impact on the environmental well-being of communities	The decision is <i>not considered to support</i> the District adapt to climate change and/or may result in a negative impact on the environmental well-being of communities
Views of the community are <i>already known</i>	Views of the community are already known however <i>may have changed</i> since views were initially sought	Views of the community are <i>not known</i>
There are <i>no significant changes</i> to what has already been agreed with the community through previous engagement	There are <i>minor changes</i> to what has already been agreed with the community through previous engagement	There are <i>significant changes</i> to what has already been agreed with the community through previous engagement

### Engagement – what might this involve?

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>If a matter is of low significance, Council can choose not to engage unless required by legislation. Council may choose to engage to provide openness and transparency to its community in its decision-making.</p> <p>Council may assist in understanding by providing information to the community about something that is going to happen, or has happened.</p> <p>This may involve the use of the below tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• E-newsletters</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Brochures/Fact Sheets</li> <li>• Public Notices</li> <li>• Publishing the decision on Council's website</li> </ul>	<p>If a matter is of medium significance, Council may decide to engage. This may involve two-way communications designed to obtain public feedback, ideas, and suggested alternatives on proposals to inform decision-making. Council may also decide it is not appropriate or necessary to engage with the community.</p> <p>It may be appropriate for Council to consider more participatory processes such as co-design or participatory budgeting to ensure that community views are understood and considered prior to decision-making.</p> <p>This may involve the use of the below tools as well as those listed in the 'low' column:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Days</li> <li>• Attending community events (e.g. market days)</li> <li>• Formal submissions and hearings</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Workshops/Focus Groups</li> </ul>	<p>If a matter is of high significance, Council must engage with the community under this Policy.</p> <p>Depending on the degree of significance, Council would work together with the community to develop understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions.</p> <p>This would likely involve large scale publicity and may include both informal engagement/discussions with the community followed by formal consultation in accordance with the LGA.</p> <p>This may involve the use of the below tools as well as those listed in the 'low' and 'medium' columns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnering with the community, e.g. co-drafting, co-designing</li> <li>• Citizens Assemblies</li> </ul>

### Examples of where Council may use these engagement methods

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor amendment to an existing bylaw or policy that has low community interest</li> <li>• Adoption of an Annual Plan that largely reflects what was agreed in the Long-Term Plan</li> <li>• A change to Council user fees and charges that affects a sub group, e.g. Building Consent fees.</li> <li>• An operational decision made by Council officers under delegation during the implementation of a Council decision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of or major/significant amendment to a bylaw or policy</li> <li>• Adoption of an Annual Plan with minor changes to what was agreed in the Long Term Plan</li> <li>• Proposing a moderate change to Council's level of service of a significant activity that will have a moderate impact on a sub group of the community, e.g. library opening hours.</li> <li>• A moderate investment, e.g. a project partially funded through other sources (an example of this may be a community playground).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of a Long Term Plan</li> <li>• Adoption of an Annual Plan that proposes major changes to what was agreed in the Long Term Plan</li> <li>• A large investment, e.g. a new waste water treatment plant</li> <li>• Ceasing a Council activity</li> <li>• Proposing a large change to the level of service for a significant activity that will have a major impact on a large number of people, e.g. parks and open spaces.</li> <li>• Transfer of a strategic asset.</li> </ul>

## 11. Schedule 4 – Strategic Assets

Section 5 of the LGA requires the following to be listed in this Policy:

- a) any asset or group of assets listed in accordance with section 76AA(3) by the local authority; and
- b) any land or building owned by the local authority and required to maintain the local authority's capacity to provide affordable housing as part of its social policy; and
- c) any equity securities held by the local authority in—
  - i. a port company within the meaning of the Port Companies Act 1988
  - ii. an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966.

The following is a list of assets or group of assets that the Council needs to retain if it is to maintain its capacity to achieve or promote any outcome that it determines to be important to the current or future wellbeing of the community.

The assets listed refer to the assets as a whole that provide services to the whole district.

### Parks and Open Spaces

- Firth Tower Reserve
- Hetana Street Reserve
- Howie Park
- Te Aroha Domain
- Boyd Park
- Matamata Domain
- Morrinsville Recreation Ground
- Matamata Cemetery
- Maukoro Cemetery
- Morrinsville Cemetery
- Piako Cemetery
- Te Aroha Cemetery
- Waharoa Cemetery
- Matamata (Waharoa) Aerodrome

### Assets owned and required to maintain our capacity to provide affordable housing

- Elderly Person Housing

### Community facilities and buildings

- Libraries
- Council offices
- Morrinsville Events Centre
- Matamata-Piako Civic and Memorial Centre
- Headon Events Centre, Matamata
- Silver Fern Farms Events Centre, Te Aroha
- Swim Zone Matamata
- Swim Zone Morrinsville
- Swim Zone Te Aroha

### Infrastructure Assets<sup>1</sup>

- Roding network
- Water reticulation network and treatment plants
- Waste water reticulation network and treatment plants
- Stormwater reticulation network

### Equity held in an airport company within the meaning of the Airport Authorities Act 1966

- Shareholding in Waikato Regional Airport Limited

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<sup>1</sup> Note that legislation before the House of Representatives proposes to transfer ownership of Council's water assets. Following the enactment of relevant legislation, Council may amend its strategic asset list accordingly without consultation.

## 12. Schedule 5 – Definitions

<b>Community</b>	Includes people or groups of people who live in the district and/or have a connection with the district and may be affected by the issue, proposal, decision, or matter subject to engagement.
<b>Consultation</b>	Involves Council providing information relevant to an issue, proposal, decision, or matter, seeking information and perspectives that may not otherwise have been taken into account, listening to what the community has to say, considering their responses, and then making a decision. Consultation is one of the tools used in engagement.
<b>Council</b>	Means Matamata-Piako District Council or any Committee, Sub-Committee or Elected Member of Council or officer of other person authorised to exercise the authority of Council.
<b>Decision</b>	Refers to all the decisions made by, or on behalf of, Council including those made under delegation.
<b>District</b>	Refers to the Matamata-Piako District.
<b>Engagement</b>	The process of working collaboratively with the community to develop ideas, concepts and/or proposals in order to inform and assist Council decision-making.
<b>Policy</b>	Refers to the Matamata-Piako District Council Significance and Engagement Policy (this document).
<b>Significance</b>	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 current and future social, economic, environmental, or cultural well-being of 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
<b>Significant</b>	In relation to any issue, proposal, decision, or other matter, means that the issue, proposal, decision, or other matter has a high degree of significance
<b>Significant Activity</b>	Is an activity (or group of activities) as listed below: The provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and open spaces as listed in this Policy as a Strategic Asset</li> <li>• Library services</li> <li>• Cemeteries</li> <li>• Elderly person housing</li> <li>• Aquatic facilities (including spa facilities)</li> <li>• District event centres</li> <li>• The roading network as a whole</li> <li>• The water reticulation network and treatment plants as a whole</li> <li>• The waste water reticulation network and treatment plants as a whole</li> <li>• The stormwater reticulation network as a whole.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Asset</b>	Means an asset or group of assets as set out in section 5(1) of the LGA. Council's strategic assets are listed in schedule 4 of this Policy.
<b>Sub Group</b>	Means an assortment of people commonly recognised as a group/collection within the district's community, i.e. residents of a recognised town e.g. Morrinsville, ward or particular area (e.g.; CBD), households/businesses along the length of a major road, dog owners, users of a district reserve/facility/service, etc.