

Improving Auckland Council's Local Board Planning and Accountability Framework

19 July 2026

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This submission concerns Auckland Council's framework for preparing Local Board Plans, Local Board Agreements and annual reporting.
- 1.2. It does not comment on the content of any individual Local Board Plan.
- 1.3. The objective is to strengthen local democracy by improving planning, accountability and community participation.

2. The Opportunity

- 2.1. The Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 envisages Local Boards representing the interests and preferences of their communities.
- 2.2. Auckland Council's current planning processes provide opportunities for consultation, but they place much greater emphasis on consulting on Council proposals than on enabling communities to help shape those proposals.
- 2.3. The result is that many residents see consultation as commenting on decisions that have largely already been made.
- 2.4. Strengthening community participation earlier in the planning process would improve confidence in Local Boards and increase democratic accountability.

3. A Better Planning Cycle

- 3.1. The planning cycle should become:

Report → Listen → Plan → Fund → Deliver → Report

- 3.2. Communities should first understand how existing services have performed before being asked what should happen next.
- 3.3. Local Board Plans should then explain:
 - 3.3.1. what communities said;
 - 3.3.2. what priorities were identified;
 - 3.3.3. why particular priorities were selected;
 - 3.3.4. how success will be measured.

- 3.4. Local Board Agreements should fund those priorities and set service level performance measures.
- 3.5. Annual reporting should demonstrate whether the agreed outcomes have been achieved.

4. Community Performance Measures

- 4.1. Auckland Council should distinguish between **management performance measures** used to manage services and **community performance measures** used to assess whether the outcomes sought by the community have been achieved.

Management performance measure	Community performance measure
Number of community events delivered	Percentage of residents attending at least one community event each year
Kilometres of pest control completed	Improvement in biodiversity indicators or resident observations
Number of engagement meetings held	Percentage of residents who believe they had an opportunity to influence Local Board decisions
Number of advocacy meetings	Number of advocacy objectives achieved or materially advanced

- 4.2. Management performance measures assist Auckland Council to manage service delivery.
- 4.3. Community performance measures enable residents to assess whether public expenditure has delivered the outcomes they value.
- 4.4. Both forms of measurement are necessary.
- 4.5. Community performance measures should normally remain unchanged throughout each three-year Local Board term to enable meaningful comparison of performance over time.

5. Local Community Metric Review Panels

- 5.1. Each Local Board should establish a Local Community Metric Review Panel early in each three-year term as part of its normal appointments process.
- 5.2. The Panel should comprise:

- 5.2.1. three independent members appointed following public nominations from within the Local Board area;
 - 5.2.2. one Local Board member participating in discussion but not decision-making;
 - 5.2.3. one Auckland Council staff member participating in an advisory capacity but not decision-making.
- 5.3. The Panel should consider all proposals for new community performance measures, amendments to existing measures and retirement of obsolete measures.
- 5.4. The Panel should seek to reach recommendations by consensus.
- 5.5. Where consensus cannot be reached, the existing community performance measure should remain unchanged.

6. Community Participation and Reporting

- 6.1. During consultation on Auckland Council's Annual Plan, residents should be invited to propose:
 - 6.1.1. new community performance measures;
 - 6.1.2. amendments to existing measures;
 - 6.1.3. retirement of obsolete measures.
- 6.2. These proposals should be provided directly to the Local Community Metric Review Panel.
- 6.3. Before consultation begins on each Local Board Plan, the Panel should publish a brief report identifying:
 - 6.3.1. recommended additions, amendments or deletions to community performance measures;
 - 6.3.2. the reasons for its recommendations;
 - 6.3.3. comments on whether the existing community performance measures continue to reflect community priorities.
- 6.4. The Panel's report should be published in full as part of the Local Board consultation material.
- 6.5. Where the Local Board decides not to adopt one or more of the Panel's recommendations, it should briefly explain its reasons.

7. Benefits

- 7.1. These changes would:
 - strengthen local democracy;
 - improve public confidence in consultation;
 - encourage greater participation;
 - improve accountability;

- strengthen the connection between Local Board Plans, Local Board Agreements and annual reporting;
- help reverse growing public apathy and distrust by giving communities a genuine role in defining success.

8. Recommendations

8.1. Auckland Council is requested to:

- 8.1.1. strengthen Local Board Plans as strategic planning documents;
- 8.1.2. improve integration between planning, funding and reporting;
- 8.1.3. introduce community performance measures alongside management measures;
- 8.1.4. establish Local Community Metric Review Panels for each Local Board;
- 8.1.5. invite community proposals for performance measures during Annual Plan consultation;
- 8.1.6. publish Panel reports unchanged with Local Board consultation documents;
- 8.1.7. require Local Boards to explain any departure from Panel recommendations.

William Foster

Chair Northern Action Group Inc.