



# WAITAKERE CITY COUNCIL

## POLICY ON SIGNIFICANCE

Adopted by Council: 30 June 2009  
(Minute Number: [1119/2009](#))

## INTRODUCTION

This policy is prepared in accordance with Section 90 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

If a decision is considered to be 'significant' then the Council must follow a more rigorous consultation and decision-making process. Councils are required to have a Significance Policy that sets out how they will determine the significance of a decision.

The Significance Policy, along with the Council's consultation practice, gives the Council guidance on what consultation processes it should follow for its decision making processes. The Council still has the flexibility to determine specifically how it will consult for each decision (except in cases where it must follow the Special Consultative Procedure or specific requirements under other legislation).

Under the Act, the Council is required to show in its annual plans and long term council community plans:

- its general approach to determining which proposals and decisions are significant
- any thresholds, criteria and procedures for determining which proposals and decisions are significant
- the strategic assets owned by the Council.

It needs to be noted that:

- "significant" is defined in Section 5 of the Act as meaning any "issue, proposal, decision or other matter (that) has a high degree of significance"
- if the issue, decision or proposal is not 'significant' (as defined in Section 5 of the Act) it does not mean that it is unimportant and does not mean that there will be no consultation with the community. The only certainty is that the special consultative procedure does not have to be followed.

## THRESHOLDS and CRITERIA

A significant issue, proposal, decision or any other matter is one which will impact upon:

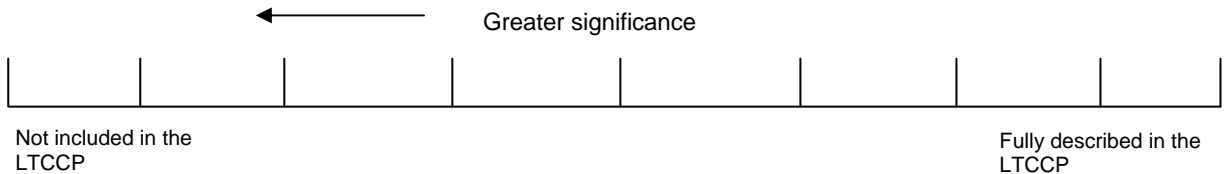
- the wellbeing and sustainable development of Waitakere City
- those persons likely to be affected by or with an interest in that decision
- the ability of the Council to achieve community outcomes, its strategic priorities or other outcomes identified in its Long Term Council Community Plan.

The Council will assess the significance of each issue, proposal, decision or any other matter having regard to:

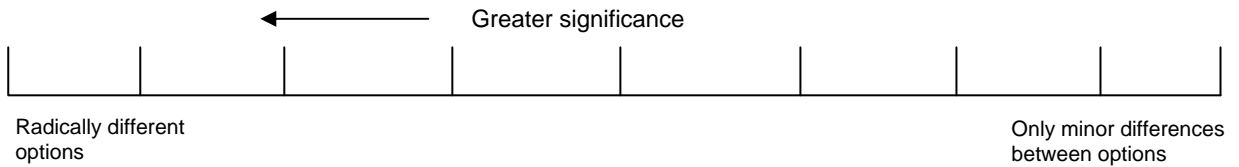
- the implications for the present and future social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the City
- the magnitude of the decision in terms of its net cost to the Council
- the effect on current levels of service
- the implications for identified community outcomes and strategic priorities
- the consistency with existing Council policies and strategic documents.

When making a decision as to the significance of a matter Council will consider information on the reasons for the issue, proposal, decision or any other matter, the options and their relative costs and benefits, and the views of those that are affected by, or have an interest in, the decision, commensurate with the significance of that decision. Criteria that will be considered when making that decision may include:

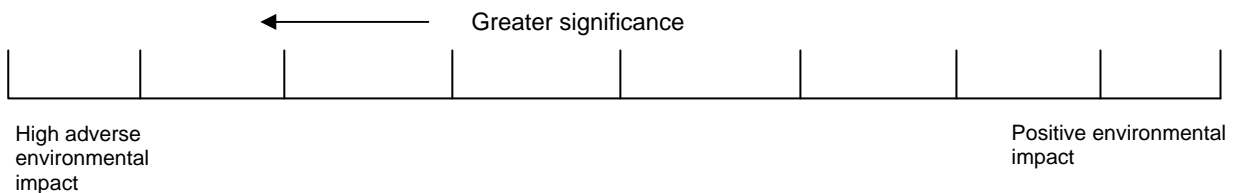
The extent to which the decision flows logically from a decision already made in the Long Term Council Community Plan or the Annual Plan.



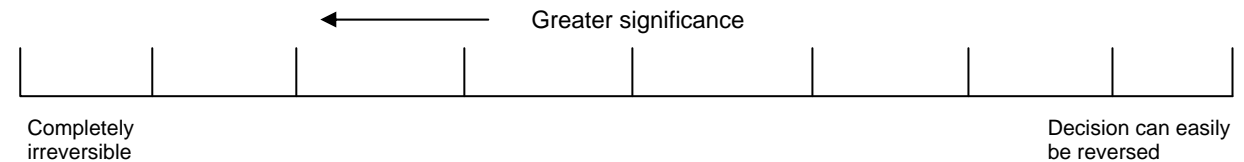
The variation in impact of the options identified (including a 'do nothing' option) on the community. The greater the variation the greater the degree of significance.



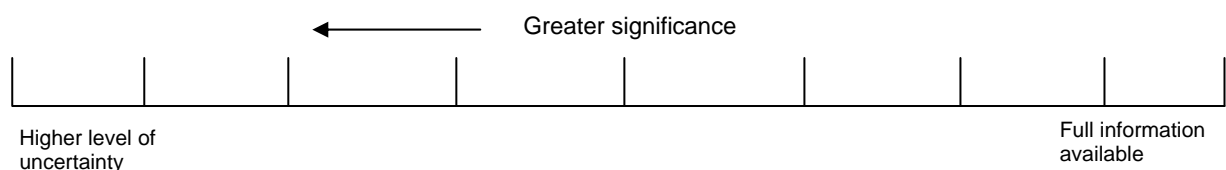
Any adverse impact on the physical and natural environment. The greater the adverse impact the greater the significance.



The reversibility of the outcomes arising from the decision



The benefit of a precautionary approach, where there is a level of uncertainty of outcomes.



Where a decision is determined to be significant, the Council will:

- identify all practical options
- assess those options based on the costs and benefits of each option, in each case by reference to the present and future social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the City
- assess the options in terms of the City's community outcomes and the Council's strategic priorities
- consider the Council's future capacity to meet its statutory responsibilities
- have regard to any other matter the Council thinks relevant.

If the issue, proposal decision or other matter concerns land or bodies of water, the Council will:

- consult with Maori in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Section 77 of the Act
- consider the views and preferences of persons likely to be affected by, or have an interest in the matter
- consider any specific controls imposed by other sections of the Act, or any other relevant legislation.

Using section 79 as a guide, the Council will make its final decision after having fully considered any information gathered as part of its decision-making process, as well as the results of any consultation undertaken.

### **STRATEGIC ASSETS**

The Council is required by section 90 of the Act to provide a list of its Strategic Assets in its policy on significance (as defined in Section 5 of the Act).

Once defined as strategic assets, any significant changes to the Council's ownership or control, or any decisions to construct, replace or abandon these assets listed must be expressly provided for in the Council's current Long Term Council Community Plan. If the proposal is not provided for, a special consultative procedure will be undertaken in order to change the Long Term Council Community Plan .

For the purposes of the Policy, the Council considers its strategic assets as whole single assets because it is the asset class as a whole that delivers the service. In the interests of the efficient management of resources, the Council will therefore not undertake the special consultative procedure for decisions that relate to the transfer of ownership or control, or minor construction or replacement, of a part of a strategic asset unless that part substantially affects the level of service provided to the community.

Any physical alterations to strategic assets that are required to either prevent an immediate hazardous situation arising, or to repair an asset to ensure public health and safety due to damage from an emergency or unforeseen situation, will also not have to undergo a special consultative procedure. Any actions taken will be reported in the relevant Annual Plan or Annual Report.

The assets and groups of assets that Waitakere City Council considers to be strategic assets are:

- the stormwater network
- the wastewater network
- the water supply network
- cemeteries
- shares in Waitakere City Holdings Ltd

housing for older adults (as required by section 5 of the Act which requires Councils to include 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).