

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

Te Kaupapa Here Manarau, Tautika me te Kauawhi Hukihuki

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1.0 Introduction - Kupu Arataki

E koekoe te tūi, e ketekete te kākā, e kūkū te kererū

There is strength in our uniqueness

This policy provides guidance to Whakatane District Council regarding how we can enhance social cohesion through supporting diversity, inclusion and equity in our work and everyday behaviour. This policy describes Council's approach to enable all people to participate and makes extra accommodations for those in our society who face greater barriers to participation and are more likely to experience discrimination and bias.

Core to this is the understanding that we all have many facets of our identity. This is sometimes referred to as our 'intersectionality'. Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge the differences among us and create an environment where we all feel safe to be ourselves.

This policy is important to ensure we are engaging with a diverse range of individuals and communities, including them in decision-making, and providing equitable opportunities for groups and individuals who may have experienced discrimination and disadvantage.

This policy seeks to address systematic disadvantages and institutional structures that perpetuate inequality for marginalised and minority groups, with the intention of implementing equitable provisions to level the playing field for these groups. The policy is fundamental for Council's role in provision of services, community development, social procurement and engagement with and support for our communities.

2.0 Background - He tirohanga whakamuri

Early in 2024 Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Whakatane-Accessible and Inclusive (WAI) group to enable a closer working relationship with, and improved understanding of, disabled people. As part of the MOU, Council promised to undertake the development of a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Policy.

Recent Council engagement identified gaps regarding DEI and it became evident that parts of our community were not being, or feeling, included or were receiving less service than others.

This indicated a need to provide direction to Council on how we can enhance social cohesion through supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in our work and everyday behaviour. DEI considerations are also key to our intended social procurement outcomes.

Council staff have researched our community demographics to inform the policy and supported qualitative research regarding our migrant and minority communities in the district. Extensive pre-engagement with our communities was undertaken throughout the first half of 2024 to better understand the needs of those in our society who we rarely hear from and to provide baseline information for the development of this policy.

The pre-engagement included facilitating focus sessions with a wide range of groups as listed below:

- Older People / Kaumātua
- Young People / Taiohi
- Neurodivergent People / Te Hunga Kanorau ā-roro
- Rainbow Community / Hapori Takatāpui
- Disabled People / Tāngata whaikaha
- Rural People / Te Hunga Taiwhenua
- Hard to Reach Whānau Groups

We note that this is not an exhaustive list of ‘communities of interest’ in our District.

3.0 Definitions – Ngā tikanga o ngā kupu

Communities of Interest refers to groups of people who share common characteristics, experiences, or needs that shape their collective identity and require specific attention to ensure equity and inclusion. These communities may be defined by factors not limited to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Council means Whakatāne District Council.

Diversity in the context of this policy, speaks to the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different backgrounds including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Equality refers to the principle of treating everyone the same or providing the exact same opportunities and resources to all individuals or groups regardless of need. It focuses on uniformity and equal treatment without necessarily considering the specific needs, circumstances, or historical disadvantages that certain individuals or groups may face.

Equity means fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges, taking into account the unique circumstances and needs of individuals or groups. It recognises that different individuals or groups may require different levels of support or accommodations to achieve a level playing field. Equity aims to address historical and systematic disadvantages and achieve 'equality of opportunity.'

Inclusion means the practice or policy of providing equitable access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Localism is harnessing the power, knowledge, skills and views of local people to strengthen decision-making and service delivery. It develops better solutions to problems, fosters stronger connections and makes local places work for people. When done well, localism can lead to more effective and efficient solutions and decisions, empowering communities to make decisions about their own development. To put local people in charge.

Minority refers to characteristics within a population (such as race, socioeconomic status, ability, age, gender, religious belief) that make up a smaller proportion of a

population than those in the same demographic that do not identify with those characteristics. These groups are more likely to be disproportionately impacted

Marginalised groups are those that are prevented from fully participating in the socioeconomic and political landscape of a society due to the interconnected impacts of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. These processes can sometimes create environments that exclude people based on sexual orientation, gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, social class, or disability. These groups are more likely to be disproportionately impacted

Nothing About Us Without Us as a principle emerged from the disability rights movement but has been widely adopted by marginalised and minority groups when advocating for equitable opportunities. This principle emphasises that no decisions should be made about a group of people without their active involvement in the decision-making process.

Reasonable Accommodations are adjustments made, by mutual agreement, in a system to accommodate or make fair the same system for an individual based on a proven need. That need can vary. Accommodations can be religious, physical, mental or emotional, academic, or employment-related, and law often mandates them.

4.0 Strategic Alignment – Tiaroaro ā-Rautaki

Long Term Plan 2024-34

This policy is aligning and contributing to Council’s Strategic Priority of enhancing the safety, wellbeing and vibrancy of our community.

Te Toi Waka Whakarei Strategy

The Te Toi Waka Whakarei Strategy supports the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy. Te Toi Waka Whakarei strategy supports the DEI Policy to ensure that considerations are given to Mana Taurite, Mana Ōrite and Mana Motuhake. The Strategy states that:

- Tāngata Māori are engaged, to varying degrees, in applying a Te Ao Māori approach and mātauranga Māori (traditional Māori knowledge) to the way

they participate in all forms of social, economic, and cultural activity across the region.

- Māori have all the rights of British citizens under Article Three of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which guarantees Māori freedom from discrimination and obliges the Crown to positively promote equity “...[and] to make every reasonable effort to eliminate barriers to services that may contribute to inequitable outcomes.”
- Mana Ōrite, respective views will be heard, considered, and afforded equal explanatory power.
- Mana Motuhake, by Māori for Māori approach

Examples of principles in line with Mana Taurite include:

- Accessible Services – Iwi, Hapū and Whānau, regardless of gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, economic situation, or geographic location, have timely and equitable access to appropriate services
- Partners with Choice and Control – Iwi, Hapū and Whānau using services have their right to make choices. Working alongside professionals improves service quality, safety, the experience of services, and the equity of outcomes. This principle can be rephrased as ‘nothing about us, without us.’
- Best practice through collaboration - Appropriate services include an understanding of the lived experiences of people and whānau and shared decision making with them.

Whilst the Te Toi Waka Whakareī Strategy focuses on our Iwi, Hapū and Whānau relationships, the Relationship Work Plan that underpins this Strategy has six Strategic Focus Areas, of which two speak to this DEI Policy, and how the Te Toi Waka Whakareī Strategy supports it. Namely:

(3) Becoming an empowered organisation – The Council group works to fulfil its commitments and legal obligations to Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and aims to ensure its staff can deliver Māori outcomes.

(4) Promoting Māori identity – The Council group aims to reflect and promote Māori culture and identity within the environment and to value mātauranga Māori.

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ)

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) believes in inclusive democracy and provides resources to promote and support diversity and participation in local government. LGNZ works across five streams to positively influence local government as part of our DEI strategy such as:

1. Embedding Te Ao Māori within the sector
2. Improving council culture and wellbeing
3. Building sector capability around cultural awareness
4. Increasing diversity of representation
5. Encouraging greater public and community engagement through storytelling and education.

This policy responds to local need and also responds to both national and international frameworks, in particular: the Local Government NZ commitment to Localism; the Ministry for Social Development Social Cohesion Framework; the NZ Bill of Rights Act (1990); and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG5: Gender equality, SDG10: Reduced inequalities, SDG16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions)

5.0 Legislation - Ngā Ture

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document. Te Tiriti requires councils to establish, maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.

New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 protects the civil and political rights of all New Zealanders. Under this Act, everyone has the right to freedom from discrimination as outlined in the Human Rights Act 1993.

Building Regulations 1992 contains the Building Code for which all building work in New Zealand must comply. The Building Code's access provisions ensure that people with disabilities can carry out normal activities and functions within buildings.

Human Rights Act 1993 protects all people in New Zealand from discriminatory treatment based on personal characteristics, including religion, race, ethnicity, disability, age, and sexual orientation.

Local Government Act 2002 requires councils to consider and promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. When making decisions councils are expected to take account of the diversity of their community, the community's interests and the interests of the future community.

6.0 Objective – Ngā whāinga

The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) Foster a sense of belonging for all people in our District
- b) Include marginalised and/or minority communities in our decision-making
- c) Build and maintain quality relationships with marginalised and/or minority communities
- d) Show empathy, compassion, and respect to marginalised and/or minority communities in our district
- e) Encourage an environment where marginalised and/or minority communities feel safe to be themselves.

7.0 Policy – Te kaupapa here

Diversity, equity and inclusion are interrelated concepts which form the basis of this policy. Diversity speaks to the different individuals and groups we have in our community; inclusion refers to including said groups or individuals, and equity aims to level the playing field for such groups or individuals. The policy sections below are grouped into these principles, however they may be applicable to more than one category

Diversity - Manarau

Diversity encompasses a sense of belonging, celebrating our identities, and awareness and appreciation of the intersectionality of people so that the people in our communities are represented.

7.1. Education and Awareness Initiatives

Council will support our communities to achieve diverse representation and honour people's identity and intersectionality by:

- 7.1.1 Building understanding of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our communities
- 7.1.2 Supporting community-led awareness initiatives
- 7.1.3 Supporting events that celebrate people's and communities' identities relative to their experience
- 7.1.4 Treating everyone with dignity and respecting their rights and beliefs.

Inclusion – Kauawhi

Inclusion involves increasing both social cohesion and connection within our communities.

Council will focus on the following areas to support the people of our district and communities of interest to feel included:

7.2. Civics, democracy, and decision-making

Council will support people and communities to participate in decision-making by:

- 7.2.1 Providing an environment where communities can have their voice heard
- 7.2.2 Encouraging active participation and feedback on Council projects
- 7.2.3 Enabling increased understanding of civics and democracy and decision-making processes.

7.3 Safe Community Spaces

Council will provide spaces where our communities can feel safe by:

- 7.3.1 Ensuring Council spaces are available for the community to use in a safe way
- 7.3.2 Enabling an environment where all the people of our district are safe to be themselves
- 7.3.3 Enhance and maintain our physical environment to accommodate all accessibilities.

Equity - Tautika

Equity identifies how we can meet the needs of our community in an equitable way by removing barriers and advocating for equal opportunities. An equitable society ensures justice and peace within our communities.

Council will focus on the following areas to promote equity across our district:

7.4 Accessibility

Council will prioritise ease of access for all people in our District by:

- 7.4.1 Ensuring easy access to Council services and providing information in formats that suit the needs and preferences of our residents
- 7.4.2 Utilising inclusive and/or universal design principles to remove barriers to access to physical spaces, information, and participation.
- 7.4.3 Providing opportunities for accessible sensory environments and equipment

7.5 Inclusive Leadership and Reasonable Accommodations

Council will demonstrate inclusive leadership by:

- 7.5.1 Increasing awareness and understanding of reasonable accommodations so that equitable provisions consider the needs of all parties
- 7.5.2 Enacting reasonable accommodations in both our internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and organisational operations where practicable
- 7.5.3 Using a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens to inform decision-making to avoid discrimination, promote inclusion, and increase fairness in the district, wherever possible
- 7.5.4 Applying the 'Nothing About Us Without Us' principle.

8.0 Accountability and Implementation – Ngā haepapa

Whakatāne District Council is responsible for the application, monitoring, and review of this policy.

This external policy applies to the procurement, management, and delivery of Council services. It will also inform the development of relevant Council plans and strategies. We expect all elected members, employees, volunteers and third parties/contractors carrying out work on behalf of the Council to comply with this policy.

We will support the development of any community-led action plans that follow from this document to support the implementation of this policy.

This policy will inform Whakatāne District Council's internal diversity, equity and inclusion policy and operational procedures of Council.

By implementing this policy, it is hoped that other businesses and organisations will be encouraged to consider implementing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion principles in their practises.

9.0 Review - Te Arotake

Council will monitor the effectiveness of the policy through evaluation and reporting mechanisms, with a formal review undertaken every five years.