

Northland Regional Council Minutes

Meeting held in the Council Chamber
36 Water Street, Whangārei
on Wednesday 25 March 2026, commencing at 10.00am

Tuhinga/Present:

Chairperson, Pita Tipene
Deputy Chairperson, Jack Craw

Councillors:

John Blackwell (*Via audio-visual link*)
Geoff Crawford (*Via audio-visual link*)
John Hunt
Colin Kitchen
Amy Macdonald
Arama Morunga

I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

Full Meeting

Independent Risk Advisor
Tāhūhū Rangapū - Chief Executive Officer
Pou Taumatua – GM Corporate Services
Pou Manawhakahaere - GM Strategic Partnerships and Engagement
Pou Whakaritenga - GM Regulatory Services
Group Manager - Community Resilience
Pou Tiaki Taiao - GM Environmental Services
Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity
People and Culture Manager
Translator (*Via audio-visual link*)
Kaiāwhina Tari
Governance Specialist

Part Meeting

WDC Revenue Manager
Independent Tangata Whenua Advisor (*x2. One via audio-visual link*)
Corporate Strategy Manager
Policy and Planning Manager
Governance and Corporate Policy Manager
Strategic Policy Specialist
Land Management Advisor - Technical
Financial Accountant
Principal Advisor
Digital Experience Support

Secretarial Note: The Chair declared the meeting open at 10.00am, noting that the current 'tumultuous world' brought challenges to all. The Chair commenced proceedings with a karakia.

Ngā whakapāha/Apologies (Item 1.0)

Moved (Macdonald/Blackwell)

That the apology from Councillor Carr for non-attendance be noted.

Carried

Nga whakapuakanga/Declarations of Conflicts of Interest (Item 2.0)

It was advised that councillors should make declarations item-by-item as the meeting progressed.

Confirmation of Minutes - 18 February 2026 (Item 5.1)

Report from Meloney Tupou, Māori Governance and Engagement Support Admin

Moved (Kitchen/Morunga)

That the minutes of the council meeting held on 18 February 2026, be confirmed as a true and correct record (*subject to the correction of the typo in relation to Item 4.0A*) and that these be duly authenticated with the Chair's electronic signature.

Carried

Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 5.2)

Report from Chris Taylor, Governance Specialist

Moved (Craw/Macdonald)

That the action sheet be received.

Carried

Financial Report to February 2026 (Item 6.1)

Report from Taka Skipwith, Financial Accountant

Moved (Morunga/Craw)

That the report 'Financial Report to February 2026' by Taka Skipwith, Financial Accountant and dated 4 March 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note:

- *Council's managed funds continued to perform strongly regardless of the transition to a new fund manager. Council had also experienced an improved commercial income.*
- *Reporting in the next financial year would reflect the organisational restructure (in particular changes to Corporate Services and Strategic Partnerships & Engagement).*
- *Whilst there had been a transfer of operating surplus to reserves, council would have the opportunity at the end of the financial year to determine how any surplus would be utilised.*
- *The Executive Leadership Team was currently assessing the impact of fuel increases on service delivery. At such time the business continuity plan was confirmed this would be provided to, and potentially workshopped, with council.*

- *Consideration was also being given to the potential impact of fuel increases on council's investment portfolio. Council's fund manager, Russell Investments, supported the current asset allocation but would monitor the situation closely.*
- *A council workshop was scheduled in April with Russell Investments to consider the SIPO in detail.*
- *Clarification was provided that the delay in capital expenditure for the Joint Emergency Co-ordination Centre reflected the time it took to get complex agreements signed. However the project had now progressed to the detailed design phase.*

Regional Rates Collection - update to 31 December 2025 (Item 6.2)

Report from Simon Crabb, Finance Manager

Moved (Kitchen/Blackwell)

That the report 'Regional Rates Collection - update to 31 December 2025' by Simon Crabb, Finance Manager and dated 10 February 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note:

- *The WDC Revenue Manager was in attendance to convey trends in rate collection. In summary, affordability was the key issue and 'people are struggling to pay'. WDC was experiencing an increasing number of ratepayers with dishonoured direct debits and seeking payment arrangements. The council was doing its utmost to find flexible arrangements for all ratepayers.*
- *Appreciation was extended to WDC and all the district councils for collecting the regional council's rates on its behalf and their efforts to collect rates and rate arrears.*
- *Whilst the overall rate collection was slightly less than the previous financial year it was 'not significantly different'.*
- *NRC had confirmed a zero percent rate increase through its Annual Plan process to reflect the current cost-of-living pressures on the community.*

Withdrawal of the Planned 2025-26 Funding Contribution from the Managed Investment Fund Portfolio (Item 6.3)

Report from Simon Crabb, Finance Manager

Moved (Morunga/Kitchen)

1. That the report 'Withdrawal of the Planned 2025-26 Funding Contribution from the Managed Investment Fund Portfolio' by Simon Crabb, Finance Manager and dated 20 February 2026, be received.
2. That \$2,841,083 is withdrawn in March 2026 from the investment funds recommended by Russell Investments and invested into term deposits maturing in August 2026.

Secretarial Note:

- *Council's managed investment fund portfolio had not achieved sufficient gains to satisfy the recommendation to withdraw \$2,841,083 from the investment funds and invest into term deposits; and was unlikely to do so by the end of the month.*
- *It was proposed that a prudent approach would be for council to withdraw the available gains at this time; subject to the approval of council's fund manager.*

An amendment was moved to the second motion (Macdonald/Tipene)

2. That available gains are withdrawn in March 2026 from the investment funds, subject to the advice from Russell Investments, and invested into term deposits maturing in August 2026.

Carried

Secretarial Note: With no further amendments forthcoming the Chair put the substantive motion as follows:

Moved (Craw/Kitchen)

1. That the report 'Withdrawal of the Planned 2025-26 Funding Contribution from the Managed Investment Fund Portfolio' by Simon Crabb, Finance Manager and dated 20 February 2026, be received.
2. That available gains are withdrawn in March 2026 from the investment funds, subject to the advice from Russell Investments, and invested into term deposits maturing in August 2026.

Carried

Local Government reform programme (Item 7.1)

Report from Justin Murfitt, Strategic Policy Specialist and Stephanie Versteeg, Kaitohutohu Matua / Principal Advisor

Moved (Macdonald/Craw)

1. That the report 'Local Government reform programme' by Justin Murfitt, Strategic Policy Specialist and Stephanie Versteeg, Kaitohutohu Matua / Principal Advisor and dated 19 March 2026, be received.
2. That council approve the establishment of a staged programme for Local Government Reform as set out in this report.
3. That council approves the governance structure set out in this report, including the establishment of a Local Government Reform Steering Group and External Advisory Group.
4. That council endorse the Mayor of Whangārei District Council as Chair of the Local Government Reform Steering Group.
5. That council nominates the Chair and councillors Craw and Crawford as members of the Local Government Reform Steering Group.
6. That council approve the Draft Terms of Reference for the Local Government Reform Governance Steering Group included in **Attachment 1** (*pertaining to Item 7.1 of the 25 March 2026 ordinary council meeting agenda*).
7. That council approve the Draft Terms of Reference for the Local Government Reform External Advisory Group included in **Attachment 2** (*pertaining to Item 7.1 of the 25 March 2026 ordinary council meeting agenda*).
8. That council approve the indicative timeline set out in this report, which subject to detailed planning once the programme is established would enable a new governance structure(s) to be in place for the October 2028 local government election.

9. That council approve the allocation of \$31,250, funded from salary savings, to meet the placeholder budget of \$125,000 for the Local Government Reform Programme over the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year.
10. That council approve allocation of \$250,000 to meet the placeholder budget of \$1,000,000 in its 2026/27 Annual Plan, noting that this amount is indicative only and subject to further detailed planning and refinement.
11. That council agree to proceed with the proposed programme and to fund a third of the costs, as outlined in this report, rather than a quarter if only three Northland councils are participating.
12. That council agree that the programme approach needs to be reviewed if fewer than three Northland Councils agree to proceed with the programme as proposed.

Carried

Secretarial Note:

- *The Terms of Reference attached to the report incorporated the amendments as workshopped by council; being the WDC Mayor as an observer on the External Advisory Group (not Chair) and the transparent provision of papers from the Governance Steering Group to all elected members. These changes had been shared and were now the 'substantive proposal to all councils'.*
- *Northland would continue 'to be proactive and partner with central government to lead change' and develop a 'by Northland for Northland' solution.*
- *The placeholder budget was an estimate until a detailed analysis was undertaken to progress the proposal.*
- *Appreciation was extended to staff for their 'nimble' response, incorporating the feedback from the council workshop, to inform this 'really significant and complex piece of work'.*
- *The March Northland|Forward Together Strategic Planning Workshop highlighted the clear purpose and alignment of the four Northland councils.*
- *The proposed timeframes were a significant undertaking for the Northland councils and risk management would be critical.*

Approval of updated Delegation Manual (Item 7.2)

Report from Kyla Carlier, Corporate Strategy Manager

Moved (Morunga/Craw)

1. That the report 'Approval of updated Delegation Manual' by Kyla Carlier, Corporate Strategy Manager and dated 23 December 2025, be received.
2. That council approve the inclusion of the proposed unbudgeted expenditure process, as per **Attachment 1** (*pertaining to Item 7.2 of the 25 March 2026 ordinary council meeting agenda*), in the NRC Delegation Manual.

Carried

Adoption of the Statement of Proposal and Draft Dangerous Dams Policy 2026 for consultation (Item 7.3)

Report from Tami Woods, Policy and Planning Manager

Moved (Macdonald/Morunga)

1. That the report 'Adoption of the Statement of Proposal and Draft Dangerous Dams Policy 2026 for consultation' by Tami Woods, Policy and Planning Manager and dated 25 February 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note:

- Assurance was provided that through the use of imagery council staff would, in time, detect the construction of any dam that was built in Northland.
- Currently nine dams had been assessed as 'high potential impact' in the region.
- An engineering assessment included earthquake vulnerability and given Northland was a low seismic risk it was not a significant component of the assessment.
- A draft letter to the Minister of Building and Construction had been prepared requesting that Northland be removed from the requirement of an earthquake assessment entirely to reflect the low earthquake risk (in the same manner as the Building Standard Ratings).
- Careful consideration would need to be given to the communication material supporting consultation to ensure the proposed policy was clearly explained to the community.

It was further moved (Macdonald/Kitchen)

2. That council adopts the Statement of Proposal and the Draft Policy on Dangerous Dams, Earthquake-Prone Dams and Flood-Prone Dams 2026 (Dangerous Dams Policy 2026) for the purpose of consultation pursuant to section 162 of the Building Act 2004 and in accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002.
3. That council approves public consultation, using the Special Consultative Procedure set out in section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002, between 1 April and 8 May 2026.
4. That council delegates to the Group Manager –Regulatory Services the authority to make any necessary minor formatting typographical and administrative changes to the Statement of Proposal and Draft Policy prior to formal public consultation.

Carried

Secretarial Note: Council supported sending the letter to the Minister of Building and Construction seeking an exemption from earthquake assessments for dams.

Regional Software Holdings Limited Statement Of Intent (Item 7.4)

Report from Bruce Howse, Pou Taumatua – Group Manager Corporate Services

Moved (Macdonald/Craw)

1. That the report 'Regional Software Holdings Limited Statement Of Intent' by Bruce Howse, Pou Taumatua – Group Manager Corporate Services and dated 27 February 2026, be received.
2. That council endorse the Draft RSHL SOI 2026-2027 included as **Attachment 1** (*pertaining to Item 7.4 of the 25 March 2026 ordinary council meeting agenda*).

Carried

Investment Committee Terms of Reference (Item 7.5)

Report from Chris Taylor, Governance Specialist

Moved (Hunt/Morunga)

1. That the report 'Investment Committee Terms of Reference' by Chris Taylor, Governance Specialist and dated 10 March 2026, be received.
2. That council approves the recommended amendments to the Investment Committee's Terms of Reference included in **Attachment 1** (*pertaining to Item 7.5 of the 25 March 2026 ordinary council meeting agenda*).

Carried

Chair's Report to Council (Item 8.1)

Report from Rae Hetaraka, Executive Assistant to the Chair

Moved (Tipene/Crawford)

That the report 'Chair's Report to Council' by Rae Hetaraka, Executive Assistant to the Chair and dated 27 February 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note:

- *Appreciation was extended to the Chair for a 'fulsome report'.*
- *Correction noted to the full name of Georgina **Curtis** - Connelly*

Chief Executive's Report to Council (Item 8.2)

Report from Jonathan Gibbard, Tāhūhū Rangapū - Chief Executive Officer

Moved (Kitchen/Macdonald)

That the report 'Chief Executive's Report to Council' by Jonathan Gibbard, Tāhūhū Rangapū - Chief Executive Officer and dated 2 March 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note:

- *Appreciation was extended to staff for their presence and support of the NRC display stand at the Northland Field Days.*
- *Concern was raised regarding the ongoing odour issues experienced at Parua Bay due to the Whangārei City Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant. Assurance was provided that WDC and NRC staff were actively resolving this issue.*
- *Given the recent severe weather events and particularly the impact on Northland's east coast, LIDAR surveys had been conducted as a matter of urgency. Earth Science New Zealand (ESNZ) was currently undertaking the necessary quality checks of the LIDAR data. Once completed, the data would be extrapolated to provide Land Slide Susceptibility Maps which would be available via the NRC website. This was particularly pertinent given Northland was currently experiencing a further extreme weather event.*

Legislative compliance half yearly report July - December 2025 (Item 8.3)

Report from Mandy Tepania, Audit and Assurance Lead

Moved (Macdonald/Hunt)

That the report 'Legislative compliance half yearly report July - December 2025' by Mandy Tepania, Audit and Assurance Lead and dated 9 March 2026, be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note: It was requested that the Memorandum of Understanding between Te Uri o Hau and the Northland Regional Council be included in the list of core legislation.

Receipt of Committee Minutes (Item 9.1)

Report from Chris Taylor, Governance Specialist

Moved (Morunga/Hunt)

That the unconfirmed minutes of the:

- Regional Transport Committee – 9 December 2025
- Regional Transport Committee – 10 February 2026
- Infrastructure Committee – 17 February 2026
- Audit and Risk Committee – 17 February 2026
- Kaipara Moana Remediation Joint Committee – 23 February 2026
- Investment Committee – 3 March 2026

be received.

Carried

Working Party Updates Report (Item 9.2)

Report from Meloney Tupou, Māori Governance and Engagement Support Admin

Moved (Blackwell/Craw)

That the report 'Working Party Updates Report' be received.

Carried

Secretarial Note: A correction was noted to the report; the Chair of the Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party was Jack Craw (not Crawford).

Kaupapa ā Roto/Business with Public Excluded (Item 10.0)

Moved (Kitchen/Macdonald)

1. That the public be excluded from the proceedings of this meeting to consider confidential matters.
2. That the general subject of the matters to be considered whilst the public is excluded, the reasons for passing this resolution in relation to this matter, and the specific grounds under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution, are as follows:

Item No.	Item Issue	Reasons/Grounds
10.1	Confirmation of Confidential Minutes - 18 February 2026	The public conduct of the proceedings would be likely to result in disclosure of information, as stated in the open section of the meeting.
10.2	Receipt of Confidential Committee Minutes	The public conduct of the proceedings would be likely to result in disclosure of information, as stated in the open section of the meeting.
10.3	Commercial Property Transactions	The public conduct of the proceedings would be likely to result in disclosure of information, the withholding of which is necessary to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information s7(2)(b)(ii), the withholding of which is necessary to enable council to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities s7(2)(h) and the withholding of which is necessary to enable council to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations) s7(2)(i).

3. That the Independent Advisors be permitted to stay during business with the public excluded.

Carried

Open Meeting

Moved (Kitchen/Macdonald)

That the council resumes in open meeting.

Carried

Confirming of confidential minutes in open meeting

The confidential resolutions confirmed in open meeting were as follows:

Confirmation of Confidential Minutes - 18 February 2026 (Confidential Item 10.1)

Report from Meloney Tupou, Māori Governance and Engagement Support Admin

Moved (Macdonald/Hunt)

That the confidential minutes of the council meeting held on 18 February 2026, be confirmed as a true and correct record and that these be duly authenticated with the Chair's electronic signature.

Carried

Receipt of Confidential Committee Minutes (Confidential Item 10.2)

Report from Chris Taylor, Governance Specialist

Moved (Craw/Morunga)

That the unconfirmed confidential minutes of the:

- Audit and Risk Committee – 17 February 2026
- Investment Committee – 3 March 2026

be received.

Carried

Whakamutunga (Conclusion)

The Chair concluded the meeting at 11.52am with a karakia.

Unconfirmed Minutes