

Schedule of the Workshops and Briefings being held on:

Date: Wednesday 10 June 2026
Time: 11:00 am
Meeting Room: Council Chambers
Venue: 126-148 Oxford Street
Levin

Workshops and Briefings SCHEDULE

MEMBERSHIP

Mayor His Worship The Mayor Bernie Wanden
Councillors Councillor David Allan
Councillor Mike Barker
Councillor Nola Fox
Councillor Morgan Gray
Councillor Clint Grimstone
Councillor Nina Hori Te Pa
Councillor Sam Jennings
Councillor Lani Te Raukura Ketu
Councillor Jo Mason
Councillor Katrina Mitchell - Kouttab
Councillor Paul Olsen
Councillor Alan Young

File No.: 26/345

1 Voice of the Customer 2026 Survey Results

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PURPOSE | TE PŪTAKE

1. The purpose of this workshop is to present the findings of the 2026 Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey and provide elected members with an opportunity to discuss the key themes, trends, and insights emerging from the results.
2. The workshop is intended to support understanding of resident perceptions, areas of strength, and recurring concerns across the district. It is an opportunity for discussion and reflection rather than decision-making.

DISCUSSION | HE MATAPAKINGA

3. Pre-reading is attached.

ATTACHMENTS | NGĀ TĀPIRINGA KŌRERO

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A1	Voice of the Customer Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey - May 2026	6



2026 Voice of the Customer Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey

22 April – 17 May 2026



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Executive Summary

The 2026 Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey captured 2,270 responses across 10 service categories and produced an overall Net Promoter Score (NPS) of -6.8. While this represents a marginal improvement on the 2025 result of -7.1, overall sentiment remains negative and reflects a community that continues to see opportunities for improvement across a range of Council services, infrastructure, and community outcomes.

The survey results present a mixed picture. Several services continue to perform strongly, particularly Community Centres and Libraries, the Levin Aquatic Centre, kerbside rubbish and recycling services, and many parks and recreational facilities. Residents frequently acknowledged the contribution of frontline staff, valued local facilities, and recognised improvements in a number of service areas.

At the same time, several recurring themes emerged across the survey. Land transport, water services, communication and engagement, and broader perceptions of leadership and reputation recorded some of the lowest satisfaction and NPS results. Healthcare accessibility, population growth, housing affordability, infrastructure pressures, and Lake Horowhenua also featured prominently throughout the qualitative feedback.

The findings suggest that community perceptions are shaped by more than individual service experiences alone. While many operational services continue to attract positive feedback, respondents frequently raised broader concerns relating to transparency, engagement, future planning, growth management, and confidence in the district's direction. Measures relating to transparency, public involvement in decision-making, economic development, and preparedness for population growth all declined in 2026.

The survey also highlights the importance of viewing Council performance within a wider community context. Several of the most frequently raised issues, including healthcare accessibility, housing affordability, crime, and economic pressures, sit partially or wholly outside Council's direct responsibilities. Nevertheless, these issues appear to influence how residents assess their overall quality of life and their perceptions of the district.

Overall, the results suggest residents remain positive about many of the services and facilities they use regularly, while continuing to express concern about a number of broader issues affecting the district. The challenge for Council is therefore not solely one of service delivery, but also of maintaining community confidence, demonstrating progress on priority issues, and ensuring residents understand how Council's work contributes to the future wellbeing of the district.

2026 Survey at a Glance

Overall NPS improvement: -6.8 (2025: -7.1)

Strongest Performing Categories	Most Challenging Categories
Levin Aquatic Centre (+8.8 NPS)	Land Transport (-20.5 NPS)
Community Centres & Libraries (+3.9 NPS)	Water Services (-19.4 NPS)
Rubbish & Recycling (+0.2 NPS)	Communications & Engagement (-17.2 NPS)

Common Themes raised by respondents:

Healthcare access
Population growth
Roads and footpaths
Water quality
Transparency and consultation
Housing affordability
Lake Horowhenua

Participation:

- 2,270 responses
- 5.9% of district population ¹

¹ [Regional Economic Profile | Horowhenua District | Population growth](#)

Key Themes Emerging from the Survey

While the survey measures satisfaction across individual services and activities, several themes recur across multiple categories and appear consistently throughout the qualitative feedback. These themes provide useful context for understanding the broader patterns evident in the results and the issues most frequently raised by residents.

Confidence in Communication, Engagement and Decision-Making

Measures relating to transparency, public involvement in decision-making, and the feedback process all recorded lower satisfaction levels in 2026 than in previous years.

Qualitative feedback frequently referenced consultation processes, communication, and the visibility of decision-making.

Many respondents expressed a desire to better understand how feedback is considered, how decisions are made, and how community views influence outcomes. While residents generally reported positive experiences when interacting directly with Council, broader perceptions of transparency, engagement, and decision-making emerged as recurring themes throughout the survey.

Population Growth and the Future of the District

Population growth was one of the most frequently discussed topics across the survey and was commonly linked to infrastructure, housing affordability, healthcare access, transport networks, economic development, and community facilities.

Satisfaction with economic development and preparedness for population growth both declined in 2026. Together with the qualitative findings, this indicates that growth, infrastructure capacity, and the district's future development remain important areas of community interest.

Feedback indicates that many residents are considering not only current service delivery, but also how well the district is positioned to accommodate future growth and changing community needs.

Experiences of Council Services and Interactions

The survey results present a mixed picture of service delivery. Many operational services, including libraries, community facilities, rubbish collection, aquatic services, and parks, received positive feedback and comparatively strong satisfaction scores. Residents frequently acknowledged the contribution of frontline staff and valued local facilities and services.

At the same time, measures relating to ease of doing business with Council, responsiveness, and customer experience recorded lower levels of satisfaction.

These findings highlight the importance of both service quality and customer experience in shaping community perceptions.

Infrastructure and Essential Services

Land Transport and Water Services recorded some of the lowest satisfaction and NPS results in the survey. Roads, footpaths, water quality, drainage, stormwater management, affordability, and related infrastructure matters featured prominently in both the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Road maintenance, footpath condition, traffic management, cycling infrastructure, and transport options were recurring themes across both urban and rural communities.

Similarly, water quality, chlorination, drainage, affordability, and stormwater management were common discussion points, particularly in relation to Foxton Beach.

The consistency with which these topics appear throughout the survey indicates they remain areas of significant community interest and concern.

Wider Community Wellbeing

A number of frequently raised issues, including healthcare accessibility, housing affordability, crime, and broader economic pressures, sit partially or wholly outside Council's direct responsibilities. Nevertheless, these topics featured strongly throughout the survey and form part of the broader context in which residents assess their quality of life and experience of living in the district.

Healthcare access was one of the most frequently raised issues, with respondents regularly referencing difficulties accessing GP services, specialist care, and timely appointments.

Housing affordability and wider cost-of-living pressures also featured prominently throughout the feedback.

Lake Horowhenua emerged as a particularly significant issue. While not among the highest-volume topics, it generated some of the strongest emotional responses recorded in the survey. Comments reflected the importance of the lake to community identity, environmental outcomes, recreation, and perceptions of the district more broadly.

The survey findings suggest that perceptions of Council are influenced not only by Council-delivered services, but also by wider community outcomes and challenges that residents experience in their everyday lives.

Understanding the Wider Context

Several of the issues most frequently raised by residents, including healthcare accessibility, housing affordability, crime, economic pressures, and population growth, sit partially or wholly outside Council's direct responsibilities.

While the survey does not seek to determine responsibility for these issues, they form an important part of the context in which residents assess their quality of life, the district, and Council's overall performance.

This context is important when interpreting the survey results. While many Council services received positive satisfaction ratings, broader concerns relating to community wellbeing, growth pressures, and future opportunities featured prominently throughout the feedback. The findings therefore reflect both residents' experiences of Council services and their wider experience of living in Horowhenua.

1. About This Report

Each year, Horowhenua District Council (HDC) conducts an annual residents survey to gather feedback and better understand the experiences, satisfaction levels, and priorities of people living within the Horowhenua District.

The survey helps HDC evaluate the quality of its services, identify areas for improvement, and support future planning and decision-making across the district. The survey is open for approximately one month each year and contains the following categories.

Survey Categories

1. Water Services (3 Waters)
2. Land Transport (Roading)
3. Parks & Reserves
4. Community Centres & Libraries
5. Rubbish & Recycling
6. Customer Service
7. Council Communications & Engagement
8. Quality of Life
9. Levin Aquatic Centre (LAC)
10. Leadership & Reputation

How the Survey Is Used

1. Measure resident satisfaction with council services
2. Identify key concerns and community priorities
3. Assist with strategic planning and budgeting
4. Improve service delivery and community engagement
5. Track trends and changes in public perception over time

Data Note - Response Count Variance

The raw data export contains **2,270 responses**, compared to **2,338** in the AskNicely Full Campaign Report (a difference of 68). This variance is spread across all 10 categories and is likely due to post-campaign data cleaning removing incomplete or duplicate responses. The raw Excel data is used as the primary source for this analysis

Category	AskNicely Report Responses	Excel Raw Responses (This report)	Difference
Rubbish & Recycling	592 (309+84+40+159)	581	-11
Land Transport / Roothing	294 (144+40+18+92)	292	-2
3 Waters	272 (135+40+19+78)	263	-9
Quality of Life	187 (91+30+18+48)	184	-3
Parks & Reserves	184 (78+30+19+57)	180	-4
Community Centres & Libraries	179 (92+25+12+50)	178	-1
Leadership & Reputation	165 (81+29+16+39)	159	-6
Comms & Engagement	166 (82+28+19+37)	157	-9
Customer Service / Civic Centre	144 (69+24+15+36)	140	-4
LAC	138 (64+17+10+47)	136	-2
Total	2,338	2,270	-68

2. Methodology: Data Collection and Cleaning

Data Collection

Survey data was collected using AskNicely, a customer experience and feedback platform that distributes surveys to ratepayers via email on behalf of HDC. Responses were gathered through an interactive chatbot-style interface, with respondents also given the option to provide written comments in free-text form.

One advantage of the AskNicely platform is its built-in AI functionality, which generates weekly summaries and identifies emerging trends. These automated summaries provided useful high-level snapshots of community sentiment throughout the survey period. However, automated sentiment analysis can struggle to interpret nuance, sarcasm, or mixed opinions, so results were manually reviewed alongside the AI-generated reports.

Data Preparation

The raw survey data was exported from AskNicely and organised into 10 separate worksheets, each representing a specific service category. Unrelated columns and responses were removed to ensure the data aligned with the relevant topic area. Rows containing no written comments were retained and highlighted separately rather than deleted, as the absence of a comment does not necessarily indicate a neutral or positive experience.

Four-Step Analytical Framework

Step 1 -Scoring Analysis

For each of the 10 service categories, numerical survey scores were analysed to produce an overall average score per topic, a distribution of scores (0-10), and identification of Promoters (9-10), Passives (7-8), and Detractors (0-6) following the Net Promoter Score (NPS) framework.

Step 2 -Comment Analysis

Written comments were manually reviewed and assigned theme tags. Comments were also assessed for sentiment and categorised as broadly positive, negative, or mixed/neutral. Special attention was given to responses where the written comment contradicted the numerical score, as these often revealed important nuance.

Step 3 -Pattern Recognition

Resident comments were compiled into text-analysis tools to identify frequently occurring words and recurring topics. The analysis also identified score vs sentiment mismatches, geographic clustering of issues, cross-topic themes appearing across multiple service categories, and the distinction between high-volume concerns and high-intensity concerns.

Step 4 -Interpreting Missing Comments

Rows containing no written feedback were retained throughout the analysis process. The absence of a written comment was treated as data in itself and was not automatically interpreted as either positive or negative without supporting score context.

All statistical significance testing has been undertaken at a 95% confidence level. Significance ratings indicate the likelihood that observed changes reflect genuine shifts in community sentiment rather than normal survey variation.

2.1 Survey Participation & Engagement trends

Response volumes for the Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey have declined over recent years despite growth in the number of subscribers receiving survey invitations.

In 2026, the survey received 2,270 valid responses, compared with 3,964 responses in 2025, 5,604 in 2024, and 6,051 in 2023. This represents a continued decline in participation rates over time.

Email campaign data indicates this trend is also reflected in resident engagement with survey invitations.

Average email open rates decreased from 52.4% in 2025 to 36.7% in 2026, while average click-through rates declined from 7.4% to 4.0% over the same period. While the survey was distributed to a larger subscriber base in 2026, fewer recipients engaged with the survey invitation than in previous years.

These trends do not invalidate the survey findings, but they should be considered when interpreting year-on-year comparisons. Lower participation may increase the influence of highly engaged respondents and may affect the representativeness of results relative to previous survey years.

The decline in participation also presents an opportunity to review future survey design, promotion, incentives, distribution channels, and engagement approaches to ensure the survey continues to provide a robust measure of community sentiment.

Survey participation trends

Year	Responses	Population Participation
2023	6,051	16.1%
2024	5,604	14.7%
2025	3,964	10.3%
2026	2,270	5.9%

3. Category Results and Interpretation

Water Services / 3 Waters

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	107
Passives (7–8)	100
Promoters (9–10)	56
Total Respondents	263
NPS Score	-19.4
Mean (Average)	6.49
Median	7
Mode	8

Key Themes (Real Comments)

- **Drinking water quality** – *"The quality of town water is terrible. We have a water filter, can't drink the water straight from the tap which is a shame."*
- **Fluoride & water additives** – *"Don't put chlorine and fluoride in our water; we don't want it."*
- **Stormwater & drainage** – *"My street floods every time we have heavy rain. There always seems to be piles of debris clogging up the drains."*
- **Wastewater & sewerage** – *"We should not have to pay for the town water and sewage supply as we have our own water tanks and septic tank that we pay to get emptied, but yet we still have to pay for town supply. It's wrong."*
- **Water supply & storage** – *"Amount of storage for water for the township is insufficient over summer months."*
- **Water rates & billing** – *"I don't want to pay extra for it; it should be included in rates like it is at the moment."*

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

While the overall quantitative results were relatively moderate (mean 6.49, median 7), the written comments revealed significantly stronger negative sentiment than the numerical scores suggested. Many respondents giving mid-range scores still expressed serious frustrations regarding water quality, chlorination, infrastructure reliability, stormwater drainage, and perceived fairness of charges. Examples included residents giving acceptable scores while describing water as "undrinkable", "brown", or "over-chlorinated", and moderate scores paired with highly emotional comments regarding flooding or health concerns.

Geographic Patterns

Strong geographic clustering was identified. Foxton Beach appeared consistently in relation to poor drinking water taste and odour, heavy chlorination, brown or discoloured water, and perceived inequity in water charging. Tokomaru feedback focused on stormwater drainage problems and river water quality. Levin comments referenced chlorine taste, nitrate concerns, and urban stormwater maintenance. Rural and coastal residents more commonly referenced self-sufficiency through tanks and septic systems, with frustration at paying for services they did not use.

Volume vs Intensity

High-volume issues included chlorine taste and odour, poor drinking water quality, blocked drains and stormwater flooding, water pricing concerns, and requests for improved infrastructure maintenance. High-intensity issues were raised less frequently but with strong emotion: claims that water was unsafe or "poisoned", concerns regarding fluoride and chemical additives, wastewater contamination entering waterways, and anger regarding water charges despite self-supplied systems.

High-Volume Issues

The most frequently mentioned issues were chlorine taste and odour, poor drinking water quality, blocked drains and stormwater flooding, water pricing and metering concerns, and requests for improved infrastructure maintenance. These themes appeared consistently across a large number of responses.

High-Intensity Issues

Some issues were raised less frequently but expressed with particularly strong emotion, including claims that water was unsafe or "poisoned", concerns regarding fluoride and chemical additives, wastewater contamination entering waterways, raw sewage overflows, perceived health impacts, and anger regarding water charges despite self-supplied systems.

Overall Interpretation

The Water Services dataset produced an NPS of -19.4, with detractors significantly outnumbering promoters. While the average score of 6.49 suggests moderate overall satisfaction, the written feedback revealed substantial underlying frustration relating to water quality, infrastructure reliability, stormwater management, and affordability. The qualitative analysis showed that resident sentiment was often more negative and emotionally intense than the numerical scores suggested, reinforcing the importance of combining statistical analysis with detailed comment review.






Water Services / 3 Waters — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 175 tagged comments · NPS -19.4



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Water Services / 3 Waters — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023–2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025–2026	2023–2026
Drinking water	72.2%	72.5%	72.0%	67.5%	 -0.3% satisfied Drinking water (none)	+4.7%
Drinking water – quality	57.5%	60.7%	58.8%	55.8%	 -3.2% satisfied Drinking water - quality (none)	+1.7%
Stormwater	44.0%	51.6%	48.6%	39.9%	 -7.6% satisfied Stormwater (medium)	+4.1%
Wastewater services	76.5%	83.5%	86.0%	78.9%	 -7.0% satisfied Wastewater services (none)	-2.4%
Water tanks Mandatory	67.8%	65.8%	69.5%	66.7%	 +2.0% satisfied Watertanks Mandatory (none)	+1.1%

Drinking water satisfaction has shown a positive long-term trend, increasing by 4.7% since 2023 and remaining largely unchanged since 2024. In contrast, stormwater satisfaction experienced a strong uplift between 2023 and 2025 but has since declined, now sitting -7.6% below its 2025 result.

Wastewater services show the most notable decline in this category, with satisfaction decreasing from 86.0% in 2024 to 76.5% in 2026. While the -9.5% is of low statistical significance, comments from respondents suggest water quality concerns are having a greater impact on community sentiment than is reflected in the overall satisfaction score, particularly in Foxton Beach.

Land Transport / Roothing

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	118
Passives (7–8)	116
Promoters (9–10)	58
Total Respondents	292
NPS Score	-20.5
Mean (Average)	6.58
Median	7
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Footpath condition & maintenance** – "Proper care and maintenance of the available footpaths would vastly improve safety. Footpaths are gradually being overtaken by grass which conceals the full available width of our walking paths and is gradually reducing it to a one way track."
- **Cycling infrastructure** – "We have no shared pathways in Tokomaru - we should be linked up with Linton then we could cycle all the way into Palmerston North."
- **Walking & cycling safety** – "I do walk and cycle heaps - it is dangerous cycling on many close-rural roads around Levin. Not enough dedicated cycle/walkways and some roads have very narrow edges and angry drivers."
- **Rural access** – "As retired living in Ohau and keen to cycle, there's no safe connection to Levin, not using a busy highway. A cycleway would be great."
- **Horse & equestrian access** – "The council needs to make the shared paths into multi-use paths so that the equestrian community can use them. Other districts and councils are looking after the equestrian community - you need to be doing this too."
- **Road maintenance & potholes** – "Fix the roads properly first time round. Don't have to redo work a week later because you have sealed over potholes full of water."
- **Public transport** – "Public transport needs to be established to connect rural areas to Levin town."

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The Land Transport feedback demonstrated several instances where numerical satisfaction scores appeared more moderate than written comments suggested. While some respondents acknowledged infrastructure as "adequate" or "improving," their comments still identified significant concerns around safety, accessibility, and maintenance. A recurring mismatch was seen where respondents recognised council efforts or recent upgrades while highlighting that improvements were incomplete or not keeping pace with growth.

Geographic Patterns

Clear geographic trends emerged. Foxton Beach residents frequently raised concerns about lack of footpaths and pedestrian infrastructure on one side of roads. Tokomaru feedback focused on lack of shared pathways, connectivity to surrounding areas, and public transport. Rural areas including Ōhau, Waitāre, Waikawa Beach, and Manakau identified dangerous narrow roads, unsafe cycling conditions, and heavy truck traffic. Urban Levin comments focused more on footpath quality, cyclist behaviour, pedestrian crossings, and lighting.

Volume vs Intensity

High-volume issues included cracked and uneven footpaths, lack of footpaths in some areas, poor rural cycling safety, dangerous road crossings, need for better lighting, and requests for more cycleways and shared paths. High-intensity issues were raised by a smaller number of respondents but with significantly stronger emotional language, particularly around fear of injury while walking or cycling, elderly residents feeling unsafe, and perceptions that certain communities were overlooked or underfunded.

High-Volume Issues

The most commonly recurring concerns were cracked and uneven footpaths, lack of footpaths in some areas, poor rural cycling safety, dangerous road crossings, need for better lighting, requests for more cycleways and shared paths, road potholes, and lack of public transport. These appeared consistently across urban, rural, and coastal communities.

High-Intensity Issues

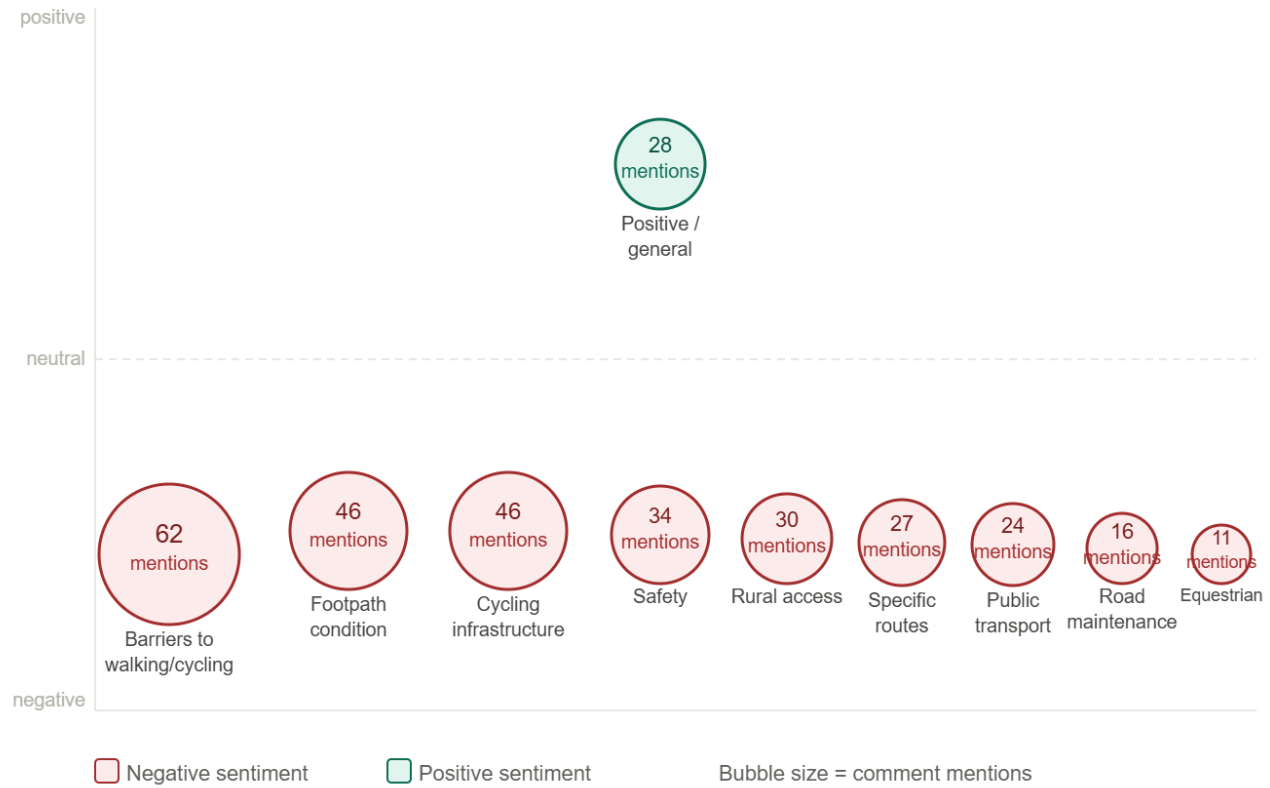
Some responses contained strongly emotional language, particularly around fear of injury while walking or cycling, elderly residents feeling unsafe, high-speed rural roads and truck traffic, concerns regarding children cycling near traffic, frustration at perceived neglect of rural areas, and anger regarding unsafe state highway conditions. Several respondents described current infrastructure as "dangerous", "unsafe", or "a death trap".

Overall Interpretation

The Land Transport feedback indicates residents value walking and cycling opportunities but see significant room for improvement in safety, accessibility, and infrastructure quality. The strongest concerns centred on footpath condition, safe walking and cycling connectivity, rural road safety, lack of public transport, and long-term infrastructure investment. The analysis revealed a clear divide between urban and rural experiences, with rural residents facing greater barriers to active transport due to distance, high-speed roads, and limited infrastructure.







Land Transport / Roding — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 324 tagged comments · NPS -20.5



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Land Transport / Roading — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023–2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023–2026
District road maintenance	38.5%	42.8%	39.3%	31.2%	 -4.3% satisfied District road maintenance (low)	+7.3%
Footpath maintenance	35.4%	39.0%	38.8%	35.4%	 -3.6% satisfied Footpath maintenance (none)	0.0%
Parking	56.6%	67.2%	66.6%	58.8%	 -10.6% satisfied Parking (very high)	-2.2%
Roading suitability – cyclists and walking	37.2%	36.7%	34.6%	23.5%	 +0.5% satisfied Roading suitability - cyclists and walking (none)	+13.7%
Roading suitability – traffic flow	40.5%	55.2%	51.2%	47.7%	 -14.7% satisfied Roading suitability - traffic flow (very high)	-7.2%
Street Lighting	55.9%	56.6%	58.2%	50.5%	 -0.7% satisfied Street Lighting (none)	+5.4%

The three-year picture for Land Transport is mixed. Satisfaction with district road maintenance and the suitability of roads for cycling and walking has shown genuine improvement since 2023, increasing by 7.3% and 13.7% respectively.

However, satisfaction with both parking and traffic flow has declined sharply since 2024. Parking satisfaction has fallen by 10.0% (very high statistical significance), while traffic flow satisfaction has decreased by 10.7% (high statistical significance). Footpath maintenance has returned to its 2023 level following a temporary improvement in 2024, suggesting little sustained progress in an area that residents consistently identify as a concern.

This pattern in longer-term gains in some areas being offset by significant recent declines in others, is reflected in the overall Land Transport NPS of -20.5, the lowest of all ten survey categories in 2026.

Parks & Reserves

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	62
Passives (7–8)	68
Promoters (9–10)	50
Total Respondents	180
NPS Score	-6.7
Mean (Average)	7.1
Median	8
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Maintenance & upkeep** – *"Pride in reserves, tidier lawns and walk paths."*
- **Walking & cycling tracks** – *"I would like to see more done at Lake Horowhenua. A decent-length walkway/cycleway and a café would be beneficial to the area."*
- **Dog parks** – *"I would like council to consider a fenced dog park for Shannon. At the moment there is a shared space on a sports field, which is not suitable."*
- **Horses & equestrian** – *"Need more places to ride horses."*
- **Playgrounds & facilities** – *"Would like more picnic tables at the parks, not just benches."*
- **Lake Horowhenua** – *"The lake problems need to be sorted."*
- **Anti-social behaviour & safety** – *"Wish there was less fly tipping and vehicle damages."*
- **Trees & green space** – *"We need more parks in Levin - there is a lack of quality and large green spaces."*
- **Selling/developing reserves** – *"The ground staff do an awesome job with the sports grounds, parks, and reserves. It is, however, a tragedy that the Council chose to sell off the War Memorial Hall and give away the Village Green."*

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The Parks & Reserves feedback showed a noticeable difference between overall positive sentiment toward the parks network and stronger frustrations expressed in specific written comments. Many residents stated Horowhenua has a good variety of parks and reserves, praising the maintenance of sports grounds and public playgrounds. However, even among generally positive responses, residents highlighted concerns regarding maintenance consistency, neglected reserves, poor toilet facilities, and lack of walking and cycling infrastructure. The mismatch indicates that broad satisfaction with parks does not necessarily reflect confidence in the condition or long-term upkeep of all individual sites.

Geographic Patterns

Levin generated the highest volume of feedback, particularly regarding Lake Horowhenua, walking and cycling tracks, and reserve maintenance. Residents frequently compared Levin unfavourably to nearby districts such as Waikanae and Masterton. Foxton Beach feedback was generally more positive but raised concerns about beach reserve maintenance and deteriorating picnic infrastructure. Shannon comments focused on overgrown vegetation, pathway maintenance, and dog park facilities. Rural communities highlighted lack of multi-use pathways and limited horse access.

Volume vs Intensity

High-volume issues included need for more walking and cycling tracks, maintenance and cleanliness concerns, overgrown vegetation, requests for more recreational infrastructure, dog park facilities, and desire for improved pathways around Lake Horowhenua. High-intensity issues included the condition of Gladstone Reserve, decline of Lake Horowhenua, anti-social behaviour and illegal vehicle activity, and concern about selling or developing reserve land.

High-Volume Issues

The most commonly recurring issues were need for more walking and cycling tracks, maintenance and cleanliness, overgrown vegetation, requests for more recreational infrastructure, dog park facilities, and desire for improved pathways around Lake Horowhenua. These appeared consistently across both urban and rural communities.

High-Intensity Issues

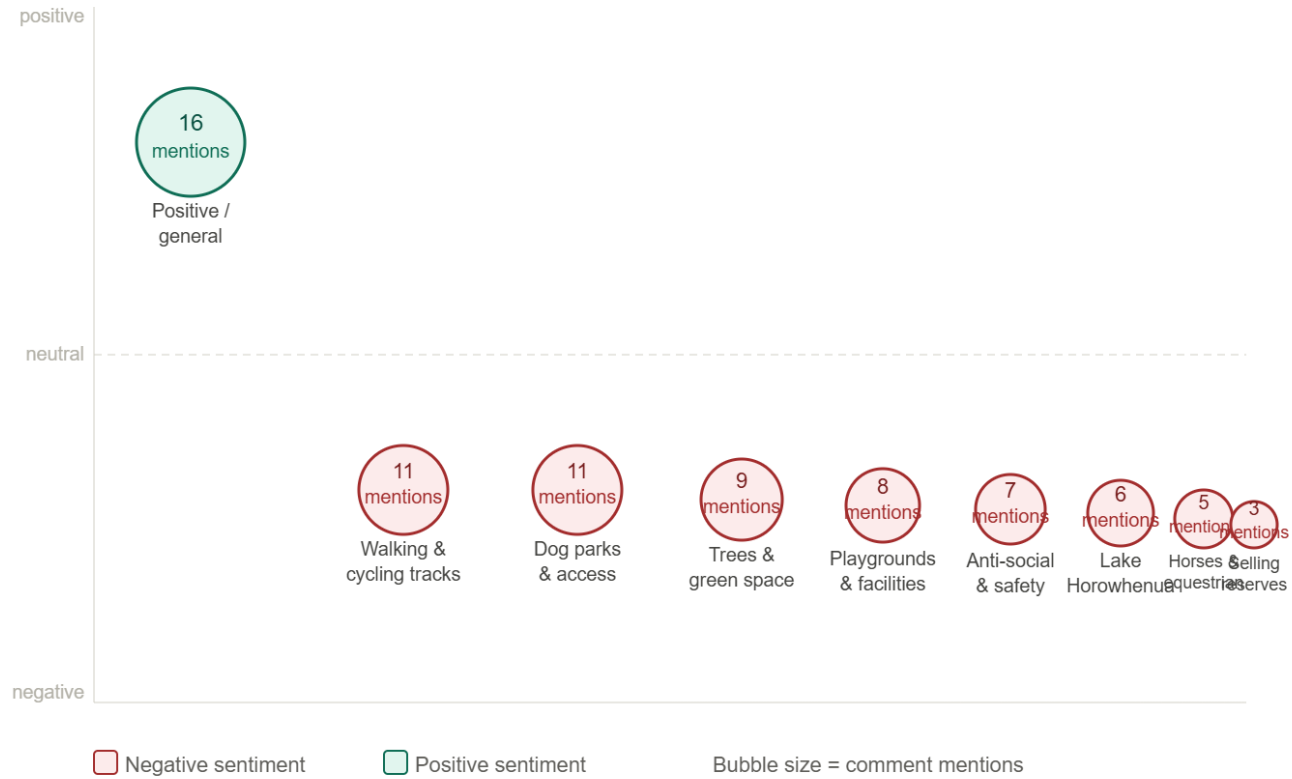
Several comments expressed particularly strong frustration regarding the condition of Gladstone Reserve, the decline of Lake Horowhenua, perceived neglect of public spaces, anti-social behaviour, selling or developing reserve land, and safety concerns in public areas. Strong emotional language was also used when comparing Horowhenua unfavourably to neighbouring districts.

Overall Interpretation

Residents highly value Horowhenua's green spaces and generally see them as important contributors to community wellbeing and district identity. However, there are growing expectations around quality of maintenance, recreational infrastructure, safety, accessibility, environmental management, and multi-use functionality. Lake Horowhenua emerged as a particularly significant focal point, consistently identified as both an environmental concern and an underdeveloped recreational asset. While overall sentiment was more positive than some other service areas, the qualitative feedback suggests strong community expectations for continued investment and improved maintenance.


Parks & Reserves — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 76 tagged comments · NPS -6.7



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Parks & Reserves – Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023-2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023-2026
Parks and reserves	74.7%	79.3%	81.3%	83.3%	 -4.6% satisfied Parks and reserves (none)	-8.6%

Parks and reserves satisfaction has shown a sustained downward trend over the past three years, decreasing by 8.6% since 2023 at high statistical significance.

Although overall satisfaction remains relatively strong at 74.7%, community sentiment is clearly moving in a downward trend. Qualitative feedback suggests growing community expectations around maintenance standards, recreational infrastructure, and environmental management, particularly in relation to Lake Horowhenua are key factors contributing to this decline.

Community Centres & Libraries

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	51
Passives (7–8)	69
Promoters (9–10)	58
Total Respondents	178
NPS Score	+3.9
Mean (Average)	7.39
Median	8
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Staff & service** – "Excellent service, beautiful spaces to be in and enjoy. Great exhibitions. Excellent customer service and great children's holiday programs."
- **Books & collections** – "You need to have more books available here in Foxton. Put more shelves up and have more books."
- **Space & environment** – "Pleased you are catering to both youth and elderly. I'm in the elderly group but liked the manga section you have for the youth, good selection and nice staff."
- **Community & events** – "Love the shared spaces with something for everyone and all ages. Kids really enjoy visiting the library for books, activities, play and cafe."
- **Digital & technology** – "Libraries make me feel warm and welcome. Collections are good. Eplatforms are varied."
- **Opening hours & access** – "The library is very good, but I am disappointed that it closed on Sundays."
- **Funding & value** – "You are doing well spending money and subsidizing a service by all rate payers, only a very few people use for free."
- **Positive / general** – "All I can say is anything I have an interest in has been provided."

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

There were relatively few strong mismatches between numerical scores and written comments in this category, as the majority of feedback was consistently positive in both tone and scoring. However, several nuanced responses demonstrated that residents could simultaneously value the service while identifying specific concerns. Examples included residents praising staff and facilities while expressing concern about reduced opening hours, positive feedback paired with concerns about limited collections in smaller locations such as Foxton, and respondents supportive of libraries as community hubs while questioning long-term funding.

Geographic Patterns

Foxton feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with Foxton frequently described as a destination, community hub, and welcoming multi-purpose space catering to a wide range of ages and interests. Some Foxton-related comments requested larger local book collections and more shelving. Levin Library feedback was also strongly positive, particularly regarding collections, staff, and community activities. Some comments referenced requests for more computers and concerns about reduced opening hours. Accessibility barriers including limited transport were raised across the district.

Volume vs Intensity

The feedback showed a strong imbalance toward positive sentiment, with relatively low levels of highly negative or emotionally intense responses. High-volume issues included friendly and helpful staff, libraries as community hubs, quality facilities and environment, and community events and programmes. High-intensity issues were less common but included funding and perceived value concerns, access and equity concerns, and strongly passionate positive responses framing libraries as essential community infrastructure.

High-Volume Issues

The most frequently mentioned themes were friendly and helpful staff, libraries functioning as community hubs, quality facilities and environments, and community events and programmes. These themes appeared consistently and with strong positive sentiment across both urban and smaller community locations.

High-Intensity Issues

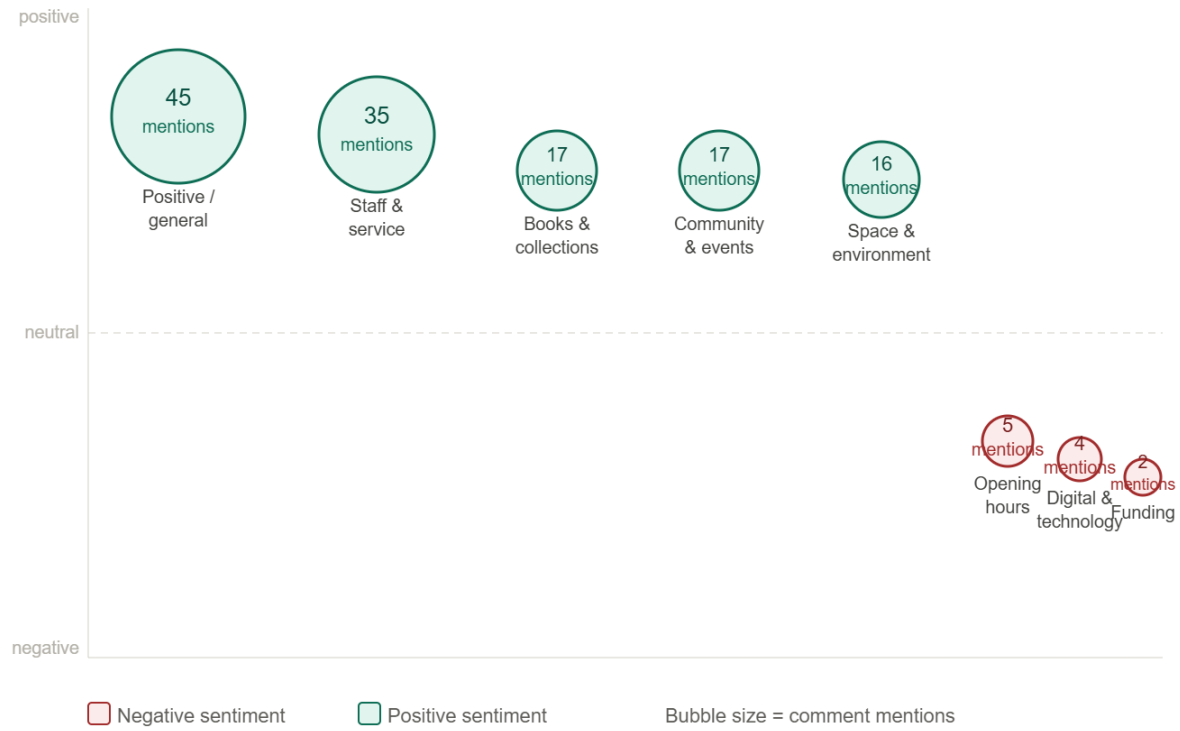
Although less common, several comments expressed strong views regarding the funding model and perceived value, access and equity concerns particularly around reduced opening hours, and the importance of libraries as essential social infrastructure. Several highly passionate positive responses framed libraries as critical to social wellbeing and one of the few universally accessible public spaces.

Overall Interpretation

Overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive, representing one of the strongest-performing service areas in the dataset. Key strengths included highly regarded staff, welcoming environments, strong community connection, diverse programmes, and multi-generational appeal. However, several recurring improvement themes emerged: requests for longer opening hours, concerns about collection size in smaller communities, improved technology access, and increased affordability of community spaces. A smaller but vocal group questioned the long-term funding model. Despite this, the broader dataset strongly supports the view that residents consider community centres and libraries to be essential social infrastructure.









Community Centres & Libraries — key themes




Bubble size = number of comments · 141 tagged comments · NPS +3.9



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Community Centres & Libraries — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023–2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023–2026
Library services	96.7%	93.9%	95.3%	94.4%	 +2.8% satisfied Library services (none)	+2.3%
Library Services – Shannon Library	91.7%	100%	100.0%	80.8%	 -8.3% satisfied Library Services - Shannon Library (none)	+10.9%
Library Services – TANS	100.0%	93.0%	95.0%	94.5%	 +7.0% satisfied Library Services - TANS (none)	+5.5%
Library Services – Te Takere	96.1%	93.8%	94.9%	95.4%	 +2.3% satisfied Library Services - Te Takere (none)	+0.7%
Non library services – Shannon library	100.0%	53.3%	90.0%	85.7%	 +46.7% satisfied Non library services - Shannon library (none)	+14.3%
Non library services – TANS	89.7%	89.2%	91.2%	91.3%	 +0.5% satisfied Non library services - TANS (none)	-1.6%
Non library services – Te Takere	93.7%	92.6%	93.2%	94.8%	 +1.1% satisfied Non library services - Te Takere (none)	-1.1%
Customer service	72.9%	77.0%	74.1%	68.5%	 -4.1% satisfied Customer service (none)	+4.4%

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023-2026
Halls	62.7%	59.1%	62.5%	70.0%	 +3.6% satisfied Halls (none)	-7.3%
Cemeteries	87.1%	83.0%	87.9%	83.3%	 +4.1% satisfied Cemeteries (none)	+3.8%
Community Centres non-library services	92.4%	89.9%	92.4%	93.1%	 +2.5% satisfied Community Centres non-library services (none)	-0.7%

Community Centres and Libraries is the most consistently positive service category across the four-year period.

Overall library services have improved steadily from 94.4% satisfaction in 2023 to 96.7% in 2026. In 2026, TANS achieved 100% satisfaction for both library and non-library services, while Shannon Library non-library services also reached 100%, up 14.3% since 2023.

Customer service improved significantly between 2023 and 2024 and has remained broadly stable since.

Halls remain the only measure to show a notable long-term decline, falling 7.3% since 2023, although satisfaction improved in 2026. No changes across the category reached statistical significance, reflecting the stable and well-regarded performance consistently evident in qualitative feedback.

Rubbish & Recycling

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	177
Passives (7–8)	226
Promoters (9–10)	178
Total Respondents	581
NPS Score	+0.2
Mean (Average)	7.18
Median	8
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Transfer station costs** – "Make the tip a lot cheaper."
- **Kerbside collection** – "It's a big cost to have to hire a privately owned company to collect rubbish. Why do other councils provide wheelie bins and HDC doesn't?"
- **Recycling, what's accepted** – "I was pleased to see we finally have soft plastics recycling in Levin, would be great to see it in Foxton."
- **Recycling infrastructure** – "The mobile recycling station at Waitare Beach needs to be emptied on a more regular basis over the summer holiday period. Quite often it is overflowing and people just dump stuff there."
- **Rubbish bags** – "Council rubbish bags are too expensive and small."
- **Private vs council services** – "Private collectors are more reliable."
- **Fly tipping & illegal dumping** – "Charges for rubbish disposal too high especially for low income people, which encourages fly tipping."
- **Education & communication** – "In past surveys you suggested using the old landfill for making compost. Is that still a consideration?"
- **Positive / general feedback** – "I appreciate the service provided to me and they are always professional and efficient."

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The Rubbish & Recycling feedback contained a significant number of score versus sentiment mismatches. Many respondents acknowledged that collection services generally operate reliably and that contractors are professional, but these positive operational comments were frequently accompanied by frustration regarding transfer station pricing, lack of kerbside rubbish services, inconsistent rural access, and perceived inequities in rates versus service provision. These mismatches suggest residents often separate frontline operational performance from broader waste management policy decisions.

Geographic Patterns

Levin-related feedback focused heavily on high transfer station costs and demand for broader recycling options, with many comparing Levin unfavourably to other districts. Foxton and Foxton Beach feedback included positive comments about kerbside collection but concerns about overflowing summer recycling stations. Rural residents consistently raised concerns about lack of kerbside services, needing to transport waste long distances, and paying rates without receiving equivalent services.

Volume vs Intensity

High-volume issues included transfer station costs (the dominant issue), lack of council kerbside rubbish collection, expanded recycling options (soft plastics, food scraps, green waste), and bin handling and service consistency. High-intensity issues included illegal dumping and fly tipping (strongly linked to pricing structures), equity and fairness concerns from rural and elderly residents, and distrust of recycling outcomes.

High-Volume Issues

The most frequently raised issues were transfer station costs, the absence of council-provided kerbside rubbish collection, limited recycling options, and bin handling concerns. Transfer station costs dominated the dataset, with repeated concerns about green waste pricing, affordability for pensioners and low-income residents, and a direct link between high pricing and illegal dumping behaviour.

High-Intensity Issues

Several themes generated strongly worded or emotionally charged responses, including illegal dumping linked to disposal costs, equity concerns from rural residents paying rates without receiving services, elderly residents struggling with accessibility requirements, distrust of whether recycling materials are genuinely recycled, and strong environmental concern about landfill reliance and the need for long-term sustainability planning.

Overall Interpretation

Overall feedback reflected a service area with relatively strong operational performance but substantial dissatisfaction regarding pricing, accessibility, and long-term waste strategy. Key strengths included reliable kerbside collection, positive feedback about collection crews, and strong public support for recycling. The dominant concerns related to affordability, equity of service provision, transfer station pricing, gaps in recycling options, and rural accessibility challenges. The volume of comments relating to affordability and illegal dumping indicates residents view these as interconnected issues.







Rubbish & Recycling — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 280 tagged comments · NPS +0.2



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Rubbish & Recycling — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023-2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023-2026
Kerbside recycling	87.8%	86.5%	82.2%	78.7%	 +1.3% satisfied Kerbside recycling (medium)	+9.1%
Kerbside rubbish	89.1%	92.0%	88.4%	90.2%	 -2.9% satisfied Kerbside rubbish (none)	-1.1%
Levin Transfer Station	61.8%	67.0%	61.3%	66.5%	 -5.2% satisfied Levin Transfer Station (none)	-4.7%
Levin Transfer Station recycling	66.2%	68.2%	N/A	N/A	 -2.0% satisfied Levin Transfer Station recycling (none)	—
Mobile Recycling CSAT	83.3%	86.5%	78.0%	N/A	 -3.2% satisfied Mobile Recycling CSAT (none)	—
Shannon and Foxton Transfer Station	76.1%	73.9%	67.3%	73.7%	 +2.2% satisfied Shannon and Foxton Transfer Station (none)	+2.4%

Kerbside recycling is the standout success story in this category, increasing by 9.1% since 2023 at very high statistical significance. Satisfaction with the Shannon and Foxton Transfer Station has also strengthened, recovering from its 2024 low and exceeding 2023 levels by 2026.

In contrast, the Levin Transfer Station remains the weakest-performing measure in the category. Satisfaction has declined by 4.7% since 2023 and, despite some recovery from its 2024 result, remains below previous levels.

The qualitative findings suggest this reflects ongoing concerns around transfer station pricing, illegal dumping, and perceived inequities in rural service provision. Overall, the results indicate that while operational collection services continue to perform strongly and improve over time, community concerns regarding transfer station access and affordability remain unresolved.

Customer Service (Civic Centre)

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	51
Passives (7–8)	43
Promoters (9–10)	46
Total Respondents	140
NPS Score	-3.6
Mean (Average)	6.85
Median	8
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Response times & follow-up** – *"Takes far too long for the phones to be answered resulting in having to hang up and try again later."*
- **Building & consenting** – *"We submit a significant number of resource consents to council and feel some frustration at the time frames taken to process applications."*
- **Phone & front counter** – *"Just be a bit more receptive to customers requests over the counter - I am a rates payer but I go in and ask for info politely I am told to go away and pay for it."*
- **Staff quality & training** – *"Poor service, everything is difficult to deal with."*
- **Email & digital systems** – *"Keep Simpli up to date and more user friendly."*
- **LGOIMAs & official requests** – *"Whenever LGOIMAs have been done in the past, majority of the time, Council does not stick to the timeframe for a response as stipulated in the Act."*
- **Specific unresolved issues** – *"So many files missing and all councils say there was a fire which is a lie. The files are somewhere so find them and stop being lazy."*
- **Positive feedback** – *"Nothing - the customer service has been excellent. Staff have been knowledgeable, friendly and able to resolve an issue for me."*

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

Several responses showed a mismatch between numerical satisfaction scores and written sentiment. Residents gave moderate or positive scores while still describing serious frustrations with delays, poor communication, or unresolved issues. Other residents provided low scores despite acknowledging that individual frontline staff were polite or helpful. These mismatches suggest residents often distinguish between individual staff performance and broader council systems and processes.

Geographic Patterns

Customer service feedback was less geographically differentiated than other categories, with most concerns reflecting district-wide operational patterns. Building and consenting delays were particularly noted by those submitting resource consents, with concern that reported timeframe statistics did not accurately reflect actual performance. Compliance and animal welfare matters generated specific locality-linked frustrations, particularly in cases where complaints were made and not followed up.

Volume vs Intensity

High-volume issues included slow response times, lack of communication or follow-up, difficulty reaching staff by phone, delays in building and consenting, and inconsistent advice between departments. High-intensity issues included ongoing neighbour and anti-social behaviour complaints with perceived council inaction, property and rates administration errors, missing records and historical files, and stress caused by unresolved compliance matters.

High-Volume Issues

The most commonly raised concerns were slow response times, lack of communication or follow-up, difficulty reaching staff by phone, delays in building and consenting processes, and inconsistent advice between departments. These indicate broad operational concerns experienced by a large number of residents.

High-Intensity Issues

A smaller number of submissions contained highly emotional or strongly worded feedback, particularly regarding ongoing neighbour and anti-social behaviour complaints, perceived inaction by council, property and rates administration errors, missing records and historical files, and stress caused by unresolved compliance or regulatory matters.

Overall Interpretation

Customer service feedback reflects a service area with capable and generally well-regarded frontline staff, but systemic challenges around follow-through, communication, and digital systems. Residents frequently distinguished between positive individual interactions and frustration with broader organisational processes. Building and consenting delays and LGOIMA handling emerged as areas of particular operational concern, while the volume of comments about unanswered emails and unresolved issues suggests a structural gap between initial contact and resolution.





Customer Service / Civic Centre — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 94 tagged comments · NPS -3.6



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Customer Service (Civic Centre) — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023-2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023–2026
Easy to do business with	35.2%	41.7%	39.4%	42.2%	 -6.5% satisfied Easy to do business with (none)	-7.0%
Council Contact CSAT	75.8%	87.6%	82.4%	N/A	 -11.8% satisfied Council Contact CSAT (medium)	—
Council Responsiveness	68.7%	75.1%	66.0%	N/A	 -6.4% satisfied Council Responsiveness (medium)	—
LGOIMA, LIM, PF requests	65.0%	77.3%	75.0%	66.0%	 -12.3% satisfied LGOIMA, LIM, PF requests (none)	-1.0%

Easy to do business with has declined consistently over the period, falling from 42.2% in 2023 to 35.2% in 2026, a decrease of 7.0%. This is particularly significant given that the 2025 survey identified this measure as the primary focus area for improvement.

Council Contact satisfaction has also declined sharply since its introduction in 2024, falling 6.6% between 2024 and 2026.

LGOIMA, LIM and Property File request satisfaction peaked at 75.0% in 2024 before falling back to 65.0% in 2026, almost returning to its 2023 level.

Council Responsiveness is the only measure in this category to improve since 2024, increasing 2.7%. However, qualitative feedback continues to highlight gaps between initial contact, communication, and resolution, suggesting these improvements are not yet being consistently experienced by the wider community.

Overall, the category reflects an ongoing challenge in converting customer interactions into positive customer experiences, with declining perceptions of ease, contact quality, and service delivery outweighing modest gains in responsiveness.

Communications & Engagement

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	65
Passives (7–8)	54
Promoters (9–10)	38
Total Respondents	157
NPS Score	-17.2
Mean (Average)	6.72
Median	7
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Social media & digital** – "You could be less defensive on Facebook. I unfollowed because I thought comments from the admin were rude, unprofessional and the jokes were inappropriate."
- **Staff responsiveness** – "I put in a request in January, and after many attempts to contact the council, I did not hear back for 3 months."
- **Meetings & workshops** – "Need it explained in better detail what our rights are re the proposal. It seems to be just a box ticking exercise."
- **Information about decisions & projects** – "Just what meetings and topics are coming up for discussion/feedback/decision making."
- **Rates communication** – "I need more information about increases in rates etc."
- **Preferred channels** – "I don't really hear much about what goes on (no delivery of local papers these days)."
- **Language & accessibility** – "Why does every piece of hard copy and digital HDC literature have to not only be written in Maori but, also be shown as first priority?"
- **Community involvement** – "Actually listen to feedback rather than being like oh you must do this or that survey."
- **Positive / general** – "So far so good, you can never please everybody!"

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The Communications & Engagement feedback showed a high number of score versus sentiment mismatches. Residents often valued council communication efforts overall while still expressing frustration with responsiveness, consultation quality, or perceived transparency. Respondents acknowledged that information is generally available while simultaneously stating it is difficult to find, overly selective, or provided too late in the decision-making process. Several comments differentiated between communication quality (how information is presented) and engagement quality (whether residents feel listened to).

Geographic Patterns

Levin-related feedback focused on urban development concerns, parking decisions, and major project communication, with a recurring perception that decisions were already made before consultation occurred. Foxton-related comments more frequently referenced difficulty accessing meeting information and desire for greater inclusion of smaller communities. Rural residents highlighted reduced access to information, reliance on local newspapers rather than digital channels, and lower engagement with council websites. Accessibility concerns were also raised for deaf residents and older residents less engaged with digital platforms.

Volume vs Intensity

High-volume issues included social media and communication style (which attracted much positive feedback), feeling unheard through consultation, access to information, and support for maintaining multiple communication channels including traditional media. High-intensity issues included distrust in consultation processes, cultural and language concerns, responsiveness and follow-up failures, and perceived exclusion of working residents from daytime meetings.

High-Volume Issues

The most frequently occurring themes were social media and communication style -which drew consistent praise for humour, accessibility, and emergency updates -alongside a strong recurring theme that consultation does not feel meaningful, feedback is not consistently acted upon, and decisions appear predetermined. Residents repeatedly used phrases such as "box ticking exercise", "lip service", and "stop controlling and listen".

High-Intensity Issues

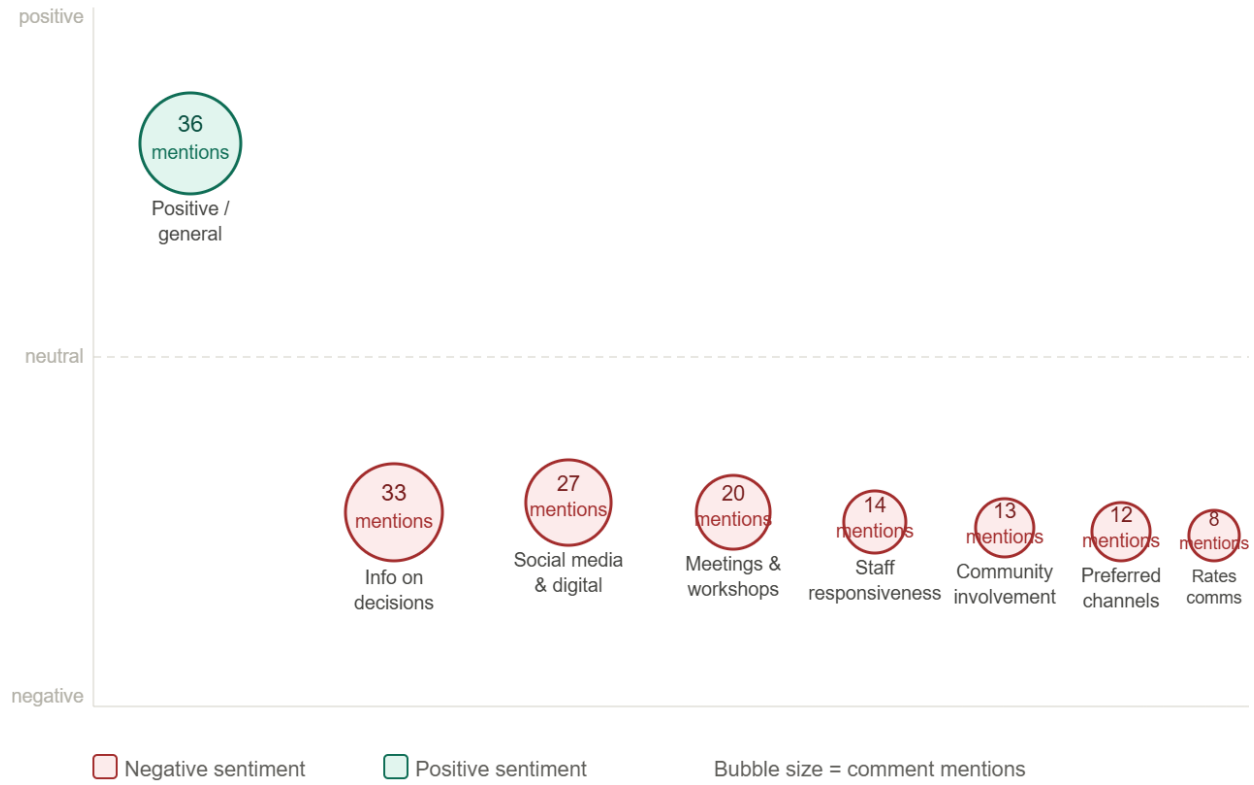
The most emotionally charged feedback related to perceived predetermined decisions, feeling ignored during consultation, and lack of genuine community influence. Some respondents explicitly described engagement processes as "pointless", "lip service", "disingenuous", and "box ticking". Cultural and language concerns generated a smaller but strongly worded group of responses. Responsiveness failures -long delays after reporting issues, lack of callbacks, unresolved complaints -also generated highly frustrated comments.

Overall Interpretation

Communications & Engagement appears to be viewed as operationally competent and increasingly modern in style, but with ongoing challenges around trust, perceived transparency, and community confidence in the consultation process. Council's social media presence and communication tone are genuine strengths. However, the dominant concern relates less to communication delivery and more to whether feedback genuinely influences decisions. A major recurring theme is the distinction between informing the community and meaningfully involving the community.








Communications & Engagement — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 168 tagged comments · NPS -17.2



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Communications & Engagement — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023–2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2023–2026
Comms easy to understand	61.5%	72.4%	65.4%	63.6%	 -10.9% satisfied Comms easy to understand (none)	-2.1%
Well Informed	51.4%	57.0%	53.9%	54.0%	 -5.6% satisfied Well Informed (none)	-2.6%
Feedback Process	55.9%	73.8%	62.7%	67.0%	 -17.9% satisfied Feedback Process (low)	-11.1%
Decision making – public involvement	40.9%	54.7%	49.5%	43.5%	 -13.8% satisfied Decision making - public involvement (very high)	-2.6%
Transparent	33.8%	40.3%	40.6%	37.0%	 -6.5% satisfied Transparent (very high)	-3.2%
Council Contact CSAT	75.8%	87.6%	82.4%	N/A	 -11.8% satisfied Council Contact CSAT (medium)	—
Council Responsiveness	68.7%	75.1%	66.0%	N/A	 -6.4% satisfied Council Responsiveness (medium)	—

The Communications and Engagement category experienced a marked deterioration between 2025 and 2026, with every measure declining over the period. Satisfaction with the feedback process recorded the largest fall, decreasing 17.9% in a single year, while perceptions of public involvement in decision-making declined by 13.8%. Satisfaction with Council communications being easy to understand fell by 10.9%, and perceptions of transparency declined by 6.5%.

Looking across the full four-year period, the trend remains consistently negative. Satisfaction with the feedback process has fallen 11.1% since 2023, while perceptions of transparency have declined by 3.2% and satisfaction with public involvement in decision-making has fallen by 2.6%. Measures relating to feeling informed and communication clarity have also drifted slightly below their 2023 levels.

By contrast, Council Contact satisfaction (75.8%) and Council Responsiveness (68.7%) remain comparatively strong, despite both declining from 2025 levels. This suggests residents generally have

positive experiences when interacting directly with Council, but are less positive about the broader communication, engagement, and decision-making environment.

The quantitative results align closely with the qualitative findings, which indicate that residents distinguish between receiving information and feeling heard, involved, or able to influence outcomes. The sharp declines between 2025 and 2026 suggest this perception gap may have widened over the past year, particularly in relation to feedback processes, transparency, and opportunities for community input.

Quality of Life

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	58
Passives (7–8)	79
Promoters (9–10)	47
Total Respondents	184
NPS Score	-6.0
Mean (Average)	6.99
Median	8
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Healthcare & medical services** – "Having more doctors and health professionals permanently committed to Levin."
- **Infrastructure & growth** – "Aging infrastructure not necessarily being maintained or replaced."
- **Housing & rates** – "Ever increasing rates burden on ratepayers."
- **Crime & safety** – "Aging population. Serious crime rising. No Doctors or other skilled professionals finding the area appealing to live."
- **Public transport** – "Healthcare is inadequate. The petty crime is increasing eg car thefts. Lack of public transport."
- **Town centre & appearance** – "Boy racers, homeless folk who live and hang around the library. Need more shops, bigger supermarkets and more doctors clinics."
- **Lake Horowhenua** – "My biggest concern is Lake Horowhenua and the reputation we have the most polluted lake in New Zealand. It feels the council has washed its hands of this issue."
- **Welcoming newcomers & community events** – "Have more leisurely things developed like cycle ways, safe walkways, tree path areas?"
- **Employment & economy** – "It is a low-income area with few jobs and really high poverty and inequality."
- **Environmental concerns** – "Access to emergency healthcare, housing affordability. Environmental pollution, the lake, river waterways & beaches being unsafe for swimming at times is concerning."
- **Positive / general** – "Nothing really, it's the people who live here that need to change."

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The most strategically important finding is the mismatch between how often a theme is mentioned and how deeply it is felt. Healthcare scores high on both axes -it is both the most frequently mentioned and one of the most emotionally charged themes in the dataset. Town centre scores high on volume but comparatively low on intensity -people notice it but are not distressed by it. Lake Horowhenua and crime present the inverse: low to moderate mention counts but among the highest emotional intensity in the dataset.

Geographic Patterns

Levin dominates the response pool and concerns span all themes there. Specific rural and coastal localities -Tokomaru, Hokio Beach, and Foxton -appear in relation to more localised infrastructure issues such as above-ground powerlines, berm maintenance gaps, GP travel distances, and absent bus connections. A secondary pattern distinguishes long-term residents, who narrate visible decline from a baseline they remember, from newer arrivals, who cite unmet expectations around healthcare access and transport connectivity.

Volume vs Intensity

Approximately 180 responses were analysed, with around 82% flagging at least one concern. Healthcare access leads on mention volume at roughly 38 references, followed by infrastructure lag at 31, town centre decline at 28, and housing and rates at 26. Crime and safety, public transport, employment, Lake Horowhenua, environment, and community events follow in descending order. Lake and crime concerns carry emotional weight well beyond their mention frequency, while town centre complaints are numerous but comparatively mild in tone.

High-Volume Issues

Healthcare access is the single most-cited concern by a wide margin. Long wait times, GP shortages, distance to hospital, and lack of specialists all appear repeatedly. Infrastructure lag follows closely, with residents feeling that water supply, roading, and sewerage are not keeping up with population growth. Town centre decline comes third, with rubbish, scruffy shop fronts, poor berm maintenance, and an unappealing mall cited frequently. Housing and rates round out the top four.

High-Intensity Issues

Lake Horowhenua, despite relatively few mentions, produces the most visceral responses -phrases like "a disgrace" and "the most polluted lake in New Zealand" appear alongside a sense that the council has simply abandoned the issue. Crime and safety punches above its mention frequency, with residents expressing fear and anxiety rather than mere dissatisfaction. Healthcare emergencies generate intense personal narratives -cardiac events, elderly patients turned away, and 18-month waits for monitoring.

Overall Interpretation

The dominant narrative is one of growth outpacing services. Residents broadly accept that Horowhenua is expanding but feel the council has not matched that growth with commensurate infrastructure, healthcare provision, or urban maintenance. Positive sentiment exists but is consistently conditional. The phrase "it could be great if..." captures the prevailing mood. The bypass, lake cleanup, and healthcare investment are the three interventions mentioned most often in the same breath as hope for improvement.










Quality of Life — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 222 tagged comments · NPS -6.0



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Quality of Life — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023–2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025 - 2026	2023–2026
A safe place	41.3%	47.8%	53.9%	38.3%	 -6.5% satisfied A safe place (none)	+3.0%
Great place to live	69.2%	79.3%	75.4%	71.5%	 -10.1% satisfied Great place to live (medium)	-2.3%
Quality of life	77.1%	80.4%	78.3%	76.6%	 -3.3% satisfied Quality of life (none)	+0.5%
Healthcare accessible	43.3%	51.7%	36.3%	32.4%	 -8.4% satisfied Healthcare accessible (none)	+10.9%
Enables affordable housing	28.9%	35.6%	30.2%	24.3%	 -6.7% satisfied Enables affordable housing (none)	+4.6%
Sense of community	56.5%	66.5%	61.0%	57.6%	 -10.0% satisfied Sense of community (medium)	-1.1%
Sense of pride	40.7%	51.3%	49.8%	49.9%	 -10.6% satisfied Sense of pride (none)	-9.2%
Supports newcomers	41.3%	54.3%	51.4%	47.3%	 -13.0% satisfied Supports newcomers (low)	-6.0%
Economic development	34.6%	47.6%	42.0%	40.2%	 -13.0% satisfied Economic development (very high)	-5.6%

The Quality of Life results suggest a pattern of gains made and then subsequently lost. Perceptions of Horowhenua as a safe place rose substantially from 38.3% in 2023 to 53.9% in 2024, representing a meaningful improvement, but have since fallen back to 41.3% in 2026, almost returning to their starting point.

Similar patterns are evident in perceptions of affordable housing, sense of community, and support for newcomers, all of which improved between 2023 and 2025 before declining sharply in 2026.

Healthcare accessibility represents the clearest sustained improvement over the four-year period, increasing by 10.9% since 2023. However, despite this improvement, overall satisfaction remains relatively low at 43.3%, and the volume and strength of healthcare-related feedback indicate that access to healthcare continues to fall well short of community expectations.

The most notable feature of the 2026 results is the broad-based decline across every measure compared with 2025. Perceptions of economic development and support for newcomers each fell by 13.0%, while satisfaction with Horowhenua as a great place to live, sense of community, and sense of pride all declined by around 10%.

Taken together, the findings suggest that while residents continue to report relatively positive quality of life outcomes, confidence in the district's future direction, growth, and ability to meet community needs has weakened over the past year.

Levin Aquatic Centre (LAC)

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	37
Passives (7–8)	50
Promoters (9–10)	49
Total Respondents	136
NPS Score	+8.8
Mean (Average)	7.53
Median	8
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Cleanliness & hygiene** – *"I stopped going because... the tile grout was horrible and needed a good clean. The showers had no doors! Where was the privacy!!"*
- **Showers & changing rooms** – *"I'm happy - perhaps a bit more time that the showers in the men's changing room stay on?"*
- **Safety & accessibility** – *"Keep things safer underfoot, particularly where water pools together on flooring, in changing rooms, toilets. Recent fall in Foxton that wasn't good."*
- **Pool lanes & scheduling** – *"Unfortunately when there is lack of staff the jogging lane seems to be the first to close."*
- **Classes & programs** – *"More classes, later hours."*
- **Facilities & amenities** – *"Foxton Pools are great but I don't want to have to travel out there when there's a facility in Levin already - however, I just think the facility is dated and small for a growing population."*
- **Staff & service** – *"I have been a regular swimmer for many years and I am very very satisfied with the pool, and staff. It's a pleasure to go there."*
- **Pricing & access** – *"Nothing. I think you always need to find more and new customers - a job for your marketing team."*

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The most notable mismatch is around cleanliness and hygiene. It is the highest-volume theme and also carries genuine emotional intensity -one respondent described swimming in sodden tissue as "repulsive" and stopped attending entirely for over a year. Staff and service presents the opposite mismatch: several responses are warmly positive about specific staff members by name, while a smaller number express frustration about unreliable rosters. The emotional range within that single theme is wider than any other.

Geographic Patterns

Most responses reference the Levin facility, with Foxton mentioned as a secondary site. Foxton users express general satisfaction but note travel inconvenience when Levin is unavailable. One respondent explicitly framed Levin's facility as dated and undersized for a growing population. The recent closure and refurbishment of Levin is referenced by multiple respondents, with cautious optimism that improvements will address longstanding complaints.

Volume vs Intensity

Cleanliness and hygiene leads on mention volume and intensity. Safety and accessibility has a low mention count but produces some of the most detailed and consequential responses, including a fall at Foxton attributed to water pooling on floors. Pool lane management and scheduling follows cleanliness in volume. Pricing attracts few mentions and relatively mild language, suggesting it is a background concern rather than a driving grievance.

High-Volume Issues

Cleanliness is the dominant complaint, with tile grout, pool tidelines, sodden tissues, and unclean shower walls all cited. Pool lane management and scheduling follows, with aqua joggers, swim classes, and general swimmers frequently conflicting. Staff reliability is the third most prominent theme -specifically the practice of closing the deep lane or turning patrons away when rostering falls short. Showers and changing rooms attract consistent feedback around water pressure, temperature, hooks, and privacy.

High-Intensity Issues

Safety and accessibility generates the most serious concerns relative to its mention count. A fall caused by water pooling on floors at Foxton is described in specific detail, and a regular rehabilitation user recounts travelling from the country only to find mobility steps blocked by a group that did not need them. These are not abstract complaints -they describe real harm and wasted effort. Cleanliness also produces high-intensity responses, with at least one respondent having permanently changed their behaviour as a result.

Overall Interpretation

The dataset reflects a facility with a loyal and largely forgiving user base that has been tolerating substandard conditions for an extended period. The refurbishment currently underway is referenced with genuine hope, and several respondents explicitly say they are looking forward to returning. The risk is that if the reopened facility does not visibly address the cleanliness, safety underfoot, shower functionality, and staffing reliability issues, the goodwill built up during the closure period will erode quickly.

Levin Aquatic Centre (LAC) — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 53 tagged comments · NPS +8.8



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Leadership & Reputation

NPS Analysis

Category	Value
Detractors (0–6)	58
Passives (7–8)	60
Promoters (9–10)	41
Total Respondents	159
NPS Score	-10.7
Mean (Average)	6.78
Median	7
Mode	8

Key Themes

- **Transparency & decision making** – *"Public consultations are a sham in that it certainly appears decisions have already been made before the public meetings."*
- **Mayor & councillors** – *"I don't see much leadership around issues such as keeping Māori wards etc. I feel like council is quiet."*
- **CEO & council staff** – *"The corrupt CE needs to go. Stop employing your friends and treating your role as a popularity contest."*
- **Rates & spending** – *"Stop wasting money on stupid stuff, speed bumps, intersection of Kawiu Road and Tiro Tiro Road and anything else other than the necessities."*
- **Communication** – *"Communication with the public and action taken after decision making need to improve."*
- **Developer & business concerns** – *"Modernise the city for younger families and make it attractive."*
- **Growth strategy** – *"Turning the town into a low wage social housing slum, crime will skyrocket."*
- **Positive / general** – *"From the outside looking in, Council seems to work as a team which makes for smooth running of the district's affairs."*

Score vs Sentiment Mismatch

The sharpest mismatch sits with transparency and decision-making. It is the highest-volume theme and also generates some of the most emotionally loaded language - words like "sham", "predetermined", "box ticking", and "faux input" appear repeatedly. The volume alone would flag it as important, but the intensity confirms it as a fundamental trust issue rather than a routine service complaint. The CEO and staff theme is low in volume but very high in intensity, with a small number of respondents using exceptionally strong language that signals genuine alienation.

Geographic Patterns

This dataset is less geographically differentiated than others. Most responses speak to council as a whole. Foxton appears in a handful of responses around parking decisions on the main street and community board meeting accessibility, suggesting residents outside Levin feel decisions are made with a Levin-centric focus. Rural and small business respondents surface specifically in the rates and developer sections, describing regulatory burden and rising costs disconnected from the services they receive.

Volume vs Intensity

Transparency and decision-making leads on both volume and intensity, with trust in the consultation process the dominant sub-theme. Rates and spending follows on volume. Communication scores high on volume but splits positively and negatively. Mayor and councillors generate a moderate volume with a notably wide sentiment range, from warm personal praise to sharp condemnation. CEO and staff, developer concerns, and growth strategy are lower in volume but carry concentrated intensity.

High-Volume Issues

Transparency and the perceived futility of public consultation is the dominant concern. Residents describe attending hearings, submitting feedback, and engaging with surveys, only to find that decisions were already made. The Village Green development is cited repeatedly as a live example. Rates and spending is the second most prominent theme, with frustration about rising levies, perceived support for developers at ratepayer expense, and money spent on non-essential projects while core services lag.

High-Intensity Issues

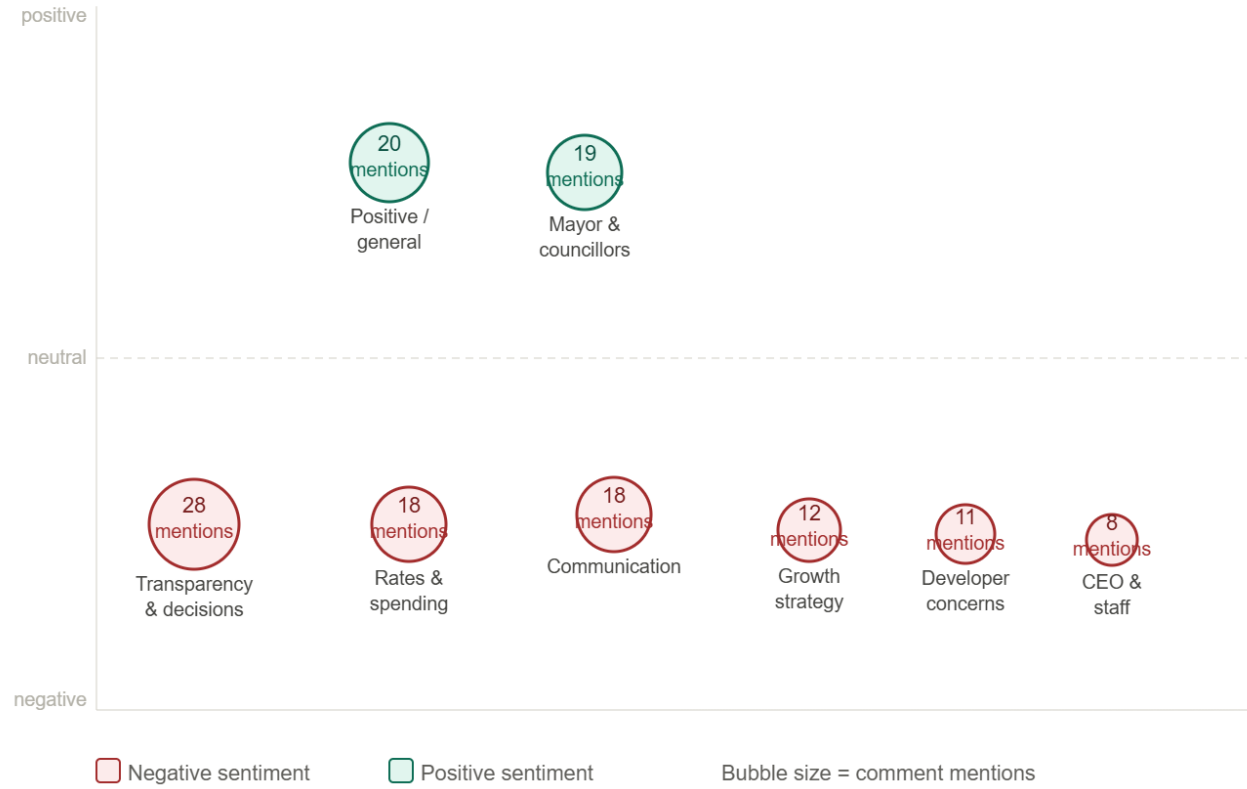
The perception that council operates as an insider network - described as an "old boys club", "jobs for the boys", and "mates rates enterprise" -generates some of the most visceral language in the dataset and appears across multiple response categories. The Waikawa River pollution issue also generates exceptional intensity from a respondent who frames council inaction not as incompetence but as a deliberate refusal to act despite full knowledge of the problem.

Overall Interpretation

The leadership and reputation dataset presents a council in a transitional moment. The current Mayor attracts genuine affection and respect, with several noting a marked improvement in tone and credibility compared to previous leadership. That goodwill is real. However, it sits on top of a deep structural trust deficit that predates the current administration. The core complaint -that consultation is performative rather than genuine -is stated so consistently and with such specific examples that it cannot be dismissed as general cynicism. Repairing the gap between what is said and what is done represents the most actionable path to rebuilding broader institutional trust.








Leadership & Reputation — key themes

Bubble size = number of comments · 134 tagged comments · NPS -10.7



Source: HDC Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey 2026 — comment analysis

Leadership & Reputation — Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), 2023–2026

Measure	2026 CSAT	2025 CSAT	2024 CSAT	2023 CSAT	2025-2026	2024–2026
Mayor & Councillors	47.0%	53.2%	46.6%	45.3%	 -6.2% satisfied Mayor & Councillors (low)	+0.4%
Reputation	42.8%	55.2%	47.2%	46.8%	 -12.4% satisfied Reputation (very high)	-4.4%
Transparent	33.8%	40.3%	40.6%	37.0%	 -6.5% satisfied Transparent (very high)	-6.8%
Easy to do business with	35.2%	41.7%	39.4%	42.2%	 -6.5% satisfied Easy to do business with (none)	-4.2%
Economic development	34.6%	47.6%	42.0%	40.2%	 -13.0% satisfied Economic development (very high)	-7.4%
Prepared – population growth	35.3%	47.2%	37.7%	38.4%	 -11.9% satisfied Prepared - population growth (very high)	-2.4%
Responsiveness	40.1%	49.4%	37.6%	37.1%	 -9.3% satisfied Responsiveness (high)	+2.5%

Satisfaction with the Mayor and Councillors has improved modestly over the period, rising from 45.3% in 2023 to 47.0% in 2026. This aligns with the generally positive sentiment towards current leadership reflected in the qualitative findings. Perceptions of Council responsiveness have also improved since 2023, despite a decline from their 2025 peak.

In contrast, most other measures within the category have deteriorated over time. Perceptions of transparency have fallen below their 2023 level despite a temporary improvement in 2024, with satisfaction now sitting at just 33.8%, one of the lowest results across the survey.

Satisfaction with economic development has declined by 5.6% since 2023 and by a further 7.4% since 2024, while perceptions of Council's preparedness for population growth have also trended downward across both comparison periods.

Taken together, the results suggest a distinction between perceptions of individual leadership and perceptions of organisational performance. While confidence in elected leadership and responsiveness has remained comparatively resilient, the broader measures point to ongoing challenges around transparency, growth management, economic development, and confidence in Council's overall direction. These themes are reinforced by the qualitative findings, where concerns relating to population growth, infrastructure, decision-making, and communication featured prominently throughout the feedback.

4. 2026 Summary

The 2026 Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey captured 2,270 responses across 10 service categories, producing an overall NPS of -6.8. While this represents a marginal improvement from -7.1 in 2025, it remains negative overall and continues to reflect a community that sees meaningful gaps between what it needs and what it currently receives.

What Went Well

- Community Centres & Libraries achieved the strongest positive NPS (+3.9) and consistent praise across both urban and smaller community facilities, with staff warmth, welcoming environments, and strong programming all commended.
- The Levin Aquatic Centre posted an NPS of +8.8, with loyal users expressing genuine optimism about the refurbishment underway and strong appreciation for dedicated staff.
- Rubbish & Recycling achieved a near-neutral NPS (+0.2) with kerbside collection crews consistently praised for reliability and professionalism.
- Council social media and emergency communications received warm and consistent praise, with the Facebook presence described as engaging, accessible, and appropriately toned.
- The current Mayor received genuine and repeated affection from a meaningful portion of respondents, with many noting a marked improvement in council tone and credibility compared to previous leadership.
- Parks and sports grounds maintenance received positive comments across multiple categories.

What Didn't Go Well

- Land Transport / Roading posted the lowest NPS of any category (-20.5), with significant community concern about footpath condition, rural road safety, lack of cycling infrastructure, and absence of public transport.
- Water Services / 3 Waters produced an NPS of -19.4, with strong qualitative frustration around water quality, chlorination, drainage, and affordability outpacing what the numerical scores alone suggested.
- Communications & Engagement scored -17.2, reflecting persistent concern that engagement processes are performative rather than genuine, and that feedback does not visibly influence decisions.
- Leadership & Reputation scored -10.7, with deep distrust around consultation processes, insider-network perceptions, and the structural trust deficit that predates the current administration.
- Healthcare access emerged as the single highest-volume concern across the Quality of Life category, with GP shortages, long waits, and lack of specialists cited repeatedly across the district.
- Lake Horowhenua generated the highest emotional intensity relative to its mention volume, with residents describing it as a district-wide embarrassment and expressing a sense that council has abandoned the issue.

How We Can Improve

- Visible follow-through on consultation -the single most damaging perception in the dataset is that public engagement is performative. Even one high-profile decision visibly shaped by community feedback would do more to rebuild trust than any number of communications improvements.
- Healthcare advocacy - while HDC does not directly control health services, residents expect council to actively advocate for GP recruitment, specialist services, and hospital access rather than treating it as outside its mandate.
- Lake Horowhenua remediation -the intensity of feeling around the lake demands a clear, communicated, and funded action plan. Inaction is no longer a neutral position; it actively damages the council's reputation.
- Land transport investment -prioritise footpath condition across the district, rural road safety, and at minimum a credible long-term plan for cycling connectivity and public transport.
- Aquatic Centre reopening - the goodwill built during the refurbishment closure will be rapidly tested. Cleanliness, safety underfoot, staffing reliability, and shower functionality must all be demonstrably improved from day one.
- Water quality communication - proactively address Foxton Beach water concerns with clear, plain-language information about quality, treatment, and planned improvements.
- Engagement format reform -move high-stakes consultations to evening sessions, offer online participation, and publish plain-language summaries of outcomes including how feedback shaped decisions.
- Transfer station pricing review -the direct link between high disposal costs and illegal dumping is repeatedly drawn by residents and represents both an environmental and a community cleanliness issue.

Geographic Patterns - District Overview

Across all 10 survey categories, clear and consistent geographic patterns emerged. While concerns varied by service area, certain themes clustered strongly around specific localities throughout the district.

- **Levin:** Levin generated the highest volume of feedback across almost every category. Key concerns included footpath condition and maintenance, Lake Horowhenua remediation, transfer station pricing, urban development decisions made without genuine community input, and healthcare access. Residents frequently compared Levin unfavourably to similarly-sized districts such as Masterton, Waikanae, and Palmerston North - particularly around green space, cycling infrastructure, and destination-style recreational facilities. A recurring narrative among long-term residents was one of visible decline from a baseline they remember, with growth perceived as outpacing services and infrastructure investment.
- **Foxton & Foxton Beach:** Foxton featured prominently and positively in Community Centres & Libraries feedback, with Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom consistently described as a community hub, welcoming destination, and model for shared public space. However, Foxton Beach generated persistent concerns across multiple categories - particularly around water quality (chlorination, discolouration, and taste), lack of footpaths on both sides of roads, overflowing seasonal recycling stations, and deteriorating beach reserve and picnic infrastructure. Residents in Foxton Beach expressed a strong sense of being underserved relative to their rates contributions.

- Tokomaru:** Tokomaru appeared consistently across roading, water, and quality of life categories. Key themes included lack of shared walking and cycling pathways, poor connectivity to Linton and Palmerston North, stormwater drainage issues, and above-ground powerlines causing storm-related power outages. Residents repeatedly described the area as isolated and underinvested relative to Levin.
- Shannon:** Shannon generated a smaller but consistent volume of feedback across parks and roading categories, focusing primarily on overgrown vegetation on footpaths, pathway maintenance, lack of a fenced dog park, and street lighting. Feedback was generally less intense than Levin or Foxton Beach but reflected a community that felt its local needs were not being prioritised.
- Rural & Coastal Communities (Ōhau, Waitāre, Waikawa Beach, Hokio Beach, Manakau):** Rural and coastal residents across the district shared a common thread - paying rates while receiving fewer or inferior services. Specific concerns included dangerous narrow roads with heavy truck traffic, no safe cycling connections to Levin, lack of kerbside rubbish collection, and limited access to GP services and public transport. Several respondents described active transport as simply too dangerous on high-speed rural roads, and a number raised the O2NL expressway as both an opportunity and a new source of road safety concern.
- District-Wide Pattern:** Across all localities, a consistent divide emerged between urban and rural experiences. Levin residents were more likely to raise concerns about service quality and council decision-making, while rural and coastal residents more commonly raised concerns about service equity — receiving fewer services despite paying comparable rates. Foxton sits somewhere between the two, with genuine community pride in its facilities sitting alongside frustration at infrastructure gaps.

Category	NPS	Mean Score	Gap Severity	Direction	Key Mismatch Finding
Water Services / Waters	-19.4	6.49	High	Scores overstate	Moderate scores mask deep frustration. Residents gave mid-range scores while calling water "undrinkable" and "brown"
Land Transport / Roding	-20.5	6.58	Medium	Scores overstate	Residents acknowledged improvements but comments flagged serious safety concerns; scores didn't reflect incomplete progress
Parks & Reserves	-6.7	7.10	Medium	Scores overstate	Broad satisfaction with parks doesn't reflect growing concerns about maintenance quality and individual site neglect
Community Centres & Libraries	+3.9	7.39	Low	Mostly aligned	Strong alignment overall; nuanced gap where positive scores co-existed with concerns about reduced hours and small-branch collections
Rubbish Recycling &	+0.2	7.18	Medium	Scores overstate	Residents separated operational performance (praised) from policy dissatisfaction (transfer costs, kerbside gaps) scores reflect ops, not policy anger
Customer Service	-3.6	6.85	Medium	Split direction	Some gave moderate scores despite serious frustrations; others gave low scores while

Category	NPS	Mean Score	Gap Severity	Direction	Key Mismatch Finding
					praising individual staff, residents separate people from systems
Comms & Engagement	-17.2	6.72	High	Scores overstate	High volume of residents valued comms efforts but felt fundamentally unheard, scores captured delivery quality, not trust in the process
Quality of Life	-6.0	6.99	High	Scores overstate	Lake Horowhenua and crime generated visceral comments far beyond their mention volume, intensity not visible in the numeric scores
Levin Aquatic Centre	+8.8	7.53	Medium	Split direction	Cleanliness scores were moderate but comments were visceral; staff scores split widely, some named staff warmly, others described unreliable rosters
Leadership & Reputation	-10.7	6.78	High	Scores overstate	Transparency theme dominated both volume and intensity, "sham", "predetermined", "box ticking" appeared repeatedly; scores don't capture structural distrust

What does this mean? Eg: Water Services has a mean score of 6.49 which looks moderate, but the comments are full of people calling the water "undrinkable" and "brown": so, the words are much angrier than the number implies.

5. Overview of Responses

A total of 5,729 ratepayers received the 2026 survey, with 2,270 completing at least one category - a response rate of 39.6%. Respondents answered a combined total of 22,047 questions across the 10 survey categories.

Weekly Response Breakdown

Period	Surveys Sent	Responses	Response Rate
Week 1 (17–24 Apr)	~2,734	~1,145	~41.9%
Week 2 (24 Apr–1 May)	~1,019	~374	~36.7%
Week 3 (1–8 May)	~558	~186	~33.3%
Week 4 (8–15 May)	1,694	648	38.3%
Total	5,729	2,270	39.6%

Note on Response Volumes

This year had one more survey question (10) than last year (9), so question count did not reduce responses. The key difference was the delivery method: last year approximately 8,200 ratepayers each received 9 individual emails spread over time, creating multiple engagement touchpoints. This year 5,729 people received a single email containing all 10 surveys, meaning if someone did not complete it, that was the only opportunity to capture their response.

2026 NPS Results by Category

Category	NPS	Responses	Promoters	Passives	Detractors
Levin Aquatic Centre	+8.8	136	49	50	37
Community Centres & Libraries	+3.9	178	58	69	51
Rubbish & Recycling	+0.2	581	178	226	177
Parks & Reserves	-6.7	180	50	68	62
Customer Service / Civic Centre	-3.6	140	46	43	51
Quality of Life	-6.0	184	47	79	58
Leadership & Reputation	-10.7	159	41	60	58
Comms & Engagement	-17.2	157	38	54	65
Water Services / 3 Waters	-19.4	263	56	100	107
Land Transport / Roading	-20.5	292	58	116	118
TOTAL	-6.8	2,270	621	865	784

6. Year-on-Year Comparison (2024–2026)

Three-Year NPS Comparison

Metric	2024	2025	2026	Trend
Overall NPS	-4.2	-7.1	-6.8	▼ Declining trend

Respondent Volume by Year

Category	2024	2025	2026
Detractors	1,797	1,294	774
Passives	2,243	1,658	834
Promoters	1,562	1,012	622
Total Respondents	5,602	3,964	2,270

The decline in total respondents from 5,602 (2024) to 2,270 (2026) is primarily attributable to the shift from individual per-topic email delivery to a single consolidated email format, rather than a decline in resident satisfaction with the survey itself. The proportional balance between detractors, passives, and promoters has remained broadly consistent across the three years.

Key Context for 2026 Trends

The opening of Te Ahu a Turanga -Manawatū Tararua Highway (bypass) during the survey period may have positively influenced infrastructure sentiment in some areas. Conversely, ongoing discussions around the Village Green development, rates increases, and the LAC refurbishment closure all represent factors that could influence community perception in either direction, depending on how they resolve.

7. Recurring Key Themes

Several themes emerged consistently across multiple survey categories, suggesting systemic issues rather than isolated service concerns. These cross-cutting themes are summarised below.

Trust and Perceived Transparency

Distrust in council decision-making and consultation processes appeared across Leadership & Reputation, Communications & Engagement, Customer Service, and Quality of Life. The recurring perception that decisions are made before public engagement occurs is the single most damaging reputational theme in the 2026 dataset and requires structural rather than merely communicative responses.

Residents described engagement processes as performative, with one respondent stating: *"I find it a sham - the waste food trial was a joke, creating a solution for a problem that doesn't exist."* Another wrote: *"Respond to emails even if it is to say you are swamped and will take x amount of time to respond. Managing expectations instead of radio silence is preferable."* A third was blunter: *"Actually answer the hard questions when asked instead of radio silence or defending the indefensible."*

Growth Outpacing Infrastructure

Concerns about population growth exceeding the capacity of roads, water, healthcare, and community services appeared consistently across Quality of Life, Land Transport, Water Services, and Parks & Reserves. Residents broadly accept growth as a reality but expect council to proactively manage its consequences rather than respond reactively.

Representative comments included: *"Growing too quickly without the underlying infrastructure and traffic control - getting congested now!"* and *"Services not keeping up with the speed of growth in the area."* The water network drew particular concern: *"The town is growing but there is no additional water resourcing. Water restrictions every year, too dirty after heavy rain and the system can't cope."*

Affordability and Cost of Living

Rising rates, transfer station fees, water charges, and housing costs were linked across multiple categories.

Residents on fixed incomes - particularly pensioners and rural residents - expressed the most acute concern. *"Recycling station too expensive for pensioners"* and *"Charges for rubbish disposal too high especially for low income people, which encourages fly tipping"* were representative of a pattern that appeared across Rubbish & Recycling, Water Services, and Quality of Life. One resident proposed a direct solution: *"I would like to see the transfer stations to be free of charge and additional cost added to our rates - this would ensure people recycled appropriately and reduce roadside dumping because they can't afford the transfer station fees."*

Lake Horowhenua

The lake appeared as a significant theme in Quality of Life, Parks & Reserves, and tangentially across multiple other categories. It functions simultaneously as an environmental concern, a recreational asset, a tourism opportunity, and a symbol of what residents believe council has failed to prioritise.

"My biggest concern is Lake Horowhenua and the reputation we have as the most polluted lake in New Zealand. It feels the council has washed its hands of this issue."

"Horowhenua Lake cleanup and becoming the town fun place, as it used to be."

Staff Responsiveness

Inconsistent follow-through after initial contact appeared across Customer Service, Communications & Engagement, and Leadership & Reputation. Residents frequently described a pattern of initial contact followed by silence - emails not replied to, reported issues not resolved, and no confirmation that feedback had been received.

"I have been waiting for a call from dog control for weeks - I have completed all the correct info, paid my money, and still no response. Very disappointed."

"The contractors damaged the recycling bin and despite contacting the council twice, no response from the contractor." This gap between promise and delivery is a significant driver of distrust across the district.

Equity Between Urban and Rural Communities

Rural and coastal residents across multiple categories - Foxton Beach, Tokomaru, Hokio Beach, Waitāre, and rural Shannon - expressed a consistent perception that services, investment, and consultation attention are disproportionately directed toward Levin. Water quality was a particular flashpoint:

"Foxton Beach water from the tap is not drinkable" and "Yes there is - the Foxton Beach water is disgusting. We would not drink, cook or wash with it."

Rubbish and Recycling services were raised with equal frustration: *"No kerbside recycling where I live so it's just a pain."*

8. Conclusion

The 2026 Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey presents a nuanced picture of community sentiment. Across many day-to-day services, residents continue to report positive experiences and strong satisfaction. Community Centres and Libraries, the Levin Aquatic Centre, kerbside waste services, and many parks and recreational facilities remain valued community assets and demonstrate the positive impact of committed frontline staff and quality service delivery.

At the same time, the survey highlights a number of ongoing challenges. Land transport, water services, communication and engagement, and broader perceptions of leadership and reputation continue to attract lower satisfaction levels and feature prominently in community feedback. Concerns relating to healthcare access, population growth, housing affordability, and infrastructure capacity also remain important considerations for residents, regardless of where responsibility for those issues sits.

A recurring theme throughout the survey is the distinction residents appear to make between individual service experiences and broader perceptions of the district and its future. While many services perform strongly, respondents continue to express concerns about transparency, engagement, future planning, growth management, and confidence that community feedback influences decision-making.

Overall, the findings suggest that maintaining and improving community confidence will require a continued focus on both service delivery and community outcomes. This includes maintaining the strengths evident across many Council services while continuing to communicate progress, demonstrate responsiveness, and address the issues most important to residents.

The survey provides a valuable evidence base to inform future planning, service improvement, and decision-making. While not all issues raised sit within Council's direct control, the results provide important insight into the matters that are most important to residents and the broader context in which Council services and decisions are assessed.

Overall, the findings suggest residents recognise and value many aspects of life in the Horowhenua District and the services provided by Council. At the same time, the survey highlights ongoing concerns relating to infrastructure, growth, community wellbeing, and confidence in decision-making processes. These findings provide a useful foundation for future discussions about priorities, investment, service improvement, and the district's future development.

File No.: 26/342

3 Resource Recovery Centre

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Approved by	Nicki Brady Group Manager Capability and Transformation Kaiwhakahaere o Ngā Aheinga me te Whakaumu

PURPOSE | TE PŪTAKE

1. This workshop introduces the Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) concept and seeks Elected Member guidance on whether officers should continue developing the proposal from concept to planning.

DISCUSSION | HE MATAPAKINGA

2. An RRC is designed to recover value from materials before they become landfill waste, through separation, reuse, resale, recycling, and processing pathways.
3. It is important to clarify this is not a transfer station; the focus is on recovery and diversion, not simply receiving waste for onward disposal.
4. The proposal is at concept stage, and no decision is being sought to establish or fund an RRC at this workshop.
5. Officers are seeking early direction on whether to continue investing staff time into a more developed proposal, including testing The Depot as the preferred location, considering relocation of the Levin Materials Recovery Station as a staged first step, and aligning further work with MfE funding opportunities and future LTP consultation considerations.

ATTACHMENTS | NGĀ TĀPIRINGA KŌRERO

There are no appendices for this report