

Report No.	20-143
Decision Required	

CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To propose the attached Climate Action Strategy for Council's adoption.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 20-143 and Annex;
- b. notes that the attached Climate Action Strategy offers a broad approach to guide Horizons' response to climate change;
- c. adopts the Climate Action Strategy.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. This advice has no direct financial impact. Decisions on resourcing to support implementation of the proposed strategy will be made through the **Long-Term Plan (LTP)** process.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Community engagement is an important element of the strategy proposed. There has been a focus on climate change in Council communications during September, including an issue of *Across the Region*, media releases, social media, and an online survey. Further engagement is possible through the LTP process.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. Climate change presents significant risks to our communities and to Horizons' assets and operational outcomes. This paper presents a strategic approach to those issues.

6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. This report presents a strategy to guide Horizons' response to climate change, including objectives in relation to mitigation, adaptation, and regional leadership. If adopted, it will improve the ability of Council to respond proactively and consistently to climate change in our region.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Elements of a Climate Action Strategy were outlined to Council in November 2019 (Report 19-179), and discussed further in February 2020. By identifying objectives and a broad approach to action on climate change, the strategy aims to align effort across Horizons' activities and ensure an effective and efficient response. Before providing final advice, staff undertook to seek tangata whenua perspectives.

8. CONTEXT

- 8.1. With the passage of the Zero Carbon Act 2019, climate change is becoming an increasingly significant feature of our statutory environment. In the last few months, the Resource Management Act has been amended provide for climate change to be considered more fully in regional policy statements, regional plans, and consent decisions. The Resource Management System Review has recommended separate legislation for support managed retreat and climate change adaptation. The Minister for Climate Change has exercised statutory powers to require information from councils and other organisations on climate change adaptation. Audit New Zealand has indicated that integration of climate change into plans will be a focus for the 2021-31 LTP round. Expectations are becoming increasingly clear that councils exercise leadership and actively use the tools at their disposal to respond to climate change.
- 8.2. Uncertainty about climate change remains – in climate projections and in estimates of risk; in details of Government policy. Nonetheless, the weight of evidence points to a need for decisions to be made now to ensure our communities and environment are able to thrive in the future. These decisions will need to be ‘adaptive’, enabling us to make adjustments as we learn more on our path towards long-term objectives.
- 8.3. Locally, we have made progress in a number of areas over the past year. The region's councils have built on their 2019 Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing to establish a joint Climate Action Committee to coordinate effort. Climate impact statements are now being included in all advice to Council to ensure opportunities for action are not overlooked. A regional **greenhouse gas (GHG)** inventory has been completed and a regional climate change risk assessment (funded through the 2020/21 Annual Plan) is underway. Horizons has adopted a reduction in GHG emissions associated with its activities of 30 percent by 2030 as an interim target. These initiatives all align with the proposed strategy and provide the foundations for its implementation.

9. DISCUSSION

- 9.1. Work on our Climate Action Strategy was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic; engagement with iwi was only able to get underway in late May. Since then, we have been in touch with iwi leaders across the region. Where we have been able to meet, we have found general support for our intent. Discussions have been constructive and have led to improvements to our proposed approach.
- 9.2. The proposed Climate Action Strategy is attached at Annex A. Objectives remain largely as indicated last year. We see Horizons' role as facilitating an effective, constructive response to climate change in our region. This means in particular:
- Building the resilience of communities and our environment to the effects of a changing climate;
 - Supporting the transition to a sustainable, carbon-neutral regional economy by 2050; and
 - Ensuring central- and local-government efforts are aligned to the needs of our region.
- 9.3. These objectives align with the outcomes we are seeking to achieve. Public and academic discourse often focuses on ‘mitigation’ (reducing or offsetting emissions) and ‘adaptation’ (preparing to live with a changing climate): both will be necessary as we implement our strategy.
- 9.4. Our proposed approach in pursuit of objectives has evolved since early advice was offered to Council last year. This reflects dialogue with iwi and other groups. The proposed strategy acknowledges that climate change touches everything we do as a regional council – but that Horizons alone cannot achieve the outcomes we seek. Relationships – with

other groups, and between people and the environment – are essential to our response. With this in mind, we recommend that Council commit to:

- Working together toward shared outcomes;
- Involving local communities in decisions that affect them;
- Sharing what we know, being open about what we don't;
- Supporting people to make a difference;
- Considering the climate in everything we do;
- Prioritising the most vulnerable;
- Remaining open to new information and ways of doing things; and
- Acting now, with future generations in mind.

9.5. This approach reflects good practice in tackling complex issues like climate change. It also reflects the expectations as we understand them of iwi, activist groups, and the wider community. As a simple set of clear principles, it can be applied to decisions in different contexts and will remain relevant as our work programme develops.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1. A draft of the strategy has been shared with iwi and hapū, and with territorial authorities.

11. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

11.1. Council will have the opportunity to consider priorities and resourcing through the LTP process. Staff will develop an implementation plan as the LTP takes shape.

12. SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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ANNEXES

A Climate Action Strategy