



PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA

**ATTACHMENTS
COUNCIL
UNDER SEPARATE COVER**

9.00 AM, WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR
CIVIC ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
32 THE SQUARE, PALMERSTON NORTH**

COUNCIL MEETING

5 February 2025

Under Separate Cover

REPORTS

10. Local Water Done Well- Approval for Consultation

1. Local Water Done Well - Consultation Document
2. Local Water Done Well - Consultation Form

Page 4

Page 36

DRAFT ONLY

Have your say
on who manages

Palmy's Water

in the future

This is one of the most important decisions
we'll make for our city in decades.

Have your say before
Sunday 23 March, 4pm

Read the options, pros and
cons, and the potential costs
at pncc.govt.nz/localwater







Contents

4	Who should manage and make decisions about your water services in the future?
5	Water reforms have been a hot topic for successive governments for close to a decade
6	We've looked after our city's water needs
8	Our water situation today
10	Some important things to know before you see the options
13	Nature Calls remains a major project included in all our options
14	Option 1
18	Option 2
22	Option 3
26	Charging for water services in the future
28	Some other points for you to consider
30	Timeline
31	Have your say

You have until
23 March
 to have your say.

Who should manage and make decisions about your water in the future?

That's the important question we need your feedback on NOW!

Under the Government's Local Water Done Well programme and associated legislation, all councils must consult with their communities on how they will manage and deliver water services in the future.

New Zealand is facing major challenges in maintaining and upgrading infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity. Our city has generally managed its water assets well in an ever-changing legislative environment. However, the costs of maintaining and improving this infrastructure are putting pressure on both central and local government agencies—and, ultimately, on taxpayers and ratepayers.

We must consult on our current approach to delivering water services, even though this option isn't financially sustainable for us. This means it wouldn't meet legal requirements under the new legislation.

We have two alternative options for you to consider, along with high-level cost estimates for the coming decades. You can read more about these on pages 14 and 18.

Each option has its pros and cons, but one thing is clear—scale matters. The more people (and their home or business water connections) we have contributing to costs, the more affordable water services will be in the future.

This is a complex issue, but it's crucial that you understand the challenges, get involved, and have your say about the future of your water services. This will be one of the most important decisions we make in the coming decades.

We're not happy with the timeframes set by the Government, but we're committed to providing you with the best information available, advocating for you, and answering your questions.

Join us at one of our drop-in sessions, chat with us online, and submit your feedback before 4pm 23 March.

Together, we must ensure water services continue to be done well in the future.



Grant Smith^{JP}

Mayor, Palmerston North City Council

Water reforms have been a hot topic for successive governments for close to a decade.

In 2016, the Havelock North water crisis raised concerns about water management in New Zealand and the high costs to communities to ensure all Kiwis had safe drinking water.

Water is going to cost all communities a lot more in the future – regardless of what option we proceed with. That's due to a range of things such as:

- Compliance with new standards and legislation e.g. drinking water and wastewater
- Government policy
- Mitigation for the impact of climate change
- Population and industrial growth
- Replacing or upgrading aging infrastructure
- Increasing health requirements

The previous Labour government proposed four large organisations to manage water across the country. Closer to the general election, that changed to a proposed model of ten entities. In Palmerston North, that would have seen one water organisation for councils in the Horizons region.

The current coalition government changed the water reforms. It introduced new legislation and called its version 'Local Water Done Well.' It keeps water assets council-owned and lets each council choose the best way to deliver water services for its community. They could include:

- Status quo (Option 3)
- Council-controlled water organisation (Option 1 and 2)
- Independent consumer trust (this has not been selected as this option would have higher costs for our community than options 1 and 2)

- Single council-controlled organisation (this has not been selected as this option would have higher costs for our community than options 1 and 2)

The government then requires councils to ensure water services are:

1. Fit for purpose,
2. Financially sustainable, and
3. More oversight and regulations on quality and cost. There is also legislation guiding how any future water organisation operates.

Our proposal

We are proposing to create a water organisation jointly owned with other Councils. Option 1 and option 2 detail how that could work. The impact of not proceeding with these options means we would not meet legal requirements. The full impacts of this are detailed in option 3 in which we are required to consult on.

For the past few years, council staff and elected members have worked hard to understand the reforms to ensure our community is well taken care of in the future. In Palmerston North, we think there would be advantages to working together in collaboration with others, and we started talking to other councils about this some time ago.

We've looked at everything from our assets, proposed work, structures of organisations, impact on existing staff, iwi involvement, business growth, community involvement, legal aspects, digital and software needs, and of course the financial implications.

We've looked
after our city's
water needs.

We're proud
to have taken
good care of
Palmy's water,
meaning you
have safe and
resilient water
infrastructure.

Drinking water



We supply 10 billion litres of safe drinking water each year	We have one treatment plant	We have 3296 hydrants	We have 586km of pipes - enough to stretch from Palmy to Auckland
We have the Turitea dams in the Taranaki ranges	We have 12 bores (wells) across the city to supply communities	We have 7 reservoirs to hold your treated water and handle emergencies	We have 5167 valves

Wastewater



We treat 12.9 billion litres of wastewater each year from your kitchen, bathrooms and laundry	We have 441km of pipes - enough to stretch to Hamilton	We have 52 wastewater pump stations to help move wastewater to the treatment plant	We have a treatment plant and several oxidation ponds to help treat your wastewater
Due to rain water entering wastewater pipes, we treat more water than we supply.	We have 6129 manholes to access your wastewater pipes		

Stormwater



We help to reduce the impacts of heavy rain	We have 6146 manholes to access pipes	We have 20km of open drains.	We have 8.3 hectares of drainage reserves
We have 18 pump stations to help move rainfall after it reaches the ground	We have 310km of underground pipes	We have 14km of stopbanks along drains and streams that we maintain	



Our water situation today:

- City water assets are in good shape and compliant.
- Water assets make up about 34% of Council assets.
- Day to day water costs are about 13% of Council's operating costs.
- Water projects make up half of our proposed capital work in the next ten years. For many of our larger construction projects, we use loans to fund them and then pay back over time like a mortgage.
- For our Nature Calls wastewater project, we've also looked at external financing known as the Infrastructure Funding and Financing Act (IFF) to help fund this project.
- Some businesses who use a lot of water also pay for their water consumption and wastewater treatment separately – this is called trade waste. When new development in the city occurs, the developers are also required to contribute to the costs of infrastructure through development contributions.

➤ We're planning on spending **\$1B on water projects over the next 10 years.** Then in the following 20 years we're expecting to invest an additional \$1B.

➤ We expect to spend **\$434M for day-to-day maintenance and supply** over the next 10 years.



In 2024/25, residential ratepayers pay:

\$415

for drinking water
fixed charge

\$375

for wastewater
fixed charge

\$167

for stormwater

As part of the general rate. Exact amount depends on land value of property.

Our city has historically had far lower water rates than many of those around us.

Homeowners connected to our water network pay the same for these 'fixed charges'.

They're the day-to-day costs of looking after your water needs, including the replacement of the assets we currently own. Your rates also help cover the cost of repaying the debt for large construction projects. In our Long Term Plan we have explained that within ten years there could also be an additional levy of at least \$1000 per connection for Nature Calls.

Did you know that water pipes only need to be replaced around every 80 years?

What we build in large water construction projects will last many decades. This means the investment helps our community now, and for generations to come.

That's why this decision is so important

Some important things to know before you see the options

Soon we'll be showing you the options we're proposing, but there's some things you need to know first.

The Government legislation has clear rules for borrowing money depending on whether councils keep their water services in-house or join up to form a multi-council water organisation.

If water is managed under jointly owned organisations: (Option 1 and 2)

The new legislation allows new water organisations to borrow more money to fund infrastructure projects than what councils can now.

Currently we can borrow 2.8 times our revenue (or up to 280% debt to revenue ratio). Our council has chosen a lower limit of 250%. Water organisations will be able to borrow up to five times its revenue (up to 500% debt to revenue ratio) for water construction projects.

If water remains in-house: (Option 3)

This option is not financially sustainable.
This means it doesn't meet legal requirements

The Government would require that any assets, revenue, expenses and debt associated with water services need to be kept separate or 'ring-fenced' from the wider services of council. Customers connected to the water services, or able to be, will pay for the services. Council will not be able to increase its current self-imposed funding cap for investing in water projects.

We've modelled a range of different scenarios to determine potential costs for you.

The legislation requires us to have a Water Services Delivery Plan. As part of our plan we will need to be able to prove that the model we choose is financially sustainable and provide transparent modelling that demonstrates long-term affordability and resilience. This includes clear projections of revenue and expenditure, plans for maintaining infrastructure, and mechanisms to manage debt and responding to emergencies. Modelling for the next ten years is likely to be more accurate than 30 years due to changing needs/legislation/population etc.

We have conducted a range of different modelling scenarios, which is how we've been able to tell you potential costs for the options. The modelling can all be found on our website. To be able to model potential costs we have had to make a range of assumptions. These include things like projects after 2035, inflation, interest rates, size of organisation, revenue etc. You can read the assumptions on our website too.

Pricing over time

Currently communities pay different amounts for water. Under option 1 or 2 a new water organisation may look to ensure everyone pays the same in the future. This is called 'price harmonisation'. It would be up to the water organisation to determine if everyone paid the same when it is set up or phased in over time. Our modeling has assumed this would begin in the first year of the organisation operating.





Nature Calls remains a major project included in all our options.

Our long-term resource consents for treating and discharging wastewater (all the water that goes down a drain inside your home and business) will be expiring in the next few years. Legally we need to apply for new consents for the future treatment and discharge of wastewater.

Projects of this scale only come up every few decades, and when they do, they're expensive. People sometimes think this project is occurring because we're doing something wrong, or we haven't taken good care of our city's wastewater previously. That's not the case. Our consents are expiring soon, which means it's affecting us now. But every community has resource consents for their wastewater treatment and discharge too, and when it's their turn to renew consents they will also face large costs. Other communities are also anticipating large projects for drinking water. This is where more people paying for water helps because we can all help each other.

During our Long-Term Plan consultation, our community told us that the cost we'd projected for Nature Calls was too much. Our Elected Members agreed and asked staff to take another look at the options for treatment and discharge in the future to see if there are more affordable options. We're doing that now.

The proposed cost at present in our Long-Term Plan is now \$480 million excluding inflation. We have explained that this will be externally financed through the IFF Act. The costs are still high level, and you can be assured that we have affordability in our mind as we continue to look at potential options over the coming year. We're also awaiting new government guidance on wastewater standards, which we believe will also help bring the cost down. We'll be keeping you updated as we continue to work on this, and we will get more feedback from you before we consider any change of option.

The audit of our Long Term Plan identified a concern about what would happen if we didn't get the external finance, and the impact that this could have on other council services. You can be assured we take this seriously. We understand that risk and we're having conversations with external financiers to ensure that doesn't happen.

Nature Calls is part of all of the options in this consultation

When you read about all the options in this document, you can be assured that the cost of Nature Calls is included. In fact, all water projects councils have in their Long-Term Plans are included in the costings, as all of them could move to another organisation if we proceed with Option 1 or 2.

While Nature Calls is a big project for our city, in the future other councils will also have big projects that will need to be funded and form part of the work of any future joint water organisation if we proceed with Option 1 or 2. This would be able to occur more easily in Option 1 and 2 due to scale and combined ability to increase borrowing limits.

Did you know that across New Zealand, 70% of wastewater treatment plants need to be reconsigned in the next decade?

15% are still operating despite their consents already being expired.



Option 1

**Preferred
option**

‘The Four’ – A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua, Manawatū, and Kāpiti Coast District Councils.

We would create a joint council-controlled organisation to manage water services in these areas.

We already have council owned organisations in our city, so this model is familiar to us and our community. We manage the Airport, Te Manawa Museum, The Globe Theatre and The Regent Theatre in this way. The Central Economic Development Agency is most like what's being proposed, as it is jointly owned with Manawatū District Council.

This option is our council's preferred option, for several reasons.

The first reason is that it is the more affordable option for our community. With more people (approx. 223,000), the cost of delivering a service becomes more affordable over time. That's because the organisation could create scale through things like procurement (purchasing pipes and treatment chemicals), software, vehicles, streamlined decision making due to a focus solely on 'Local Water Done Well' and much more. This option also makes it more likely to continue to attract and retain specialist staff.

All four council areas are quite close together, within an hour between each Council, and communities of interest are close. This helps with costs too as there are more connections per kilometre of pipe.



With only four councils we believe the governance arrangements would be easier to establish than Option 2 where there are potentially more councils involved.

The councils would work together to set up the organisation.

If this option is selected, the four councils would work together on a transition plan. It would appoint representatives to a joint committee known as a Shareholder Council. This group would then set up the new organisation by appointing a skills-based board of directors.

The shareholding council committee would also create a 'Statement of Expectations'. That would outline expectations, determine priorities, and set the strategic direction that would inform the decisions and actions of the organisation.

Legislation also requires that the organisation to prepare a water services strategy which would detail its approach to water management. That strategy would be reviewed every three years and relates to a period of at least 10 financial years, so it would act like a Council long-term plan.

The board of directors would be 'skills based', meaning a mix of people with the experience and skills in managing large organisations, various stakeholders and may have utility experience.

The transition plan would include topics such as the expected start date, iwi involvement, scope of delivery services, location, customer experience and staff transitions.

Councils wouldn't be involved in day-to-day decisions

Unlike Council management, no Council staff or Elected Members would be involved in the organisations' daily decisions. It would be independent of Council.

The organisation is responsible for its own funding and for charging customers

The legislation requires that the new organisation must determine funding needed for water services.

It would be responsible for all levels of service. This includes sourcing, treating, and discharging water, planning for future repairs and upgrades, charging for water, and keeping you, our community informed and involved.

As the water assets transfer to the water organisation, it takes on our 'water-related' debt*. It can also borrow money for water construction (capital costs), separate from council borrowing. Currently, councils must balance water spending with other services they manage.

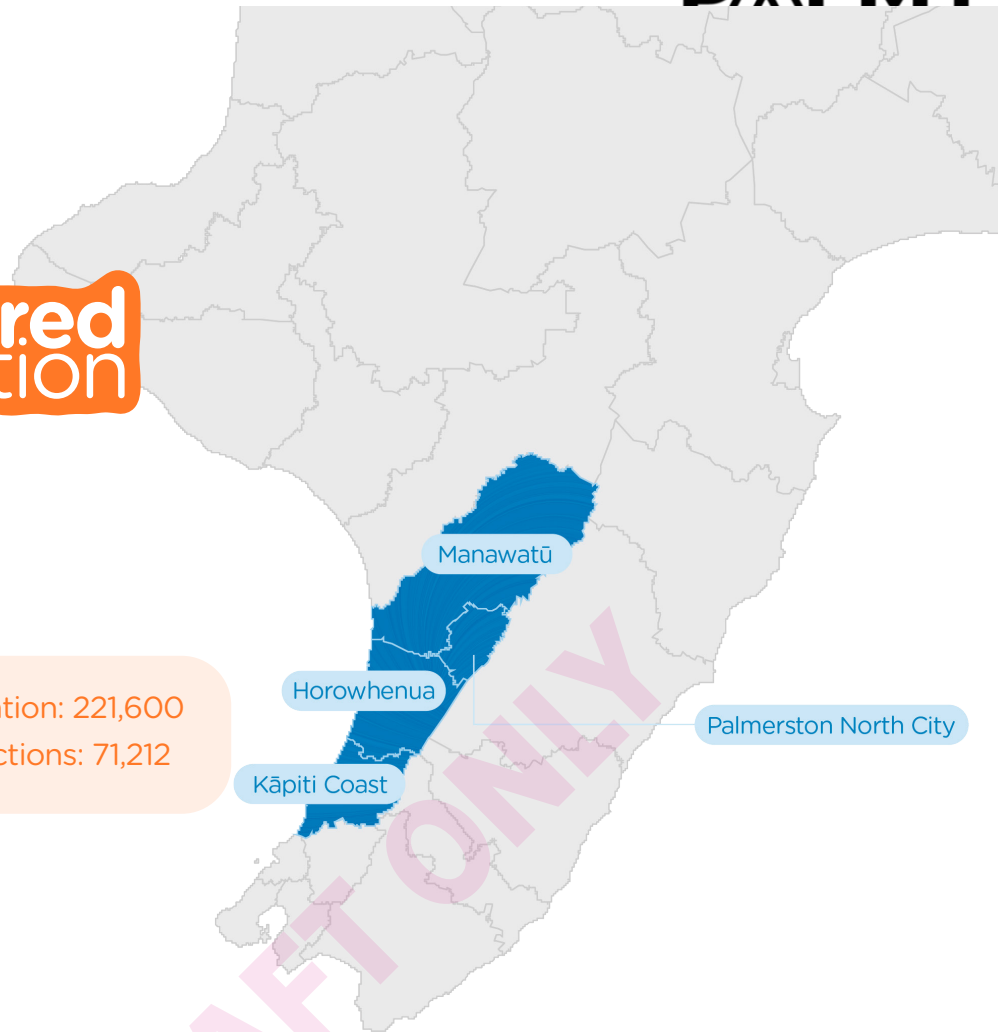
This also means that councils can keep investing in other services, like transport, rubbish, recycling, and key community facilities. Councils would still consult and seek feedback on these other services through their long-term plans and other community consultations.

*Read more on page 29

Option
1

**Preferred
option**

Total population: 221,600
Total connections: 71,212



Cost

Within ten years, residential ratepayers could be paying

\$2,656 per year*

for water under this option. This figure drops to \$2,594 in 30 years.

Modelling for the next ten years is likely to be more accurate than 30 years due to changing needs/legislation/population etc.

As the water organisation would be responsible for water services and the funding of them, it would also be responsible for the assets. We would transfer \$66M of current Council debt to them to pay back. We would also be able to remove all proposed water debt from our Current Long Term Plan. This is approx. \$340M over the current Long Term Plan. That excludes our Nature Call's project, which we've said would be financed externally through the IFF Act. This project, like all other water projects, would transfer to the proposed new organisation.

Removing that spending and forecast revenue from our current Long-Term Plan results in a reduction of our available debt headroom of \$577M over the 10 years of our plan. We still have capacity, but we are going to have to look at the timing of our planned projects – just like we did in our Long-Term Plan. We will still be able to invest in our other infrastructure areas such as transport, rubbish and recycling, parks, community facilities and our venue and event facilities. The rating impact of removing water from Council is a bit more unclear. Fixed charges for water would no longer be billed to ratepayers as the new council-controlled organisation would be responsible for charging for this.

* includes inflation and our Nature Calls project.

Ownership, control, and community involvement



Who owns the water assets?

Under this option, the assets for water and wastewater would be owned by the water organisation.

It is likely Council continues to own all stormwater assets and be responsible for the work programme, but contract the day to day management to a water organisation. See page 29 - 30.



Community affordability:

A more affordable option for our community



Legal compliance:

Meets legal requirements.



Who makes decisions?

The board of the water organisation.

But informed by Statement of Expectation from shareholding Councils.



Social impact:

Better social impacts than option 3, as council can maintain to invest in other areas and help create connectedness.



Community involvement in decision-making:

Not directly.

There could be consultations from time to time. The community would need to advocate for services. However, Councils can also influence the organisation as shareholders.



Environmental outcomes:

With the advantage of scale, improved efficiencies and an increase in borrowing capacity, better environmental outcomes could occur.

Regulations also protect our environment.



Iwi involvement:

Needs to be confirmed.

We believe iwi should play a strong role in water management and our Council would expect similar involvement to what Rangitane have with us at the moment.



Cultural outcomes:

No work has occurred so far to determine impact on cultural outcomes/governance.

Service delivery



Water service:

Would meet legal requirements.

Plus likely improve water services that are planned over the long-term due to scale.



Growth and development:

Better ability to prepare for and manage future growth needs.



Impact on other council services:

Council may still choose to look at services we provide through subsequent Long-Term Plans and seek public feedback.

It is unlikely to have the negative impacts seen in option 3.



Climate change mitigation:

With the advantage of scale, improved efficiencies and an increase in borrowing capacity, more climate change mitigation could be likely.



Civil defence response:

Councils and water organisations would work this out during the setting up of the organisation.

But you can be assured looking after our community will always be a top priority for Councils.



Option 2

‘The up to 7’: A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council and one or more other councils within the Horizons Regional Council boundary.

Those councils could include Palmerston North, Tararua, Horowhenua, Whanganui, Manawatū, Ruapehu and Rangitīkei, but it’s highly unlikely all will be involved.

This option is the same as Option 1, except for which councils would be involved in the water organisation. Kāpiti Coast District Council is not in the Horizons boundary and therefore not included in the modelling of this option. However, if this option proceeded, and they wanted to be considered, we would be open to that.

Councils in this area already work closely with each other due to us all being within the Horizons Regional Council boundary. Councils have been working together on the water reforms for the past few years. That’s because we had recognised the benefits of a multi-council approach to Three Waters for a long time.

While we’re in a wider region, our communities do differ from each other. Palmerston North is the main urban area. Most other communities are rural and/or coastal. The wider geographical area means there are fewer connections per km of pipe. This means water services can be more expensive. If all councils in this area were involved, which is currently unlikely, it would be financially sustainable.



This option is not our preferred option for a couple of reasons.

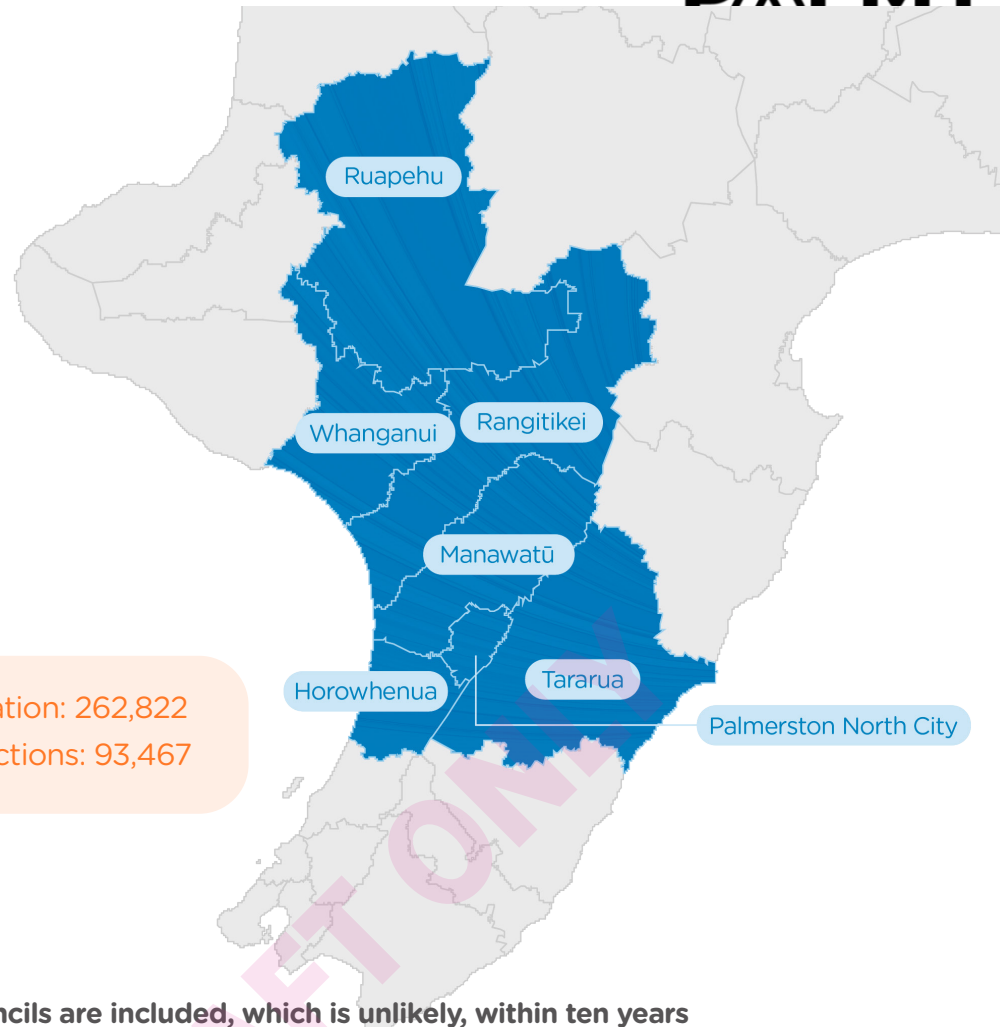
Some councils in the region have signalled they don't wish to be involved in this regional model. Some want to work with their immediate neighbours, or within a catchment, or may even consider having a single council water organisation. This means it is possible that this option could only involve only a small number of councils in this area forming an organisation.

With this level of uncertainty the proposed costs could change significantly. If some councils aren't part of the organisation, it affects the number of water connections, the scale, and therefore the number of people paying. The costings on page 20 assumes all seven Councils are involved. As that is unlikely, it is not our preferred option.

We also expect the governance arrangements and transition could be more challenging under this option if all the councils are involved.

Despite the current uncertainty regarding how many councils could be involved, we think it's important to present this option to you. All councils will consult with their communities at slightly different times. But, we wanted to ensure you have an option that might involve some or all of them in case their communities have different views or those councils choose to re-enter discussions.

Every other aspect of this option is the same as Option 1.



Total population: 262,822
Total connections: 93,467

Cost

If all seven councils are included, which is unlikely, within ten years residential ratepayers could be paying

\$2,482 per year*

for water under this option. This figure drops to \$2,391 in 30 years. However with fewer councils these costs increase significantly.

Modelling for the next ten years is likely to be more accurate than 30 years due to changing needs/legislation/population etc.

Depending on the make-up of the organisation, the councils and the number of connections these costings will change.

As the water organisation would be responsible for water services and the funding of them, it would also be responsible for the assets.

That means we would transfer \$66M of current Council debt to them to pay back. We would also be able to remove all proposed water debt from our Current Long Term Plan.

This is approx. \$340M over the current Long-Term Plan. That excludes our Nature Call's project, which we've said would be financed externally. This project, like all other water projects, would transfer to the proposed new organisation. Removing that spending and forecast revenue from our current Long-Term Plan results in a reduction of our available debt headroom of \$577M over the 10 years of our plan. We still have capacity, but we are going to have to look at the timing of our planned projects – just like we did in our Long-Term Plan. We will still be able to invest in our other infrastructure areas such as transport, rubbish and recycling, parks, community facilities and our venue and event facilities. The rating impact of removing water from Council is a bit more unclear. Fixed charges for water would no longer be billed to ratepayers as the new council-controlled organisation would be responsible for charging for this.

* includes inflation and our Nature Calls project.

Ownership, control, and community involvement

These assume all councils are involved.



Who owns the water assets?

Under this option, the assets for water and wastewater would be owned by the water organisation.

It is likely Council continues to own all stormwater assets and be responsible for the work programme, but contract the day to day management to a water organisation. See page 29 - 30.



Community affordability:

Improves with the more councils involved.



Legal compliance:

Meets legal requirements.



Who makes decisions?

The board of the water organisation.

But informed by Statement of Expectation from shareholding Councils. With more councils involved, this could be more complex than option 1.



Social impact:

Better social impacts than option 3, as council can continue to invest in other areas and help create connectedness.



Community involvement in decision-making:

Not directly.

There could be consultations from time to time. The community would need to advocate for services. However, Councils can also influence the organisation as shareholders.



Environmental outcomes:

With the advantage of scale, improved efficiencies and an increase in borrowing capacity, better environmental outcomes could occur.

Regulations also protect our environment.



Cultural outcomes:

No work has occurred so far to determine impact on cultural outcomes/governance.



Iwi involvement:

Needs to be confirmed.

We believe iwi should play a strong role in water management and our council would expect similar involvement to what Rangitane have with us at the moment.

Service delivery



Water service:

Would meet legal requirements

Plus likely improve water services that are planned over the long-term due to scale.



Growth and Development:

Better ability to prepare for and manage future growth needs.



Impact on other council services:

Council may still choose to look at services we provide through subsequent Long-Term Plans and seek public feedback.

It is unlikely to have the negative impacts seen in option 3.



Climate change mitigation:

With the advantage of scale, improved efficiencies and an increase in borrowing capacity, more climate change mitigation could be likely.



Civil defence response:

Councils and water organisations would work this out during the setting up of the organisation.

But you can be assured looking after our community will always be a top priority for Councils.



Option 3

Status quo with changes

(not financially sustainable and therefore it's not legally compliant).

This option would see Council continuing to manage and deliver the city's water services. However, for the reasons outlined below, this option is not feasible. That is because it will not meet legal requirements due to the need for financial sustainability.

We wouldn't typically consult on an option that doesn't meet legal requirements. However, the Government requires all councils in New Zealand to consult on its 'status quo'.

The need to ring-fence water would cost you more.

The new government legislation requires us to 'ring-fence' all money spent on water services. Ring-fencing water finances means separating all water-related revenue and costs from other council services. This helps to ensure the community understands the true cost of their three water services.

Currently, different council services indirectly help fund others. For water services we rely on revenue from other areas of council to meet the legal requirements for borrowing money for large construction projects.

If we had to ring-fence this money, the cost for water would need to increase significantly for our community as the entirety of our water services would need to be funded by users.

Limited borrowing would restrict investment in other council areas too

The new legislation won't allow us to borrow any additional money for water projects if we keep water services in-house. This means we have to work within our existing borrowing restrictions, which will be tough when there will be so many pressures and regulatory requirements. In Option 1 and 2, the legislation allows a water organisation to borrow far more money than we currently can to maintain and upgrade infrastructure. Under this option we can't borrow more, see page 10. The new legislation does not allow that if it remains as part of an in-house Council services.



Your water services have strict rules and regulations, and our water infrastructure also needs to be upgraded in a timely manner to prevent water pipes bursting, ensure safe drinking water etc. This means Council could need to keep investing in water projects under its current borrowing cap.

With there being a limited amount we could borrow, we wouldn't have enough money to meet our communities expectations in maintaining and investing in other things. This would affect primarily large infrastructure services, and would see large reductions in the replacement, maintenance and potentially any new infrastructure for our transport, rubbish, recycling, housing, cemeteries, parks and properties like libraries, museums and theatres.

There'd also likely be an impact on the day to day services you receive from council

Higher water bills and ring-fenced costs would make us concerned about the financial impacts on affordability and our community.

Affordability is front of mind for us and increased costs for you mean we'd need to take a serious look at the other services we provide to see how we can reduce spending in other areas to lessen the impact on you.

We have not looked into this to determine the extent of what that could look like for our community at this stage. Council would need to spend a lot of time considering different changes to service levels and get your feedback if these things were to change on a significant scale.

This option does not meet legal requirements.

What we've explained may sound unsettling. But, we're not alone here; most councils are facing the same difficulties with the rising costs of providing water services under current funding models.

The Government's 'Local Water Done Well' legislation requires us to prove financial sustainability for the future.

This option is not affordable for our council nor our ratepayers. Our community would face major financial and potential social impacts as a result of changing service levels and reduced investment in other council areas.

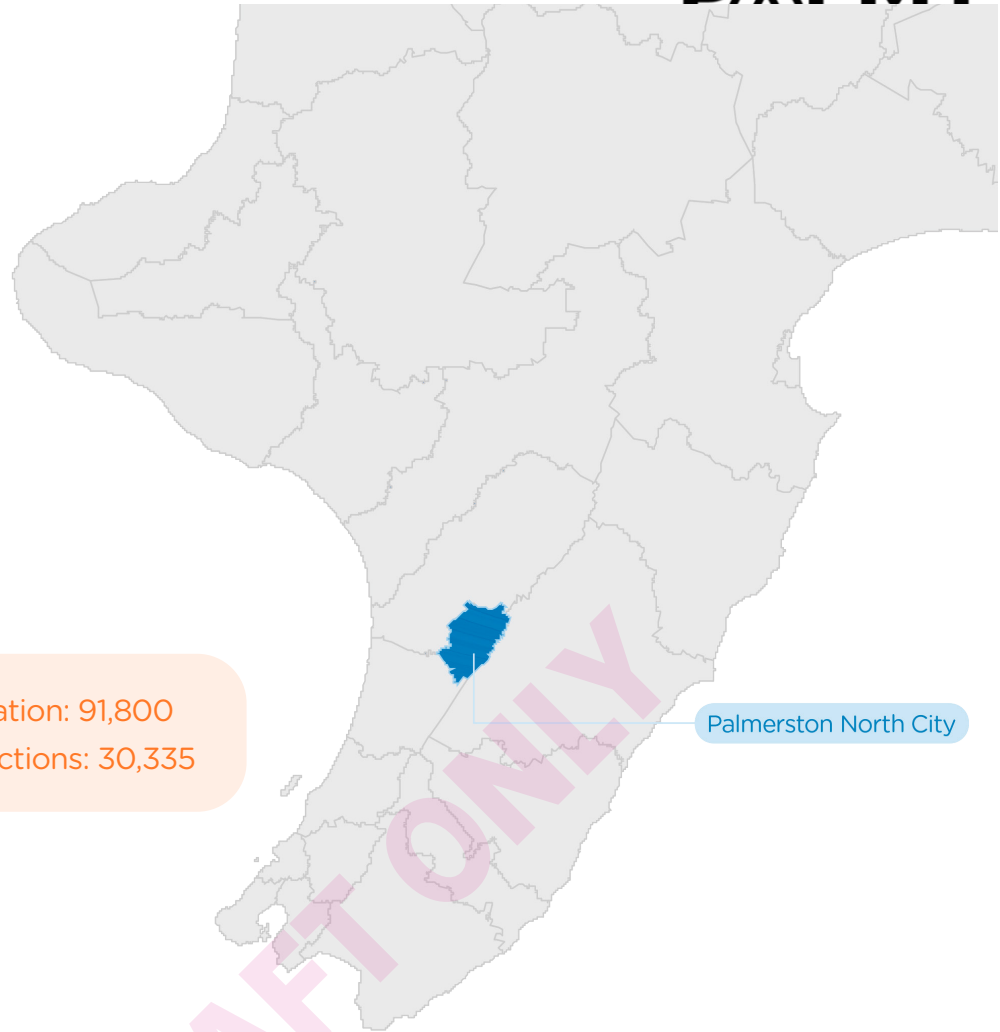
This means this option cannot meet the legislative requirements for water services in the future.

We'd also risk not meeting legal requirements for other council services if we reduced investment in other key infrastructure areas.

Lastly, the Government would prefer we collaborate with other councils on water services. We don't know what would occur if we did not follow that direction.



Total population: 91,800
Total connections: 30,335



Cost

Within ten years, residential ratepayers could be paying

\$3,442 per year*

for water under this option. This figure could drop to \$3,069 in 30 years*.

These costs do not include an additional levy of at least \$1,000 per year for Nature Calls

Modelling for the next ten years is likely to be more accurate than 30 years due to changing needs/legislation/population etc. Council debt levels under this option would be similar to now, however the majority of future borrowing would need to be allocated to water projects. We'd also still need external financing for our Nature Calls project.

In our Long-Term Plan we've explained Nature Calls could cost at least \$1,000 a year for those connected to our water. This is on top of the cost above.

We would need to significantly reduce borrowing for transport, property, community facilities, parks; rubbish and recycling services. This would impact the current services you receive. Under this option property owners would be paying far more in rates than they do now, and receiving fewer services than they do currently.

Ownership, control, and community involvement



Who owns the water assets?

Council (and therefore ratepayers)



Who makes decisions?

Council. Also subject to regulatory oversight



Community involvement in decision-making:

Input through the Long-Term Plan and Annual Budget consultation processes



Iwi involvement:

Status quo.

We currently work closely with our mana whenua, Rangitāne, and have partnership agreements in place. Iwi play a key role in our water areas, specifically including advice, historical insights, strategic direction and even on the ground work in helping with fish counts in our streams. Our relationship helps us to contribute towards enhancing the mauri (life force) of our streams and awa (river)



Community affordability:

Not affordable for community



Legal Compliance:

Won't meet legal requirements.



Social impact:

Far higher rates bills will impact community through a variety of ways.

Loss or reduction of other Council services could lead to broader social implications for residents. Reduced council spending could impact other local businesses and employment.



Environmental outcomes:

Due to high costs we may not meet community aspirations.



Cultural outcomes:

Due to the high costs associated with this option it may prevent us from meeting community and mana whenua aspirations.

Service delivery



Water service:

Would meet basic legal requirements, but limited ability to improve services e.g higher treatment quality.



Impact on Other Council Services:

Maintaining the status quo for water services could severely impact other Council services due to the new legislation requiring ring-fencing.

Some services might have to be discontinued, and others would face significant cuts – this would have other major impacts on our community and its wellbeing.



Growth and development:

Limited funding for water services could slow growth and development in the city, as the necessary water infrastructure in growth areas would need to be funded through other means.



Climate change mitigation:

Difficult due to cost pressures



Civil defence response:

Status quo.

We will continue to look after our water and our community in an emergency

Charging for water in the future.

Under the Local Water Done Well legislation, an economic regulator will monitor the pricing of water under any option.

The legislation asks us to explain to you how water can be funded in different ways. Under the options it will be up to either Council or a new organisation to determine how to do this in the future.

Fixed water charges

This is what we do currently in Palmerston North. Residents connected to our water and wastewater networks pay a fixed rate each year for each service. Everyone in the city pays a proportional amount for stormwater management, determined on their land value. Some people don't think this is the best or a fair way to manage water as some homes use very little water but pay the same as those who use large amounts of water and may have things like outdoor irrigation, pools etc. These charges pay the day-to-day costs of getting you water, treatment and discharge of wastewater and replacing some assets.

We'd have to spend some money to set up a new organisation.

There would be some large initial costs to set up a new organisation. They include things like transferring some legal responsibilities, transferring assets, setting up an office, buying software, hiring staff, work infrastructure, billing processes, customer service and much more.

Estimates are around \$14 million for this. These costs wouldn't apply for option 3. For Options 1 and 2, most of the costs would be paid for by the water organisation. These costs are included in the examples in Option 1 and 2.



Water meters

Many Councils are introducing water meters. Kāpiti Coast District Council use water meters, and so do some communities in Horowhenua. Palmerston North also uses water meters for our commercial water users. Water meters are connected to each property and measure the volume of water used. That then determines how much a property pays for water.

When Kāpiti Coast introduced meters there was a significant reduction in water use, and it also helped locate leaks.

Some people view meters as a fairer option as you only pay for what you use, and therefore are incentivised to use less water. It also means people with pools or irrigation systems pay for those large volumes of water. However some have concerns about the impact on large families or people who use more water for health reasons.

If councils collaborate to create a water services organisation there will need to be conversations about how water is charged to ensure it is consistent. This could also be a conversation during any transition set-up. We suspect that at some point in the near future water meters will be likely.

The legislation requires that any organisation adopts pricing structures that reflect the cost of the services, while promoting equitable access to water, and that all revenue must be re-invested. This is to avoid excessive charging.

Under all options, the legislation allows for charging people connected to the drinking water and wastewater networks, as they are now. We would also expect that all properties (regardless of if they're connected to the water supply) would continue to contribute towards the cost of stormwater management. The legislation requires that the costs for each are itemised, as they are now. It also allows for charges to be applied to properties not connected to the network but within the service area to reflect the cost of maintaining the service.

We expect that commercial water users, and our trade waste (wastewater) customers will also continue to pay for their water. Any new water organisation would look at how this works across the wider region to ensure it's consistent.

Currently, your water costs are charged as part of your rates. Under option 1 or 2 with other areas being involved, we expect that in time you would receive a separate invoice from the water organisation. This would be like your power/phone/internet bills where you may receive an invoice monthly or quarterly. You'd also talk to that organisation directly for any concerns or feedback about water or bill payments. The legislation allows for late fees for unpaid charges.

Some other points for you to consider.

The law is clear on keeping water assets publicly owned.

The legislation includes several requirements to ensure water assets cannot be sold or transferred to private entities without extensive legislative and community consent.

Our water assets are important.

In our current long term plan our council considers our water assets to be significant for our community and our current plan doesn't propose any change in ownership. Under options 1 & 2, ownership of these assets could transfer to the water organisation. This would require us to amend our current Long Term Plan based on our proposed timeframes. If you have any comments on this specific aspect please let us know in the "other comment" section on our submission form.

Stormwater management is very important to us.

Stormwater is a unique part of our regions water system – because unlike wastewater or the drinking water supply, some of the critical parts of the system are shared across other services. For example, the roads hold stormwater (heavy rainfall) as they drain. Our parks and reserves are designed to have lots of green space to help hold onto as much water as possible in heavy rain events. Both of these aspects help reduce the chances of flooding.

While stormwater management is factored into the modelling, it is likely Council continues to own all stormwater assets, and be responsible for the work programme, but contract the day to day management to a water organisation. That includes things like upgrading pipes, clearing drains and grates etc.

Our council is passionate about good stormwater management and doing all we can to mitigate the impacts of climate change for our community. We're working on a strategy and flood models currently to help us in that space.

We considered a range of things when looking at options.

While cost is the big driver, we considered several other aspects to help determine a preferred option. These include impact on other council services, innovation, the service you get, communities of interest, cultural input, your ability to have a say, growth, climate change and the environment. In your submission, we'll be asking you to have a say on these too, so we know what matters most to you.

We've been keeping iwi updated.

We've continued to keep our partners and local mana whenua Rangitāne o Manawātū involved through our regular interactions with them. Iwi from across the region have also met for some group hui. We will continue to work with and seek feedback from Rangitāne throughout the process. This process will need to carefully consider iwi interests and involvement, especially if there are differing objectives across the wider area. We believe iwi should play a role in water management.

All options will be subject to a range of regulations.

Under Option 1 and 2:

If we were to join other councils, the organisation would still be subject to strong oversight. Firstly, there's the shareholding council who create a 'Statement of Expectation' about what is expected, how councils will monitor it and assess it's performance. The organisation has to respond to this in it's water strategy. The organisation would also be required to create annual reports and other public reporting of their work and financial position.

For all options:

Under the new legislation, regulators would keep a close eye on water services. There would be a regulator who looks at finances and pricing.

The other regulator, Taumata Arowai - The Water Services Authority, ensures drinking water meets legal standards.

Lastly, there are still a wide range of other laws that would influence water services - for example the Reserves Management Act.

A bigger population doesn't mean a bigger say in joint organisations.

Under Options 1 and 2, the water organisation would make decisions. Despite having the largest population, our Elected Members have not made any resolutions about the governance expectations for a potential joint organisation.

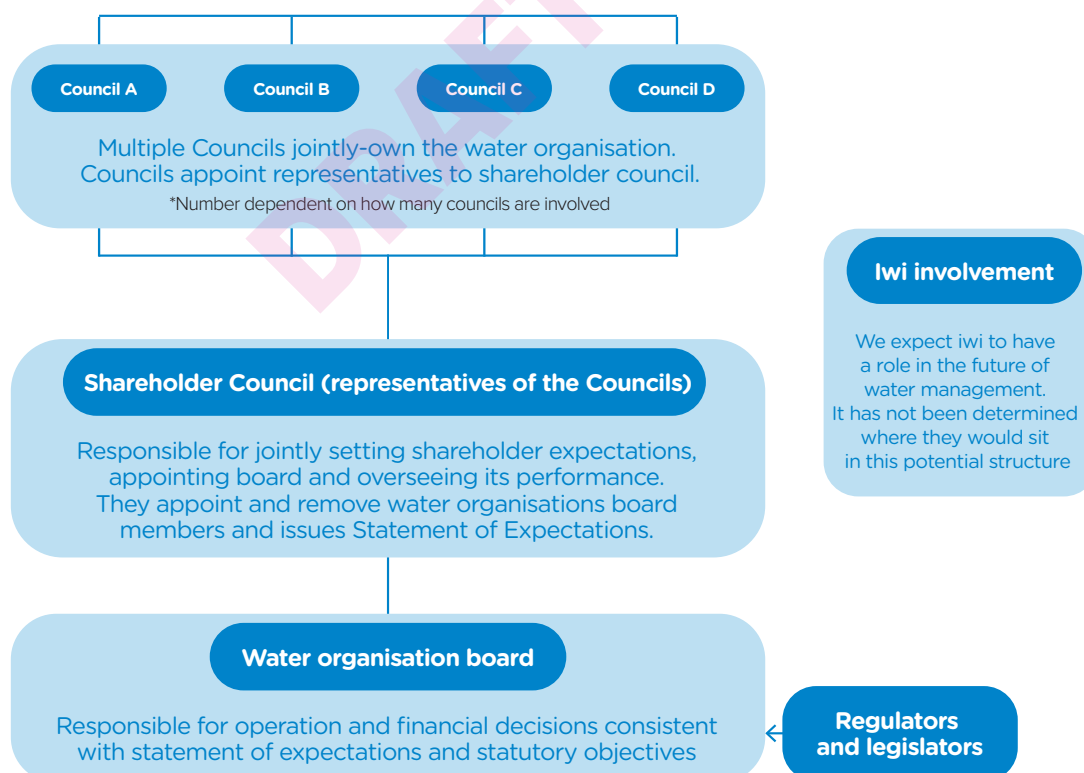
We believe your water service could improve.

Under Option 1 and 2, we expect your water services will improve if we join with others. With more people paying for water improvements they can likely occur faster than what we would have been able to do.

Being an urban area, our community does have a higher expectation of service and we'll be advocating for maintained or improved levels of service with any organisation.

With more people to pay there will also likely be a push for innovation and better environmental outcomes.

This is how a jointly owned water organisation could be structured.



Learn more about impacts on other communities

Communities will be affected by changes to water services in different ways. The other councils mentioned in this document are consulting with their own communities on a range of potential options for their future water services.

We have financial modelling available on our website that provides more detail about each council. However, during their consultations, they will also explore other factors, such as potential impacts on council services and their communities. We encourage you to read their consultation documents when considering which option to support in your submission. We're hoping to have a fact sheet from each of the council's names about their current water services, current water related debt, and major investments in the coming decades.

It's important Palmerston North residents have their say in our consultation so that our elected members can continue to advocate for you. However, you are also welcome to make submissions on other councils' consultations.

We're also happy to chat to people in other council boundaries about Palmerston North's situation and what potential changes to water services might mean for our community. You can come to our drop-in sessions, make a submission on our consultation, and chat to us on our social media channels.

Here is a list of the councils we have named in our consultation document, with their websites where they'll have their consultation material, and proposed consultation date

Council	Website	Consultation Date
Kapiti Coast District Council	kapiticoast.govt.nz	
Manawatu District Council	mdc.govt.nz	
Horowhenua District Council	horowhenua.govt.nz	
Tararua District Council	tararuaadc.govt.nz	
Whanganui District Council	whanganui.govt.nz	
Rangitikei District Council	rangitikei.govt.nz	
Ruapehu District Council	ruapehudc.govt.nz	



Our timeline

February/March

Community Consultation

April

Hearing of submissions

May/June

Council decides future of water management

Prior to 3 September

Council adopts Water Services Delivery Plan and submits to Government

Approx October

Hear back from Government and confirms acceptance or if changes are needed. Minister can appoint a Crown Facilitator or Crown Water Specialist to provide an acceptable plan if the submitted plan isn't accepted

November 2025 - July 2027

Implementation period

30 June 2028

Either Council or water organisation must prove financial sustainability

We need your feedback to help make an informed decision.

We know you may have questions, and we're here to help answer them. We have a range of ways for you to get in touch with us, and to make your submission.

Have your say by
**4pm Sunday
23 March**

Come to a drop in session

To be confirmed

Make a submission!

Making a submission is the most important thing you can do. It also means that if you'd like, you can choose to speak to Elected Members about your views at our hearings. Simply tick the box on the submission form to do that and we will be in touch to arrange a time.

You can make a submission in three easy ways:

1. On our website pncc.govt.nz/localwater
2. Fill in a hardcopy form from one of our libraries or customer service centre and drop it in a box in person
3. Fill in a hardcopy form and post it to us:

Local Water Done Well Consultation
Free Post PX33317
Palmerston North

While we have traditional submission forms, you are welcome to also share your views in any way that suits you.

That could be a short video, a poem, a song, a piece of art – whatever you choose! If you want to do this, please do it via our website – fill in the beginning of the submission form with your contact details and then attach as a file, or drop a hard copy in a submission box (please just ensure your name and contact details are on it).

Have your say
on who manages

Palmy's Water

in the future

This is the one of the most
important decision we'll
make for our city in decades.

Have your say before
Sunday 23 March, 4pm



Read the options, and the potential
costs at pncc.govt.nz/localwater

Your details

Name

Address

Email

Age* (We're asking people's age as this is a decision that will impact our city for decades
and different age groups may have different opinions)

☐ 9 and under

☐ 10-19

☐ 20-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-59

☐ 60-69

☐ 70-79

☐ 80 plus

Name of organisation (if submitting on their behalf)

Do you live within the Palmerston North City Council boundary?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Does the Palmerston North City Council provide your drinking water and/or
wastewater?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Are you a Palmerston North City Council Trade waste and/or Commercial Water
Customer?
(You are a business that pays for metered water and/or trade waste separately to your rates.)

Yes ☐

No ☐

We're asking for some specific information about you to see if there is a difference in opinion between different groups of people.

Would you like to come to a hearing and speak to Elected Members about your submission?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If you ticked yes, we'll be in touch to confirm the date and time.

Let's find out more about what matters to you

Please tick which six things matter most to you when considering what happens to water service delivery.

- ☐ **Future water costs and investment**
How much will you pay for water?
Can the Council continue to make major investment in water infrastructure?
- ☐ **Maintaining non-water services**
Can the Council still deliver services like roads, recycling, parks, and libraries?
- ☐ **Funding other city priorities**
Can the Council still arrange financing to enable it to invest in key projects like transport and seismic upgrades?
- ☐ **Innovation**
Using new ideas and technologies to make water services more efficient and sustainable.
- ☐ **Consistent water service**
Either the same or improved water services.
- ☐ **Cultural input**
Ensuring mana whenua involvement in water decisions.
- ☐ **Community influence**
Residents' ability to shape water services decisions and there be transparent decision making.
- ☐ **Growth planning**
Preparing water services for population growth.
- ☐ **Climate resilience**
Water services continue to, and improves on mitigating climate change (eg: against flooding).
- ☐ **Environmental benefits**
Improving outcomes for the environment.
- ☐ **Other** (please state)

Let's find out what you think about the options

Please score the options from 1-3, with 1 being your preferred option, and 3 being your least preferred option.

	Option 1: 'The Four' – A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua, Manawatū, and Kāpiti Coast District Councils.
	Option 2: 'The up to 7': A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council and one or more other councils within the Horizons Regional Council boundary.
	Option 3: Status quo with changes (not financially sustainable and therefore it's not legally compliant).

Please tell us more about your thoughts on these options

Option 1: 'The Four' – A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua, Manawatū, and Kāpiti Coast District Councils.

Please tell us what you like about this option

Please tell us what you don't like about this option

Option 2: 'The up to 7': A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council and one or more other councils within the Horizons Regional Council boundary.

Please tell us what you like about this option

Please tell us what you don't like about this option

Please tell us what you like about this option

