

# Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy

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## Thames-Coromandel District's Open Space and Community Facilities – our Strategy at a Glance

### OUR VISION

*Thames-Coromandel's community facilities and open spaces are managed effectively and efficiently, celebrate and protect our natural environment, meet community needs, contribute to improving people's health and wellbeing, enhance resident and visitor experience of the district and respond to changing needs and trends.*

#### OUR OPEN SPACES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN 2020

#### OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION – WHAT WE WILL DO TO ACHIEVE THE VISION BY 2030

- We have enough, and a diversity of types of open space to meet current and foreseeable future community needs.
- There is adequate provision of a range of community facilities across the District. These include cemeteries, libraries, public conveniences and swimming pools.
- Challenges for the viability of some of our open spaces and community facilities are:
  - the age and condition of buildings and equipment.
  - changing community needs and preferences for recreation and sporting activities
  - seasonal peak demand for our open spaces and community facilities
  - the affordability of repurposing existing open space and community facilities
  - the risk posed by natural hazards such as flooding and earthquakes.
- Improved management practices are needed for Council to make good decisions about its open space and community facilities now and into the future.

- We will only acquire new open spaces where there is robust evidence that demand is certain and long term.
- We will establish a District-wide approach to managing our community facilities. The focus will be on:
  - maintaining existing services and providing affordable, flexible and fit for purpose facilities to meet changing community preferences and needs and address seasonal peak demand
  - continuing to develop robust management practices and applying consistent, robust criteria for making good decisions
  - rationalising open spaces and community facilities where over-supply or inability for affordable refurbishment or adaptation is identified
  - building and maintaining partnership relationships with iwi and community groups in planning, designing, developing, planting and maintaining our open spaces
  - working collaboratively with others to promote co-location of services and shared facilities that are affordable for our ratepayers and easier for people to access.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Thames-Coromandel district covers an area of around 230,000 hectares. It includes the 85-kilometre-long Coromandel Peninsula and extends south to the Hikutaia River and west to the Waihou River. The district is located within easy driving distance of the major urban centres of Auckland and Hamilton, as well as the wider Waikato region.

The district's defining characteristics include the steep Coromandel Range, known by Maori as Te Tara-o-te-Ika a Māui (the jagged barb of Māui's fish) or Te Paeroa-a-Toi (Toi's long mountain range) which runs down the narrow peninsula's middle, the indigenous forest that covering about 65% of the district and the 400 kilometres of coastline with its steep cliffs and sandy beaches. The peninsula is surrounded by and has easy access to the waters of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi which is administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC).

These physical attributes offer many opportunities for public recreation and sporting activities and make the Coromandel one of New Zealand's most popular holiday destinations for national and international visitors.

Most of the district's permanent resident population of 29,895 people (as at 2018)<sup>1</sup> live in small, dispersed, coastal settlements. The population is variable, as approximately 50% of our ratepayers are not permanent residents, and only occupy their holiday properties for part of the year. They and the growing numbers of tourists and visitors contribute to large population peaks and increased use of the District's open spaces and community facilities, especially in the summer holiday period.

### 1.1. What are open spaces and community facilities and why are they important?

#### 1.1.1. Open Space

Open space in the Thames-Coromandel district encompasses the district's parks and reserves, sports fields, walkways, cycleways, cemeteries, esplanades, road and road reserves, historic reserves and golf courses. It also includes the bush-clad hills and sandy beaches that give the Coromandel its distinctive character and attract visitors to the area.

There are approximately 74,000 hectares of publicly owned open space in the district. The considerable estate owned and managed by the DOC covers about 72,000 hectares<sup>2</sup> or one-third of the peninsula. It also includes the Coromandel Forest Park and many kilometres of walking and tramping trails. Most of the remaining 2,000 hectares of open space are owned and managed by Thames-Coromandel District Council (the Council).

Our open spaces are important and valued by both residents and visitors to the district. These spaces provide places for people to relax and recreate in and (amongst other things):

- help make our district an attractive and welcoming place
- provide safe transport corridors for walking and cycling and alternative internal and external community linkages
- help people to experience the district's natural and cultural values
- protect green corridors for the movement of native animals and plants
- protect and celebrate significant historic and cultural landscapes and sites.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2018-census-population-and-dwelling-counts>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/policies-and-plans/conservation-management/coromandel-peninsula-conservation-management-plan.pdf>, p.8.

### 1.1.2. Community Facilities

The term 'community facilities' refers to the district's airfields, campgrounds, community and recreation centres, sports clubs, halls, harbour facilities, libraries, marae, museums, pools, public conveniences, pools and sports fields.

Many of these facilities are owned by and located on land owned by Council. A number are privately owned or owned and managed by iwi, Ministry of Education, or community organisations and private groups.

The community facility network plays an important function in:

- helping to build strong, healthy and vibrant communities
- fostering improved lifestyles and a sense of belonging and pride among the District's residents, many of whom live in remote locations
- providing places where people can connect, socialise, learn and participate in a wide range of social, cultural, artistic and recreational activities and events
- supporting economic activities and promoting socio-economic well-being
- providing important gathering points in civil defence emergencies
- enabling access to the waters of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

### 1.2. Council and other partners' roles in open space and community facilities provision

The Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy (the Strategy) focuses on the open spaces and community facilities owned by the Council. The Strategy is only applicable to these resources, but does recognise and take account of the important contribution made by others to the district's network of open spaces and community facilities.

As well as the many trails, camp sites and bush reserve managed by DOC, there are the Ministry of Education's school grounds and playing fields and those owned and managed by private and community sporting and recreational organisations. These offer significant sport and recreation opportunities for the district's communities. The work of charitable trusts, including Sports Waikato, support and promote the provision of places and spaces for community, recreation and sporting activities.

Community volunteer groups and private landowners are invaluable partners in maintaining local cemeteries, reserves and walkways and managing community halls. Across the district there are privately owned bush areas and walking trails which are maintained by their owners for public enjoyment, and provide important linkages in the District's open space network.

### 1.3. Open space, community facilities and Iwi

For Māori, te whenua - the land - is one of their most important taonga (treasures) and they regard themselves as kaitiaki (custodians or care givers) of this taonga for future generations. Council recognises its relationship with tangata whenua (people of the land) under the Tiriti o Waitangi, and the unique kaitiaki and rangatira role of iwi and hapū in the district in respect of the natural and physical taonga in their rohe (area). Council's aim is to establish and maintain a relationship with iwi to achieve the sustainable management of the district's community facilities and open spaces.

The Strategy acknowledges the interest tangata whenua have in current and future management of significant open space and community facilities. This may include the protection and management of wāhi tapu, the protection and restoration of the mauri of natural eco-systems of land, water and air and the harvesting of kai and cultural materials.

The Strategy also recognises that there are open spaces and community facilities currently owned by Council which are the subject of Treaty of Waitangi settlement processes. These spaces and facilities are not covered by the Strategy.

#### 1.4. Issues and opportunities for the District's open spaces and community facilities

Several issues challenge the current provision and management of Council's open spaces and community facilities. These include:

**1. Geographic distribution of our towns and settlements.** The district's population is dispersed across the peninsula in small coastal settlements. The largest of these are Thames (the main administrative and employment centre), Coromandel Town, Pauanui, Tairua, Whangamata and Whitianga.

The relative isolation of some of our communities, their differing geographies and development patterns challenges the provision of affordable, equitable provision of open space and community facilities across the district. The Strategy considers requirements across the district, but also considers the current and future needs of the main urban settlements.

**2. An ageing, slow-growing population.** Thames-Coromandel's population is a slow growing, ageing one. Currently around a third of the district is aged 65 and over, with this proportion expected to increase to about 45% by 2048. The population is expected to grow slowly until the 2030s, experience a gradual decline until 2048, then stabilise thereafter.

The changing population profile places different demands on the location and type of our open spaces and community facilities. For example, Council will need to continue to provide playgrounds and sports fields for younger adults, children and youth, but become more inclusive in our planning, to address the needs of older people in our communities.

**3. Seasonal peak population.** The Coromandel Peninsula is a popular vacation destination in the summer season, especially during the Christmas and New Year period. At the height of this holiday season, when many holiday homeowners are in residence, the population regularly peaks at over 130,000 people, (compared with the usually resident population of 29,895).

At the same time, up to a half a million short-term visitors come to enjoy our beaches, bush walks and special events. This large influx and the fluctuating peaks accompanying popular events puts pressure on the district's open spaces, and on facilities like public toilets and playgrounds located on them. The highest demand is experienced in the main settlements, particularly on the eastern side of the peninsula, and at popular visitor destinations.

The projected increase in both the number of holiday homes and the volume of visitors to the district indicates that the peak visitor period is likely to become busier in the future. This represents an opportunity for the economic development of our district but is also a challenge for the provision of facilities like public conveniences, boat ramps and public open space.

**4. Affordability and Opportunities to Collaborate.** The district's small population and slow growth projections will make it difficult for Council to fund all of the community's aspirations for open spaces and community facilities into the future. This is also an issue for many other providers, including schools and private sports clubs. There are opportunities to take a more collaborative, shared approach to the provision of community facilities, and for optimising their use, maintenance and adaptation to changing needs through partnerships with iwi, DOC, the neighbouring Hauraki district, other providers, including the Ministry of Education, the private sector and the wider community.

**5. Fit for Purpose.** For a variety of reasons, including geographic location and the age and condition of equipment, some of Council's open spaces and community facilities are currently not suitable, adequate or attractive for the community to use. Changing community expectations and sport participation preferences; the physical needs of older people and new technology; the growing popularity of new sports; the decline of traditional activities and technological change also impact on the suitability of some facilities for their original purpose, and their ability to be adapted for new or multiple uses.

**6. Robust information, planning and management practice.** Over the past few years, Council has initiated a long-overdue change in its approach to managing its open spaces and community facilities portfolios. This is demonstrated in the preparation of Asset Management Plans, the introduction of new asset management software and the current review of Reserve Management Plans.

Work is still needed to build the strong knowledge base required to make good decisions around planning and management of these assets. A key area for improvement is the development of a consistent, District-wide system for monitoring and managing demand for use of its open spaces and community facilities.

**7. Changing recreation and population health trends.** Annual customer satisfaction survey results and the involvement of many community groups in the upkeep of their local parks indicates that our residents use, value and are very satisfied with our open spaces.

Despite these high customer satisfaction levels, Sport Waikato's 2018 participation profile indicates that only 18 percent of people in the district were physically active in a public park, field or playground. 56 percent exercised on a road or footpath, 31 percent on a walkway, and 44 percent did so beside the coast. 64 percent of people want to do more physical activity.<sup>3</sup> These trends, and the changing demographic profile that will see greater numbers of more active, older people living in our communities, challenge the current and future provision of open space across the district.

In addition, Sport New Zealand's Active NZ 2017 Report<sup>4</sup> confirms previous survey findings that showed a trend towards decreased participation in traditional club sports such as rugby, cricket and netball, and a continued rise in the number of people engaged in more individualised forms of recreation and sporting activities, including walking, running and yoga. These trends need to be considered in assessing our communities' future demand for play areas, sports fields, walking and cycling paths, and indoor recreational spaces.

**8. Climate resilience** is a major management issue facing all infrastructure providers and the built environment. Climate resilience is an underlying issue for this Strategy. Some of the District's open spaces and community facilities are located on low lying coastal areas so may be prone to sea level rise and associated coastal inundation. Potential climate resilience needs to be considered when any future investment in open spaces and community facilities is contemplated.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.sportwaikato.org.nz/getmedia/f65dedd9-c39c-4f02-9760-279f00ffadcb/District-Thames\\_2018-Participation-Profile-ADULTS\\_nobleed.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://www.sportwaikato.org.nz/getmedia/f65dedd9-c39c-4f02-9760-279f00ffadcb/District-Thames_2018-Participation-Profile-ADULTS_nobleed.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Main-Report.pdf>

## 2. WHY DEVELOP AN OPEN SPACE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES STRATEGY?

### 2.1. Statutory and Strategic Context

There is no legislative requirement to develop an Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy. There are three key statutes that are relevant for the provision and management of Council's open spaces and community facilities. These are:

- the Reserves Act 1977 (Reserves Act);
- the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA); and
- the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA).

The Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 and the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 are also relevant in informing the development and content of an Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy.

The Strategy is a non-statutory document, and like all other Council strategies and policies, it is guided by the Council's Vision and Values. It also contributes to the outcomes Council wants to achieve for the District. The Strategy aligns with and draws upon information in Council's current Long-Term Plan, relevant Asset Management Plans, Reserve Management Plans and other spatial and financial planning and policy documents. When completed, it will inform ongoing reviews of these documents.

Details about the impact of the relevant legislation on the management of open spaces and community facilities, and the alignment of this Strategy with Council's Vision, and Values as well as other Council plans and policies are included in **Appendix 1** to the Strategy.

### 2.2. The Strategy's vision and purpose

#### 2.2.1. Vision and Purpose

The Council's overarching vision for its open spaces and community facilities is that:

*Thames-Coromandel's community facilities and open spaces are managed effectively and efficiently, celebrate and protect our natural environment, meet community needs, contribute to improving people's health and wellbeing, enhance resident and visitor experience of the district and respond to changing needs and trends.*

The Strategy has been developed to ensure that Council can provide the appropriate quantity and quality of open space and community facilities in the right places to meet the changing needs of communities. It is intended to:

- provide a strategic overview and analysis of Council's provision of open spaces and community facilities
- establish a framework for promoting a consistent approach to the management of the District's open spaces and community facilities
- form the basis for establishing and strengthening community partnerships
- provide direction for future Council planning, management and investment to meet current and future demand across the District
- be responsive to the dispersed nature and changing demographics of communities
- provide guidelines for decision making regarding acquisition and disposal decisions
- provide the context and framework for development contribution requirements in respect of the District's open space and community facilities.

The Strategy is anticipated to cover a ten-year planning period (2020-2030), with a review in 5 years to confirm actual growth and community needs and expectations.

To realise the Council's vision for its open spaces and community facilities, Council has established the following three strategic goals:

### 2.2.2. Strategic Goals

#### **Goal #1: Strong Open Space and Community Facilities Networks**

Thames-Coromandel District's open space and community facilities networks:

- enable community health and well-being
- protect, and respect local identity, culture, heritage and environmental values
- are a source of community pride
- are fit for purpose, flexible and encourage high levels of community use and enjoyment
- meet changing community needs
- are provided in the most cost-effective way.

#### **Goal #2: Effective Management of Council's Open Space and Community Facilities Networks**

Management of Council's open spaces and community facilities:

- is based on quality information
- takes a District-wide, 'best practice' approach
- makes best use of existing open space and community facilities
- ensures good stewardship of investments
- meets health and safety requirements.

#### **Goal #3: Collaboration and Partnership**

Council has strong working relationships with other agencies, iwi and community groups to ensure open spaces and community facilities are provided and used efficiently and meet community needs and aspirations.

## 3. OPEN SPACE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES–THE CURRENT SITUATION

### 3.1. Open spaces -what Council provides now

Council's approximately 2,000 hectares of public open spaces include 695 kilometres of roads, 380 kilometres of footpaths, numerous coastal and river esplanades, as well as land used for parks, reserves, sports fields, museums and bush reserves.

Some open spaces are identified as being used mainly for recreational, sporting and other community activities. Others are intended to serve other functions, for example, as stormwater and flood flow paths, but may be publicly accessible and provide some opportunities for walking and other recreational activities.

Some of our open spaces used for recreation and sporting activities are formally reserved under the Reserves Act 1977 as areas with recreational, environmental, historic, cultural or other values that are to be preserved and managed for public enjoyment and benefit. Some of Council's reserves are actively managed and maintained, while others are not.

### 3.2. Council's current open space planning and management framework

Since 2015, Council has taken a more consistent and robust approach to managing its open spaces and community facilities, which includes the introduction of new asset management software and preparation of Asset Management Plans (AMPs). The AMPs establish a ten-year programme for managing reserves and community facilities so that the Council's desired outcomes and agreed levels of service for these assets can be achieved.

Council is also in the process of conducting a District-wide land status investigation to review its information about the ownership, legal status and size of land within our open space network. The

information from this investigation informs the review of Council's Reserve Management Plans (RMPs) which provide direction for the day-to-day management and development of open spaces reserved under the Reserves Act. At this stage, the RMPs for the Coromandel-Colville and Thames-Thames Coast areas have been reviewed. The RMPs for the Eastern ward areas are underway but have not been completed.

Once adopted by Council, the Strategy will provide an overarching, district-wide direction for the acquisition, on-going management and disposal of our reserves and community facilities. This will guide the preparation and review of AMPs and RMPs, as well as planning and decision-making in relation to other Council strategies and policies, such as the Annual and Long-Term Plans.

### 3.3. Open space categorisation and analysis

As part of its review of RMPs, Council has adopted the New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA)<sup>5</sup> Parks Categories Framework<sup>6</sup> (the Framework) to better identify its open space reserves and their appropriate use and management.

The Framework was developed in consultation with the New Zealand parks sector and local councils and has proven to be more useful for planning and managing open spaces and reserves than the Reserves Act classifications. The analysis which underpins this Strategy has used the Framework to describe and assess current and future provision of open space in the District.

The starting point for analysing Council's current provision of open spaces across the District is the information held by Council about the location, use, legal status and categorisation of its reserves under the Framework. This information is being updated through the current land status investigation and will continue to be updated in the future.

The analysis also considers the contribution of the significant amount of Council-owned open space that is not reserved under the Reserves Act, such as road reserves, as well as the public open spaces owned by other organisations, including DOC and the Ministry of Education.

The following sections provide a descriptive overview and analysis of open space represented in Council's open space network, using the Framework's categories.

#### 3.3.1. Civic Reserves

These areas of open space are often provided within or adjacent to the business districts in our main settlements. They usually offer a place for social gatherings, meeting places, relaxation and enjoyment, and may also provide locations for public and community buildings such as community halls and swimming pools. Council's civic reserves across the District include the Samuel James Reserve and Hauraki House at Coromandel Town.

The Framework provides no benchmarks for the provision of civic reserves by population. Council's decisions to acquire these has been largely historical and made on a case by case basis. There is currently no identified demand for additional land to be formally set aside to function as a civic reserve.

In some places, such as Whitianga, open space that is part of a road reserve can be re-developed to serve a similar function to a civic reserve. It is likely that Council's promotion of co-location of community services and facilities in central 'hubs' will provide opportunities for additional, upgraded civic open spaces.

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<sup>5</sup> Now known as Recreation Aotearoa.

<sup>6</sup> New Zealand Recreation Association, 'NZRA Parks Categories Framework', 2017, [https://issuu.com/newzealandrecreationassociation/docs/nzra\\_parks\\_category\\_framework\\_fina](https://issuu.com/newzealandrecreationassociation/docs/nzra_parks_category_framework_fina)

### 3.3.2. Cultural Heritage Reserves

Cultural heritage reserves are described in the Framework as open spaces that protect the built cultural and historical environment, and/or provide for heritage conservation, education, commemoration, mourning and remembrance.

Council-owned open space identified as cultural heritage reserves across the peninsula includes the Thames War Memorial Reserve, Thames Historical Museum land and the Ariki Tahi Reserve at Te Kouma which are all been categorised for their historical and cultural significance.

In many districts, cemeteries are formally reserved as cultural heritage reserves under the Reserves Act. This is not the case for the 13 cemeteries Council is responsible for, however the Strategy recognises and takes into account the important contribution these places make to Council's provision of open space in the district. While the district's cemeteries can have significant cultural, historical and ecological values, and are often used for walking and other passive recreational activities, their main function is as places for burial. For this reason, they are primarily considered as community facilities by Council, and discussed under Section 3.4 below.

There is no current or anticipated future demand for new heritage reserves to be acquired by Council over the next decade.

### 3.3.3. Nature Reserves

Nature reserves are also known as conservation, bushland, forest, protected or environmental reserves. They are usually large-scale sites, suitable for low impact recreational activities, and for providing experience and protection of natural environmental or other features such as native bush, coastal margins, forestry, farm parks, wetlands, riparian areas and water bodies. Council-owned nature Reserves include the John William Hall Arboretum in Thames, the Kauri Scenic Reserve at Waitete Bay and the Pumpkin Hill Reserves at Tairua.

The Framework anticipates that sites categorised as nature reserves will be no smaller than 1 hectare, and reference an industry-wide benchmark of 5-15 hectares per 1,000 residents. Council's current District-wide provision is below this range, with the Thames and the coastal settlements north of the town only having .009 hectares of this type of open space per 1,000 residents. This shortfall is offset by the large areas of native bush managed as part of the DOC estate, which have similar natural environmental values and offer walking and camping opportunities similar to those available in Council's nature reserves. When taken together, DOC and Council's provision of this type of open space throughout the District will adequately meet the needs of current and future residents and visitors.

### 3.3.4. Neighbourhood Reserves

Neighbourhood reserves are open spaces developed and used for informal recreation and sporting activities, play and family-based activities, and social and community activities. They are also known as Local, Social Recreation or Community reserves. Often, other types of open space, such as ecological linkage, heritage or civic reserve can serve a neighbourhood park function.

The current provision of neighbourhood reserves in our main settlements generally aligns with the Framework's guidelines. These recommend that urban residential areas be within a ten-minute walking distance (500 metre radius) of a neighbourhood park/reserve, and that each park should have an average size of 3,000 to 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (.3 - .5 hectares)<sup>7</sup>.

Current provision of neighbourhood reserves varies between the district's wards and its main settlements. For example, the current provision of neighbourhood reserves in the Coromandel-Colville area is approximately .75ha per 1,000 residents, while the average for the Thames ward is

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<sup>7</sup> Source: New Zealand Recreation Association Parks Categories and Levels of Service Guideline 2011.

approximately 1.9 hectares per 1,000 residents. In addition, most neighbourhood reserves in the Thames ward are located in the the small coastal communities, rather than the town of Thames, making for a significant under-provision of this type of park in the district's major centre.

Under-provision of this type of reserve in locations like Thames reflects historical urban development, the availability of appropriate land and the lack of significant growth in older settlements. It is adequately counterbalanced by the availability and accessibility of alternative open spaces such as ecological and linkage reserves, coastal esplanade reserves and other land owned by Council but not held as reserve under the Reserves Act, which provide similar recreational and leisure opportunities. An example of this is Thames' Burke Street Beachfront reserve, which is an ecological and linkage reserve but serves a neighbourhood park function for the surrounding residential neighbourhood. Local school playgrounds owned by the Ministry of Education and the proximity of many of our communities to safe coastal beaches also supplement neighbourhood reserve provision across the district.

Some of our neighbourhood reserves, for example Porritt Park, Thames' principal neighbourhood park, are also destination parks, with facilities that attract people from beyond the immediate neighbourhood in which they are located. Porritt Park has had significant upgrades since 2016, including development of the Powerco Skate Park, which was a collaborative project between Council, community groups, funding partners and business organisations.

Due to their location, some of our neighbourhood reserves, and the facilities and structures on them, including community club buildings, are at risk from the effects of climate change.

### 3.3.5. Outdoor Adventure

Outdoor Adventure open spaces (also called Regional, Forest, Farm or All Terrain parks) are used and developed for recreation and sporting activities that require a large scale, forested, rural or peri-urban environment. The Long Bay Scenic Reserve at Coromandel is classified as outdoor adventure.

Community demand is the main driver for this type of reserve. Council has usually met this demand by utilising existing public land acquired for reasons other than nature-based recreation, or where the direct acquisition of land for the primary purpose of nature-based recreation will be justified.

### 3.3.6. Recreation & Ecological Linkages

Recreation and Linkage reserves are often linear in shape and provide pedestrian and cycle linkages, wildlife corridors and access to water margins. They can function as environmental protection areas and may also be known as linear parks, walkways, green or environmental corridors and esplanades.

Only some of Council's recreation & ecological linkage reserves are actively maintained for public recreation purposes reserves. Many of these are unmaintained and are not publicly accessible, but some of these serve important ecological and environmental functions.

Our publicly accessible, maintained recreation and ecological linkage reserves are well used by communities for walking, cycling, access to beaches and passive recreation, and serve an important function as alternate transport modes. They also function as neighbourhood open spaces in some areas of the district. In addition to our recreation and linkage reserves, Council owns land not reserved under the Reserves Act, as well as its roading network, that augment and serve similar functions to these open spaces.

Due to their location, some of our recreation and linkage open spaces, along with the equipment, community club buildings and other structures located on them are at risk from the effects of climate change.

There are no national benchmarks to guide provision by population for this category. When other Council-owned land currently used for coastal walkways, linkages to other reserves or the coastal

environment, or as road reserve are taken into account, there is considered to be ample provision of these types of open spaces across the peninsula. Council has indicated it may acquire land as linkage reserves to strengthen its existing network.

### 3.3.7. Sport & Recreation

This section provides an overview of the amount of land provided by Council for sports and recreation open space as well as the sports fields, sports equipment and associated buildings on these reserves. These assets are technically community facilities, but the issues and opportunities associated with them and the reserve land on which they are located are closely related and most appropriately discussed together.

The Framework characterises sport and recreation reserves as often being quite large areas set aside and developed for organised sport and recreation activities, recreation facilities and buildings, often multiple use. They are also known as active or sports parks.

Council’s sports and recreation open spaces range in size between 1.32ha and 14.94ha. The smaller fields do not meet the Framework’s recommended size of between 5 and 10 hectares, which is aimed at enabling sports grounds to cater for multi-use activities with at least two full sized winter fields, car parking and toilets. The size, number and distribution of Council’s larger sports and recreation open spaces across the District are however adequate for current community needs.

The following sports fields are vested as reserves under the Reserves Act, and categorised under the Framework as sport and recreation parks:

**Table 1: Sports Field Provision by Ward**

| Ward                              | Park   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Coromandel-Colville               | None   |
| Mercury Bay                       | Lyon Park (1.82ha); Hilton Park (3.08 ha)                        |
| South-Eastern Ward-Tairua/Pauanui | Cory Park (1.32ha) (Tairua); Kennedy Park 4.84ha(Pauanui)        |
| South-Eastern Ward-Whangamata     | Whangamata Golf Course (9.42ha); Aickin Rd Sportsground (3.35ha) |
| Thames                            | Rhodes Park (14.94)  |

Other sports and recreation facilities owned and/or managed by Council, but not formally reserved under the Reserves Act 1977 are the ten-hectare Mercury Bay Multi-Sports Park (also known as Whitianga Sportsville) and the 1.65 hectare Crown-owned Coromandel Sports and Recreation Domain. These facilities are also supplemented by Council’s roading network, which is used by about 56 percent of our adults for physical exercise.<sup>8</sup>

In 2018, Council partnered with the Ministry of Education and community groups to open the Jack McLean Community Recreation Centre in Thames. This two-court indoor venue can meet tournament requirements for many indoor sports including netball and basketball, and is suitable for a number of sports and recreational activities including volleyball, badminton, gymnastics, Kiado Ryu and Futsal. Council also supports other centres and groups who provide indoor recreation opportunities to the public. A similar approach has been taken for netball court provision at the Coromandel Area School.

A major issue is the age and condition of the sports fields, courts, buildings and equipment located on them. Many of the facilities are not fit for purpose, difficult and expensive to repurpose so that they meet changing sport and recreation preferences and the needs of an ageing population. For example, the Mercury Bay Multi-Sports Park, Mercury Bay’s main sport facility, does not have

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.sportwaikato.org.nz/getmedia/f65dedd9-c39c-4f02-9760-279f00ffadcb/District-Thames\\_2018-Participation-Profile-ADULTS\\_nobleed.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://www.sportwaikato.org.nz/getmedia/f65dedd9-c39c-4f02-9760-279f00ffadcb/District-Thames_2018-Participation-Profile-ADULTS_nobleed.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

clubrooms or shelter for winter sports, and at present cannot accommodate a number of codes. Plans are currently in preparation for its redesign as a more flexible, multi-use sports hub.

Due to their location, the effects of climate change and other natural hazards pose another challenge for some of our sport and recreation open spaces, and the facilities located on them. Rhodes Park in Thames is an important sport and recreation reserve where these issues are evident. Investigation is currently underway to assist with decision-making about the suitability of that site for sport and recreation activities into the future, and the appropriateness of new investment to replace the obsolete buildings and equipment in that location.

The financial affordability of repurposing or replacing its sporting and recreation open spaces and facilities is a major challenge for Council and our communities across the district. It also offers new opportunities for repurposing, rationalisation and co-use of existing facilities, and for a collaborative approach to sharing costs and management.

### 3.4. Community facilities – what Council provides now

The distribution, condition, use, management and operation of Council-owned community facilities is variable and reflects differing historic and local approaches. Council has begun the task of establishing district-wide levels of service and identified programmes of work to promote more consistent, efficient management of these assets. The Strategy adopts the levels of service set out in the Asset Management Plans for each group of community facilities.

This section contains an overview and analysis of the current provision of community facilities by community facility type, and evaluates whether current provision is sufficient, given current and anticipated future demand.

#### 3.4.1. Airfields

Council owns two grass strip airfields, located at Thames and Pauanui. The two facilities are intended for recreational use primarily, although a small amount of commercial activity occurs presently. The airfields are home to local aero clubs and are also used in emergency situations.

Two other airfields, at Coromandel Town and Whitianga, are privately run and assist with meeting the District's demand for airfields. They are not funded by Council and are not covered by this Strategy.

Council has incomplete asset information about its airfields, and is yet to establish efficient, effective demand management systems for them. It is anticipated that demand for airfield services at Thames will increase, as provision for small airfields like this one declines and Civil Aviation Authority rules relating to air displays change. There is some current demand for this airfield to accommodate additional commercial and other activities, but this is undergoing detailed investigation. There are also opportunities for the airfield to leverage off development on adjoining properties, including any future swimming pool development, or the re-development of Rhodes Park.

The demand at the Pauanui airfield aligns with the summer peak, when more holiday home residents are in the area. It is anticipated that demand will mirror other local growth trends, growing slowly and steadily, particularly if growth in holiday homes continues in the area.

#### 3.4.2. Cemeteries

Council is currently responsible for managing 13 cemeteries within the District. Seven of these are open for burials with the remaining six no longer operational. Both the operational and closed cemeteries play an important role as sources of historical and genealogical information, and some of them are at risk from natural hazards such as unstable land.

Each ward has at least one operational cemetery. There are about 120 interments a year across the District, with approximately 80% of these occurring at the Totara Memorial Park Cemetery in Thames.

In addition to the Council's cemeteries, there are several owned by church organisations, and a number of urupā (Maori burial grounds) managed by local iwi.

Most of Council's cemeteries cater for lawn plot burials, and in response to growing demand, a natural burial garden has been developed at Omahu Cemetery near Thames. Natural burial services are being explored in cemeteries in the Coromandel-Colville and Mercury Bay wards.

Council's cemeteries have capacity for likely future demand. Although the current Mercury Bay Cemetery at Ferry Landing has limited plot space available, the new 5.08-hectare Kaimarama Cemetery on State Highway 25 near Whitianga is under development and will be able to cater for future community need.

### 3.4.3. Halls, Community centres and community buildings

The civic centres in Thames, Whitianga, and Whangamata, along with the ten other community centres and halls located across the district are part of a portfolio of over 100 Council-owned and managed buildings. Our halls and community centres are highly valued by our residents; many were built with funding and labour provided by local people as war memorial halls. These buildings and places have cultural and heritage significance for their communities, and are important landmarks in our District.

We know that many of our halls and community buildings are in average condition and are getting to the end of their economic life. It will be difficult to adapt some of these buildings for new uses. The location and age of some of these buildings make them difficult to access, particularly by disabled or older people. We are also aware that there are non-Council-owned venues in our communities which have better facilities, are more accessible, and are more popular community gathering places.

Many of our community centres are available for hire, but Council does not have a consistent, reliable system for knowing how often they are used, or by whom. Without fully understanding current and future demand trends, it is difficult to identify whether these facilities, although valued, are effectively meeting current (and future) community needs and what changes may be needed to cater for changing demand. It is also difficult to assess whether facilities represent good economic value for our ratepayers and if the allocation of costs between users, in the form of user charges, and Council's ratepayers in general, is fair.

Current management arrangements of our halls and community centres are varied and reflect historic circumstances and decision-making. Some, like the Whitianga Hall and Thames Civic Centre are solely managed by Council, while others, like the Puriri and Kuaotunu Halls, are run by hall committees who represent the organisation(s) leasing the building, or by community representatives. Some halls, (e.g. the Thames Band Hall Building), are leased exclusively to one group and are not available for public hire, while others are available for hire most of the time.

Similarly, leasing agreements for these buildings are complex and varied. Lease charges for leasing Council-owned buildings are set out in its Leases and Licences to Occupy Policy, which is reviewed every three years as part of the Long-Term Plan process.

In recognition of their public good purposes, community groups and emergency services organisations pay reduced rents for our buildings, including our halls and community centres. Many community groups and charitable organisations renting our buildings also receive additional financial support from Council, for example through a Community Board grant or payment of rates and other building-related expenses.

Most leases require Council to maintain the exterior of the building, while lessees are in the main responsible for interior maintenance and refurbishments, upkeep and replacement of interior chattels such as electrical appliances, furniture and crockery. Lessees are also generally responsible for insurance, a portion of rates and building compliance (building warrant of fitness) costs, although, as discussed, Council often assists community groups with paying these.

Council is legally required to collect rates to fund the long-term replacement (renewal) of its halls and community buildings, and when this is factored in, the total cost of our halls and community buildings to our ratepayers is substantial.

Council has a responsibility to ensure that it makes good decisions for its communities. In the case of its halls, community centres and other buildings used for community purposes, it needs to establish the right balance between the maintenance and renewal costs of these facilities, their current and likely future use and what the community can afford to pay.

Council will also need to consider whether and how costs could be shared more equitably between building users and ratepayers; if co-location of activities in new fit for purpose ‘community hubs’ would be more cost-efficient and promote greater community accessibility; and if it can co-operate with other agencies to share spaces. All this will require developing better information systems and more consistent management practices within Council.

It is very likely that the ongoing maintenance and cost of refurbishing some of our halls and community buildings will become too expensive for Council to continue to bear. Where this is the case it will need to engage with communities about the future for these buildings. Options could include community groups or other parties assuming the costs for a building, or even buying the building, and Council will need to develop policy to guide its decision-making in respect of these issues.

#### 3.4.4. Harbour facilities

Council’s Marine and Harbour Facilities Strategy 2018 establishes a framework for Council to manage and enhance new and existing marine and harbour facilities around the peninsula. This Strategy recognises, aligns with, but does not repeat the Marine and Harbours Facility Strategy’s direction and action plan.

Council owns and controls 12 wharves and jetties and 21 boat ramps around the District. The larger wharves are located at Tairua, Te Kouma (Sugarloaf and Hannaford’s Jetty), Whitianga, Port Charles, Coromandel Wharf and Whangamata. Most boat ramps do not have all tide access.

There are another 15 community or privately managed boat ramps, some of which are on Council land. In addition to these, ramps and other marine facilities are provided by community groups and trusts such as the Waikawau Bay Boat Ramp Society, the Whitianga Marina Society and the Whangamata Marina Society.

The location of wharves, jetties and ramps adjacent to water means that tangata whenua have an interest in the ongoing maintenance and development of harbour facilities. Some, like Thames’ Shortland Wharf, are subject of Treaty settlement negotiations.

Table 2 below provides a breakdown of harbour facilities by Community Board ward.

**Table 2: Harbour Facilities Provision by Ward**

| Ward                                | Wharves / jetty facilities | Boat ramps                             |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Coromandel-Colville                 | 4                          | 9. 5 are community or privately run.   |
| Mercury Bay                         | 4                          | 9. All are managed by Council.         |
| South-Eastern Ward-Tairua / Pauanui | 4                          | 5. All are managed by Council          |
| South-Eastern Ward-                 | 1.                         | 2 (3?). One is managed by Council, the |

| Ward       | Wharves / jetty facilities | Boat ramps   |
|------------|----------------------------|--|
| Whangamata |                            | other is community run.                            |
| Thames     | 1 (Shortland Wharf)        | 11. 9 are community or privately run. <sup>9</sup> |

Our ramps, wharves and jetties are important and well-used by our residents, about forty-four percent of whom recreate on, in or beside the coast. In addition to their recreational value, these facilities are important for the District's economy, as they are critical infrastructure for our commercial fishing and aquaculture industries, our tourist charter and commercial ferry service operators.

Some wharves are also used by people for fishing and diving, jumping and swimming from. The growing use for recreational activities, as well as expanding commercial uses puts pressure on our harbour facilities. This is further exacerbated during the summer peak period, when many locations become congested.

There is also growing tension between recreational and commercial users, and at the land interface, between land use and marine activities. New Council initiatives, such as the redevelopment of the Whitianga esplanade and proposals for improved wharfing and boat ramp facilities at Kopū are targeted at resolving some of these issues.

The history of under-investment in maintenance and renewal of these assets has resulted in some of our wharves, jetties and ramps requiring considerable remedial works. This, and the risk from the effects of climate change requires Council to develop a better understanding of the current state of its harbour facilities, current and likely future demand for them, and how necessary upgrades will be funded.

### 3.4.5. Libraries

The three Council owned and run libraries are located in Thames, Tairua and Whitianga. There are an additional six community run libraries located at Ferry Landing, Hahei, Kuaotunu, Pauanui, Whangamata and Coromandel Town that do not form part of the Council's core network. The community libraries receive financial support from Council, and some are located in Council-owned buildings.

Council stated in its 2018 Infrastructure Strategy that it will only fund major new infrastructure like an additional, new library if justified by new growth. The current and projected growth rates are not high enough to indicate an additional library facility is required in any of the District's main settlements.

The current challenge for our library services lies with ensuring that our existing services, and the buildings in which they are located, remain relevant, are used by our communities, are fit for purpose and affordable. These issues are likely to drive consideration of renewal of current library facilities.

Our existing libraries are responding to changing community demands to become flexible, multi-functional facilities, as well as continue to serve their traditional role as sources for books and information, safe and quiet places to study, or where children can participate in story time sessions.

Recent initiatives, such as at Pauanui, where the library is co-located within an accessible 'hub' of other community services, demonstrate the changing function of these facilities. Libraries are places where people can meet, share information, study together and hold meetings, but now also access Wi-Fi, computer and printing facilities, and community services such as a justice of the peace. In Tairua, they can also access a visitor information centre on-site. On-line services such as e-books are helping to keep libraries accessible and relevant for our more isolated communities.

<sup>9</sup> 2015 list of Wharves and Coastal Structure by Community Board (See attachment to ECM Docset #4005099).

There are still gaps in Council’s management of its library facilities. A better demand management system is needed to understand changing needs for library spaces and new services, and whether the current spaces can be adapted to meet these needs. There is also no formal renewal strategy for books, fittings and furniture.

### 3.4.6. Public conveniences

Council owns and maintains 95 public toilets throughout the District, as well as several dump stations for mobile home effluent disposal. We recognise that our public conveniences are an important basic health and sanitation service for all our residents. We also know that clean and attractive facilities enhance the visitor experience to the Coromandel, support and contribute to recreational activities, tourism, the local economy and overall economic growth.

Council provides a good level of service in relation to the number and amenity of our public conveniences, and our customer satisfaction surveys indicate that people are very satisfied with the current provision of public toilets. As shown in the table below, this is greatly influenced by the summer seasonal peak of visitors and holiday homeowners, particularly in the Eastern wards. The highest usage areas for these facilities are Hot Water Beach (Mercury Bay), Thames Civic Centre, Porritt Park (Thames), Pepe Park (Tairua), Hunt Road (Whangamata) and Williamson Park (Whangamata).

**Table 3: Total Public Toilet Provision by Ward**

| Ward                              | Public toilets |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Coromandel-Colville               | 14             |
| Mercury Bay                       | 41             |
| South-Eastern Ward-Tairua/Pauanui | 14             |
| South-Eastern Ward-Whangamata     | 11             |
| Thames                            | 15             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                      | <b>95</b>      |

Given growing visitor numbers to the peninsula, demand for public conveniences is likely to increase, especially at high use locations during the seasonal peak. However, there is a lack of consistent information about daily, weekly or seasonal usage at all the sites that would enable Council to plan effectively across the network.

Public conveniences are expensive to provide, service, replace and build new. While we have obtained central government funding for some new toilets at tourist destinations, it is our rate payers who fund most of the ongoing maintenance and renewal of facilities used and enjoyed by many people who do not live in the District. The challenge for Council is to manage the growing visitor demand for public conveniences with Council’s and the community’s ability to afford increasing costs.

### 3.4.7. Swimming pools

The main swimming pool facility in the district is the Council-owned and managed Thames Centennial Swimming Pool. It consists of one main covered pool and one toddler pool. It is accessible all year and offers a range of ‘learn to swim’ and swimming fitness programmes. The Thames pool’s programmes, regulatory and safety standards are recognised nationally for delivering high standards. In February 2019, Swimming New Zealand accredited the pool with Gold status, their highest certification.

Council provides community board grants to support community pools at Coromandel Town, Whitianga and Whangamata. These operate on a seasonal basis and are located on land owned by the Ministry of Education.

Swimming is one of the five most popular recreational and sport activities in the District for adults<sup>10</sup> and children. Feedback to the 2018-2028 Long-Term Plan showed that people in parts of the district outside the Thames ward would like improved swimming facilities. There is also demand for these facilities from neighbouring communities in Hauraki District. However, the pool is reaching the end of its usable life and is due for replacement by 2027. Options for replacement are being explored.

Council has purchased a parcel of land south of the Thames Airfield that is a potential new location for a swimming pool. It has begun to investigate the needs of its own and neighbouring Hauraki District's communities for pool facilities. Options for the replacement facility include one that is like the existing, but in a permanent building, or one that is larger and could serve as a sub-regional facility. Options for funding are also being explored. The issue of balancing demand for pool facilities with our ability to fund them will be a major consultation as part of the 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan (LTP).

### 3.5. How Council currently funds open spaces and community facilities

Ongoing maintenance and renewal/replacement of Council's open space and community facilities assets are largely funded through a combination of the Uniform Annual General Charge (UAGC), targeted rates as part of property rates, and in the case of some community facilities, through user fees and charges. The Council's Revenue and Financing Policy sets out how revenue required for operating and capital expenditure is allocated across each funding source.

New open spaces and community facilities or major upgrades to these are generally funded by Council through a combination of rates, loans, and for some facilities, user fees and charges. Funding may also be obtained through partnerships with other agencies such as the Ministry of Education, local businesses and community groups. Proposals for funding of these projects are generally identified through consultation processes associated with reserve management plans, Annual and Long-Term Plans.

Council usually acquires or significantly upgrades assets such as new sports fields or public toilets to satisfy or improve levels of service, or to provide for new demands, including those that are a result of growth. Funding for the creation of new open space or community facilities, or upgrades to existing networks required to provide for additional demand from growth in specific locations may be provided by development contributions from the developer. These contributions are collected under the provisions of the LGA at the time new developments occur, and the amount Council may take is set out in Council's Development Contributions Policy.

Understanding our provision of and demand for Council's open space and community facilities networks now and into the future assists with our decision-making about allocating budget in our Annual and Long-Term Plans for new open spaces and community facilities and upgrades to existing assets. It also has implications for the allocation of costs between ratepayers and users, and the contributions that Council takes from new developments.

## 4. OPEN SPACE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES TOMORROW – ACHIEVING THE VISION

The vision and goals in Section 2.2 set out where Council wants to be regarding the provision, management and use of our open spaces and community facilities. Achieving these requires Council to set out a clear strategic direction and associated action plan which addresses the identified issues, opportunities and trends for its open spaces and the variety of community facilities it owns and

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.sportwaikato.org.nz/getmedia/f65dedd9-c39c-4f02-9760-279f00ffadcb/District-Thames\\_2018-Participation-Profile-ADULTS\\_nobleed.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://www.sportwaikato.org.nz/getmedia/f65dedd9-c39c-4f02-9760-279f00ffadcb/District-Thames_2018-Participation-Profile-ADULTS_nobleed.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

manages. The table below sets out Council's strategic policy direction and associated actions that will be taken over the next ten years.

**Table 4: Strategic Policies and Actions**

| Policy No. | Policies   | Actions   | Timeframe  |
|------------|--|---|--|
| 1.         | <p><b>Open Space Provision</b></p> <p>Current provision of open space across the District is diverse and generally consistent with national industry guidelines. Given this, the projected slow, steady population growth projection and changing recreational trends, there is no current driver to acquire additional open space to meet future demand.</p> <p>Council will maintain its current policy direction of only acquiring or investing in new open space where there is robust evidence that demand is certain and long-term.</p>  | <p>Align Council’s financial policy and planning documents, including Annual and Long-Term Plans, and Development Contributions Policy with this policy direction.</p>  | Ongoing  |
| 2.         | <p><b>Open Space Provision and Development Standards</b></p> <p>Provision, classification, maintenance, renewal and development of open spaces owned and managed by Council will be consistent throughout the District, and as far as possible be consistent with current national industry guidelines.</p>  | <p>Develop best practice Open Space Development and Service Delivery Standards to guide open space acquisition, disposal, maintenance and renewal practices. Where possible, these will be consistent with current national industry guidelines.</p> <p>Ensure that all open space maintenance and renewal contracts are consistent with Council’s Open Space Development and Service Delivery Standards.</p> <p>Review Development and Service Delivery Standards every three years to ensure continuing alignment.</p>                        | 1-3 years  |
| 3.         | <p><b>Open Space Management</b></p> <p>The strategic direction for management of Council’s open space network will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuing to develop robust asset management data and practices which enable Council and communities to make informed choices about the quantity and quality of their public open spaces.</li> <li>• maintaining existing services and renewal of assets to meet changing community preferences and needs and address seasonal peak demand</li> <li>• rationalising open space where over-supply or redundancy is identified</li> </ul> | <p>Further develop and maintain accurate asset databases and spatial information systems for Council’s reserves and other open spaces used for recreation, sporting and community activities.</p> <p>Develop robust District-wide demand management systems for Council’s open space network, including land not reserved under the Reserves Act.</p> <p>Provide funding in the 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan for development and maintenance of spatial information and demand management systems for Council’s reserves and other open spaces.</p> | <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-5 years</p> <p>1-3 years</p> |

| Policy No. | Policies  | Actions   | Timeframe                     |
|------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working collaboratively with other open space providers, including the private sector, Department of Conservation, Ministry of Education and private entities to promote connections between open spaces, enhance their environmental values and ensure our communities' continued access to a variety of open space experiences</li> </ul> <p>building and maintaining partnership relationships with community groups in planning, designing, developing, planting and maintaining our open spaces</p>   | <p>Follow criteria in Policies 8 and 9 when considering proposals to dispose of open space currently used for recreation, sporting and community activities.</p> <p>Investigate partnership opportunities with the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Education and private entities to ensure continued community access to open space beyond the Council's network, and to promote potential synergies between Council and other providers' planning for open space across the District.</p> <p>Promote opportunities for community groups to partner and participate in managing and maintaining our open spaces.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |
| 4.         | <p><b>Design and function of reserves and open spaces</b></p> <p>Council's reserves and open spaces will meet the changing needs of our communities by being designed as welcoming, inclusive spaces that are safe for users of all ages and abilities. When considering upgrades and redevelopment of existing parks and open spaces or development of new spaces, key design considerations will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the flexibility of the space for multiple uses and ability to be inclusive</li> <li>the useability, comfort, safety and accessibility of spaces for all ages, stages and abilities</li> <li>the health and safety for users and operators (including shade)</li> <li>how design can improve use of parks for the physically and intellectually disabled in a way that does not make them feel different and encourages positive interactions between all users.</li> <li>the enhancement of biodiversity values and opportunities for community interaction with the natural environment</li> <li>the whole of life costs of operating and maintaining the space</li> <li>the consistency with best practice urban design particularly around accessibility</li> <li>the fit with the surrounding environment and reflection of local character and identity; and</li> <li>the application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental</li> </ul> |   |                               |

| Policy No. | Policies  | Actions  | Timeframe                        |
|------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
|            | <p>Design (CPTED) principles to promote health and safety and personal security.</p> <p>Ensure that the key design considerations contained in Policy 7 are incorporated into Council's asset management and reserve management plans, planning for upgrade and refurbishment of individual reserves and open spaces, and in Council's open space maintenance contracts.</p>  |  |                                  |
| 5.         | <p><b>Civic open spaces</b></p> <p>When upgrade and redevelopment of the District's town centres is planned, consideration will be given to opportunities, including partnering with the private sector, to create and upgrade civic open spaces, including roads, footpaths and streetscapes.</p>  | <p>Investigate opportunities to partner with the private sector, other agencies and community groups to revitalise civic open spaces across the District.</p> <p>Use criteria in Policy 4 to guide all reserves and open spaces upgrade and redevelopment projects.</p> <p>Include development of civic open spaces as a priority outcome for upgrade of the Thames town centre and other town centres in the District.</p>  | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>1-10 years</p> |
| 6.         | <p><b>Open Space and Iwi</b></p> <p>Recognising their partnership relationship under the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/te Tiriti o Waitangi, Council will actively engage with tangata whenua to agree a framework for iwi participation in managing our open space network.</p> <p>With respect to open spaces identified through the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process, co-governance frameworks will be developed with tangata whenua, including preparing development and management plans for co-governed parks and open spaces</p> | <p>Initiate discussions with tangata whenua groups about developing a framework for co-governance of open spaces included in Treaty settlement processes, including the preparation of development and management plans.</p> <p>Work together with tangata whenua to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify, protect, and manage waahi tapu and other places of cultural and spiritual value within the Council's open space network</li> <li>• tell stories of cultural heritage throughout our open space network, including through place names, interpretation, artwork and memorials; and</li> <li>• develop planting and maintenance plans for our parks and open spaces that enhances their biodiversity and/or cultural values.</li> </ul> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>    |

| Policy No. | Policies  | Actions   | Timeframe      |
|------------|---|---|----------------|
| 7.         | <p><b>Acquisition of New Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities and other Community Facilities</b></p> <p>When considering acquisition of new open space (including land acquired as a development contribution or as a gift) and community facilities Council will take into account the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alignment with relevant Thames-Coromandel District Council strategies and plans</li> <li>• alignment with Thames-Coromandel District Council existing and proposed urban planning, infrastructure development, tourism/economic development, and transport networks</li> <li>• alignment with national, regional, district and local strategies and plans, including code-specific national facility plans and those relating to upgrading facility networks sub-regionally, regionally and nationally</li> <li>• whether current and demonstrable future needs of the community within the district or ward cannot be met by other existing open spaces or community facilities</li> <li>• whether the proposed acquisition complements the existing open space or community facility network, and avoids duplication of functions</li> <li>• if the proposed acquisition is to be a Recreation and Linkage reserve, the degree to which it provides for linkages between other reserves, or for access along streams, rivers or coastline margins</li> <li>• affordability for Council and ratepayers, taking into account full life cycle costs, including maintenance, operation and replacement/renewal costs</li> <li>• having regard to whether the proposed acquisition is of local, regional or sub-regional significance</li> <li>• whether the proposed acquisition's promotes location promotes maximum levels of accessibility for residents</li> <li>• the degree to which the proposed investment can promote broader socio-economic and cultural benefits</li> <li>• the extent to which Council can work together with others to fund,</li> </ul> | <p>Incorporate the criteria in Policy 7 into analysis and decision-making relating to acquisition of new open spaces and community facilities</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |

| Policy No. | Policies   | Actions  | Timeframe |
|------------|--|--|-----------|
|            | <p>develop and operate the proposed open space or community facility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in cases where a partnership or grant is part of the proposal, the track record and capability of the proponent organisation.</li> </ul>   |  |           |
| 8.         | <p><b>Revocation of Reserve Status of land and Disposal of Open Space classified as a Reserve under the Reserves Act</b></p> <p>The following criteria will be taken into account when considering a resolution to request that the Minister of Conservation revoke the reserve status of land and/or the consequent sale of that land:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. that the purpose for which the land was originally obtained and classified under the Reserves Act 1977 is no longer relevant either currently, or in the foreseeable future</li> <li>b. that current or foreseeable future use of the land for reserve purposes is unlikely, or that greater benefit could be obtained by disposing of the land so that other land can be purchased elsewhere</li> <li>c. that the revocation and disposal will be advantageous to Thames-Coromandel District Council</li> <li>d. that funds obtained through selling such land will be used for open space development purposes within the District</li> <li>e. that due consideration is given to relevant community opinion concerning land and its disposal</li> <li>f. that consideration is given to disposing of smaller parcels of land where the proceeds can be used to rationalise reserve distribution.</li> </ol> | <p>Incorporate the criteria in Policy 6 into analysis and decision-making relating to the revocation of the reserve status of land and disposal of open space classified as a reserve under the Reserves Act</p> | Ongoing   |
| 9.         | <p><b>Disposal of Open Space not classified as Reserve under the Reserves Act, but used for Recreational, Community Use or Sporting Activities</b></p> <p>Council will consider criteria b), c) d) and e) in Policy 8 when determining the sale of any land not reserved under the Reserves Act, but owned by Council and used for recreational, community use or sporting activities.</p>   |  | Ongoing   |

| Policy No. | Policies   | Actions   | Timeframe  |
|------------|--|---|--|
| 10.        | <p><b>Community Facilities</b></p> <p>To assist with achieving its vision and strategic goals for community facilities, Council will establish a District-wide approach to their management which enables the provision of affordable, flexible and fit for purpose facilities to meet changing community needs and expectations as well as accommodate seasonal peak demand in popular locations around the District.</p> <p>Priority will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continuing to develop robust asset management data and practices which can identify and address issues relating to the age of our community facilities, their condition, current and likely future supply and demand and any gaps between these, and the ability of existing facilities to be refurbished and adapted</li> <li>addressing inconsistencies and inequalities in current leasing arrangements to promote the equitable distribution of maintenance and renewal costs between users and ratepayers</li> <li>maintaining existing services and renewal of assets to meet changing community preferences and needs and address seasonal peak demand</li> <li>rationalisation of community facilities where over-supply or inability for affordable refurbishment or adaptation is identified</li> <li>working collaboratively with other community service providers, community groups, key stakeholders and the wider community to promote co-location of services and shared facilities so that they are affordable for our ratepayers and easier for people to access.</li> </ul> | <p>Develop and maintain consistent, reliable demand management systems for all types of community facilities, including halls, community centres, libraries, public conveniences, sport fields, wharves, boat ramps and swimming pools.</p> <p>Develop and maintain robust data sets for all community facilities across the District relating to current condition, use, maintenance and renewal costs, and utilise in asset management planning.</p> <p>Provide funding in the 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan for development and maintenance of spatial information and demand management systems Council's reserves and other open spaces.</p> <p>Consult with the community on options for more equitable cost-sharing arrangements as part of the Long-Term Plan process and review of Council's Leases and Licences to Occupy Policy.</p> <p>Initiate discussions with lessees, community groups, and other key stakeholders about their future needs and the ability to renew or adapt existing facilities to accommodate these efficiently and affordably.</p> <p>Review current leasing and licensing arrangements and management structures, and engage with leaseholders, community groups and key stakeholders to develop a framework for more consistent, equitable, transparent distribution of maintenance and renewal costs of community facilities between ratepayers and users.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to partner with other agencies and community groups to provide more accessible, affordable, fit for purpose community facilities across the District.</p> | <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-5 years</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>3-5 years</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |

| Policy No. | Policies   | Actions  | Timeframe   |
|------------|--|--|---|
| 11.        | Council will promote opportunities for lessees, hall committees or main users of its community centres and halls to take a greater management role for the buildings they use. This may include undertaking repairs and maintenance, renewal and re-development work. Any arrangement with a community group or lessee will take the form of a formal agreement between Council and the group assuming greater control, will become part of a lease or licence to occupy agreement, and will require the establishment of a not-for-profit entity. | Develop guidance to assist with consideration of proposals for lessees of Council-owned buildings to assume greater management of buildings they use, including asset ownership.   | 1-5 years   |
| 12.        | <p><b>Airfields</b></p> <p>Robust asset management systems are required for the Pauanui and Thames airfields to ensure they are more effectively and efficiently managed, are fit for purpose and compliant with national standards, and able to meet current and future demand for this activity.</p> <p>Council will support opportunities for integrating and leveraging activities at Thames Airfield with any redevelopment of Rhodes Park and the proposed Thames Centennial Swimming Pool replacement</p>                                   | <p>Collect and maintain accurate asset data for the Thames and Pauanui Airfields.</p> <p>Establish effective, efficient demand management systems for the Thames and Pauanui Airfields.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to enable appropriate additional airfield and ancillary activities at Thames airfield.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to partner with community and business groups to appropriately develop and maintain the Thames and Pauanui Airfields.</p>   | <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |
| 13.        | <p><b>Cemeteries</b></p> <p>Council's cemetery services will be responsive to changing customer needs, including providing for traditional burial practices of tangata whenua and other cultures and new alternatives to traditional burial practices which may be sought by our increasingly diverse population.</p>  | <p>Work with communities and iwi to meet their needs with respect to accommodating alternative burial practices and providing for the traditional burial practices of tangata whenua and other cultural groups within Council-owned open cemeteries.</p> <p>Develop and agree levels of service for maintenance of Council-owned closed cemeteries</p> <p>Encourage and support community involvement in the ongoing maintenance of our cemeteries, including those that are closed.</p> <p>Investigate ways in which our cemeteries can be better valued for their cultural heritage values, respected as places of remembrance and appropriately used as open spaces for our</p> | <p>1-3 years</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>                    |

| Policy No. | Policies  | Actions  | Timeframe  |
|------------|---|--|--|
|            |   | communities' benefit.  |  |
| 14.        | In co-operation with community groups, Council will maintain historic cemeteries in a way that maintains and protects their heritage character, recognising that the heritage and recreational value of these facilities will require different maintenance approaches.   |  |  |
| 15.        | <p><b>Harbour Facilities</b></p> <p>Council will maintain and implement the strategic approach to managing its harbour facilities set out in the goals of the Thames-Coromandel District Council Marine and Harbour Facilities Strategy 2017. These goals are focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>managing growth and demand</li> <li>safety and access</li> <li>funding and Partnerships</li> <li>realising economic benefit.</li> </ul> | <p>Continue to implement the Marine and Harbour Facilities Strategy's actions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritising upgrades of facilities from a district-wide perspective</li> <li>Identifying the most appropriate initial and on-going funding mechanism for each facility (user-pays, partnership models)</li> <li>Developing a funding strategy, which creates opportunities for specific investment and joint ventures</li> <li>Working with private owners, government organisations, iwi to resolve and clarify ownership and consenting anomalies in relation to existing facilities.</li> </ul> |  |
| 16.        | <p><b>Libraries</b></p> <p>Council will continue to provide library services in our main settlements, and work in partnership with others in the community to support community-run libraries in smaller settlements.</p>   | <p>Work with communities to ensure that current and future library services are flexible and fit for purpose to meet current and future demand.</p> <p>Where current library facilities are no longer fit for purpose, work with communities and other funding partners to investigate options for developing new facilities, including community hubs, that can facilitate the efficient, accessible delivery of library services meet changing community needs.</p>  | Ongoing  |
| 17.        | Consistent with the direction in Policy 10, Council will establish a District-wide approach to library management which enables robust planning and timely provision of affordable, flexible and fit for purpose facilities to meet changing community needs. This will include development of a robust demand management system that provides information about changing needs for library spaces and new services.  | <p>Continue to develop and maintain robust asset management practices for Council-owned library buildings.</p> <p>Develop a robust demand management system for Council libraries.</p> <p>Provide funding in the 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan for</p>  | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>1-5 years</p> |

| Policy No. | Policies   | Actions   | Timeframe |
|------------|--|---|-----------|
|            |  | <p>development and maintenance of spatial information and demand management systems for Council's libraries.</p> <p>Establish a renewal strategy for library books, fittings and furniture.</p>   | 3-5 years |
| 18.        | <p><b>Public conveniences</b></p> <p>As set out in Policy 10 of this Strategy, Council will take a District-wide approach to managing its network of public conveniences.</p>  | <p>Provide funding for and initiate development of a Public Conveniences Plan. The Plan will identify demand in settlements across the District and establish levels of service for the provision, development/design and operations of public conveniences. It will take into account growth and demand factors and include customer/user research and produce a long term capital renewal plan using age, condition and performance assessment information. It will also investigate alternative options for meeting peak demand in high use locations, for example, portable toilets.</p>                              |           |
| 19.        | <p><b>Swimming pools</b></p> <p>Council will continue to provide a pool facility in Thames and will continue to investigate the options for replacement of the Thames Centennial pool, including its location, scale and funding.</p>  | <p>Confirm the location for the facility to replace the Thames Centennial Pool, and timing for its development.</p> <p>Finalise a needs assessment for the District's and neighbouring Hauraki District's communities for pool facilities.</p> <p>Continue to consult with Hauraki District Council, Waikato Regional Council, Sport Waikato and other agencies about the proposal to replace the Thames pool with a sub-regional pool facility.</p> <p>Consult through the 2021—2031 Long-Term Plan on options for the scale and range of activities that could be provided in the Thames pool replacement facility.</p> | 2020-2031 |
| 20.        | <p>Council will continue to support and partner with other agencies, including the Ministry of Education, to ensure that swimming pool facilities are available for public enjoyment in the District's smaller settlements, and levels of service meet community expectations.</p> |   |           |

## Appendix 1: Statutory Framework and Linkages to Other Council Policies and Plans

There is no legislative requirement to develop an Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy. However, the decision to produce a strategy is strongly influenced by national and regional statements, policies, plans and legislation. There are three key statutes relating to the management and provision of parks:

### Local Government Act 2002 (LGA)

Several of the LGA's provisions relate to the operation of local government and affect the operation and management of the District's open spaces and community facilities. The relevant sections of the LGA's general purpose for the purposes of this Strategy are:

*'to provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities; and, to that end, this Act—*

...

b) provides a framework and powers for local authorities to decide which activities they undertake and the manner in which they will undertake them; and

...

*(d) provides for local authorities to play a broad role in meeting the current and future needs of their communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions.*

In performing its role, Council must have particular regard to the contribution that core services make to its communities, including libraries, museums, parks and reserves, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure (Local Government Act 2002, Section 11A (e)).

The LGA allows local authorities to require contributions of money, land or a combination of both, when new development is proposed. It also requires Council to prepare a Long Term Plan (LTP) that sets out the community's aspirations for the projects and services Council provides and the financial plan to ensure their delivery over a ten year timeframe. The LTP is reviewed every three years.

### Reserves Act 1977 (RA)

The RA is administered by the Department of Conservation. It applies to all land that is vested or gazetted under the provisions of this statute. The RA identifies classes of reserve, stipulates the general purpose of each class, and requires the preparation of Reserve Management Plans (RMPs) to guide their management, maintenance, use and development. These are further discussed below.

### Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

The RMA requires all councils to prepare district plans that will assist them with carrying out its purpose, which is the promotion of the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Under the RMA, sustainable management means

*"managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—*

*(a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*

*(b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and*

*(c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment."*

The RMA includes specific provisions relating to the coastal marine area and esplanade reserves. It also provides for Council to be able to require a financial contribution of land, including esplanade reserve or strip, or money, or a combination of both, as a condition of resource consent.

The RMA requires Council to prepare a District Plan to manage all land use in the District over a ten year period. The direction provided by the Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy will support the District Plan by confirming the current and future use of land owned and managed by Council for these purposes. It will also assist with identifying appropriate amounts and types of open spaces and/or community facilities will be required in growing areas.

### **Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011**

The Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 acknowledges the importance of the marine and coastal area (the area between the mean high water springs and the outer limits of the territorial sea - 12 nautical miles from shore) to all New Zealanders and provides for the recognition of the customary rights of iwi, hapū and whānau in the common marine and coastal area. Public access to the common marine and coastal area is guaranteed by the Act.

### **Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 (HNZPT)**

The HNZPTA's purpose is to promote the identification, protection, preservation, and conservation of the historical and cultural heritage of New Zealand. Under this statute, an 'historic place' is any land (including an archaeological site), or thing fixed to the land, or building, structure or combination of these that is part of the historical and cultural heritage of New Zealand. Council needs to have particular regard to the recommendations made by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Pouhere Taonga) (NZHPT) about historic places that are registered with the NZHPT under the HA's provisions.

The HA also provides for the protection of archaeological sites, which are defined as any place in New Zealand that either was associated with human activity that occurred before 1900 or is the site of the wreck of any vessel where that wreck occurred before 1900; and may be able to provide evidence relating to the history of New Zealand. It is illegal to destroy, damage or modify any archaeological site without an authority from the NZHPT.

### **Long-Term Plan 2018-2028**

The Council's Long Term Plan (LTP) identifies the key projects and services the Council will provide in the District over a ten year period, and sets out the Council's financial and planning strategy for delivering these.

This Strategy is intended to contribute to the achievement of the Council's Vision, be driven by the Council's values and contribute to the achievement of all the Council's stated outcomes.

### **Asset Management Plans**

Council has prepared Asset Management Plans (AMPs) to guide the effective management of all its assets, including its parks and cemeteries, buildings, pools, public conveniences airfields and harbour facilities. The AMP for each asset group set out how it is to be managed to ensure that Council's goals, strategic targets, and required levels of service will be delivered. These plans give effect to the organisation's wider strategic direction, as set out in the LTP and other strategic and planning documents.

The Strategy will assist the AMPs by identifying current or future needs and appropriate levels of service for particular types of open space or community facility in the District.

## Reserve Management Plans

Council is required to prepare Reserve Management Plans (RMPs) for all land that is vested or gazetted under the Reserves Act. RMPs identify the current use and any important natural, historical or cultural features of each reserve, and categorise them according to the open space categories set out in this Strategy and recommended by the New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA).

RMPs establish clear directions for the future management and development of reserves. Along with Council's Asset Management Plans (AMPs), they provide a basis for prioritising work and budget for ongoing maintenance and any upgrades required to meet changing circumstances and achieve the Strategy's key objectives.

The Council has prepared a General Policies RMP, as well as more specific reserve management plans for the geographic areas of Coromandel-Colville, Thames and Thames Coast, Mercury Bay, Whangamata and Tairua-Pauanui. The plans are intended to align with this Strategy.

## District Plan

The District Plan controls the way land is used in the district. It identifies appropriate areas for residential, commercial, recreational and other activities, and protects the area's important natural and historic heritage features.

This Open Spaces and Community Facilities Strategy will help identify locations where additional land may be needed for parks and community facilities, guide decision-making about future use of land currently zoned for recreation or community use and inform urban design, town centre revitalisation and other urban design initiatives.

## Coastal Management Strategy 2018

The TCDC Coastal Management Strategy sets out a range of initiatives that Council will take to better manage our coastal assets and understand the risk of coastal inundation and coastal erosion. The 2018-2028 Long Term Plan includes \$2.6 million over three years to assist with implementation of this strategy, including the development of Coastal Management Plans for specific coastal areas.

The Open Spaces and Community Facilities Strategy recognises and takes into account the goals and desired outcomes of the Coastal Management Strategy.

## Marine and Harbour Facilities Strategy 2017

This strategy provides a decision-making framework for Council to manage and enhance existing and new marine and harbour facilities in the District.

The Open Space and Community Facilities Strategy's direction for Council's wharves, boat ramps, car parks, toilets and other community facilities associated with our marine and harbour environments aligns with the Marine and Harbour Facilities Strategy's goals and actions.

## Positive Ageing Strategy 2012

Thames-Coromandel District Council developed this Strategy to identify and address the opportunities and challenges with our ageing population and ensure we play our part in giving older residents a society that values their contribution and encourages their participation.

## Disability Strategy 2012

This strategy has been developed collaboratively with a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations in the local disability sector, including individuals whom have lived experience of disability. We value and consider this input essential to the development, implementation and monitoring of our Disability Strategy to ensure it is relevant and will make a meaningful difference for disabled people in the Thames-Coromandel District.

## Bylaws

Bylaws are rules made by Council under the LGA to manage community issues such as public nuisance, maintenance of public health and safety and cemetery operations. The principal bylaws that affect the management of Council's open spaces and community facilities are:

- Activities in Public Places Bylaw 2017 - Te Ture ā-Rōhe ki ngā Wāhi Marea
- Advertising and Signs Bylaw 2017
- Cemetery Bylaw 2015, the Alcohol Control Bylaw 2018 - Te Ture a Rohe Whakamarama Waipiro
- Dog Control Bylaw 2016
- Freedom Camping Bylaw 2014
- Maritime Facilities Bylaw 2015 Ngā ture mō ngā tauranga waka
- Parking Control Bylaw 2014.

<https://www.tcdc.govt.nz/Your-Council/Documents-incl-Bylaws-Policies-and-Strategies/Bylaws/>.

## Development Contributions Policy

The LGA allows local authorities to require contributions of money, land or a combination of both, when new development is proposed. The contributions are used to carry out capital work to provide public infrastructure for the new development, including community infrastructure, which may include libraries, swimming pools, public toilets, community centres and halls, playground equipment in parks and reserves.

The Council's June 2018 Development Contribution Development Policy enables the Council to collect contributions from developers to fund the cost of extending infrastructure services in anticipation of growth and to recoup the financial impact of new development on the District's existing network. It ensures that developers pay the cost of new development in a fair and equitable manner, and that the ratepayer is not unreasonably burdened by such costs.