

MAYORS AND CHAIRS GOVERNANCE GUIDE >

// He aratohu mō ngā koromatua
me ngā heamana

LGNZ // September 2025



Foreword

// He kupu whakataki >

Congratulations on being elected as leader of your local authority, whether as Mayor or Regional chair.

As Mayor or Chair, you lead a council team responsible for making decisions that shape your community today and into the future.

Through effective leadership, you can make a difference – including by growing the economy, making your place safer or more desirable, and making critical infrastructure investments. Your actions also influence how local government and local democracy are regarded, and the level of trust they inspire.

This guide is designed to support you as a leader, covering key concepts and practical insights, tips for managing your governing body, how to build a team, and working with your Chief Executive.

Being a Mayor or Chair is both highly rewarding and, at times, very demanding. These are significant roles. That's why LGNZ exists – to support local leaders, connect councils, strengthen leadership capability, and advocate for local government to central government.

LGNZ serves member councils through our purpose: to champion, connect and support local government.

// **Champion** – LGNZ advocates for local government on critical issues by building relationships with Ministers and officials, interpreting policy and making submissions, and generating media coverage.

// **Connect** – LGNZ brings members together through zones, sectors, our conference and networks, while ensuring strong feedback loops between members and our work.

// **Support** – LGNZ provides professional development tailored to local government, supports councils and elected members facing challenging situations, and helps members navigate pressure and harassment.

I look forward to working with you through this triennium.



Scott Necklen
Interim Chief Executive
LGNZ



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// Ngā ihirangi >

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Welcome to your new leadership role

// Nau mai ki tō tūranga hou hei
kaiārahi i tō hāpori >

The roles of Mayor and regional council Chair come with many responsibilities, not all of which are found in a job description. You now represent your community, lead your council, and act as the public face of local decision making.

You play a critical role in building a functional council team, facilitating effective decision making around the council table and working effectively with both the council chief executive and staff, as well as the community. The success of your tenure depends on your ability to manage relationships and catalyse your council's ability to work productively together.

To be successful, Mayors and Chairs must assist their councils to identify shared priorities, so that councillors can work together to address major issues facing a community. You will need to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of each councillors, and work to ensure everyone's skills are applied in the most effective way possible, to deliver on the purpose of local government.

As Mayor or Chair you have no 'executive' power. Making decisions depends upon gaining the support of a majority of your councillors. Being successful means facilitating effective decision-making. Being dictatorial, distant or divisive is unlikely to gain the support of a majority of your councillors.

While you are responsible for your own performance, you also have a significant influence on the performance of the governing body as a whole, including setting strategic direction, building a team, and championing professional development. As leader, you will also seek to facilitate the resolution of any disputes between elected members before they get to the point where a code of conduct complaint might be made.

Successful mayors and chairs are those that embrace and respect their role as a local leader, which does mean being available outside of usual 'office hours'. In times of calm, this means attending meetings, working through policy and planning documents, attending community events and meeting with constituents. You are the face of the council, and your community will expect a degree of access to you and your time. Your deputy can also help you carry out these duties.

When a crisis or an emergency hits, be it a significant weather event, natural disaster, social disruption or outbreak of illness, you will find yourself front and centre as the key person your community looks to for guidance, reassurance and information – a calm head in what can be chaotic times. These periods can be intense and involve long days, late nights and limited down time. They involve being in the media spotlight while having to make significant decisions that will lead the community back to 'normality'.

Despite the inevitable challenges, it is an honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to lead a community. You have been asked by your community to lead your council for the benefit of your communities. Expectations will be high.



After the election, sit down with your CE for a couple of hours and map the next few weeks. Make sure you are on the same page and ready to induct the new group.

The day after have individual (or in small groups) coffees with your new councillors (and the returning ones, but new ones first).

Ask them how you can support them and what they need - convey that to the CE to organise.

Run a thorough induction with your new team - this is where you set the tone and expectations for the next three years.

(Mayor Rehette Stoltz).

20 tips from successful mayors and chairs

// Ngā kōrero āwhina 20 mai i ngā koromatua me ngā heamana angitu

You need a strong relationship with your CE. The most important relationship in your council is between you and your CE. Neither of you can succeed without the other. Invest in that relationship. Protect and support your CE. Make sure you have a two way 'No Secrets' and 'No Surprises' relationship with your CE. Each of you must be able to trust and rely on the other.

Know the 'Rules'. Make sure you know standing orders, Code of Conduct; LG Act; Delegations/Committees of council and their functions and that you are an effective chair. Ask for feedback from your councillors on your chairing. It's not about dominating the meeting. A great chair can be low profile but shepherds the meeting effectively to a successful outcome.

Care for and grow your councillors. Spend time with and mentor your new or weaker councillors or ensure they get the mentoring and/or professional development support they need. Make sure their point of view gets heard. Frustrated or unsuccessful councillors will damage your council's performance and the community's trust. You need them to grow and contribute, not feel marginalised and become negative or disruptive.

Build and maintain a big network of key stakeholders. Develop a communications database and programme that maintains relationships with CE, councillors, community boards, Iwi, community (being everything from ratepayer groups to businesses etc. and external agencies), other TAs, LGNZ, government agencies, businesses, Ministers, and other groups that contribute to your district.)

Your brand is your council's brand. You are always being watched. So, your behaviour in every situation needs to enhance your council's brand. Tiredness or 'a few drinks' or feeling 'off duty' is never an excuse. Stay outwardly positive and optimistic. Also be humble – you are the leading servant of your district. Don't be a victim of your ego.

Keep an open mind – see all sides of an issue. Problem resolution is a big part of the job. This requires you to avoid jumping to conclusions or having a closed mind. Instead ensure you have all the information pertinent to an issue and understand other perspectives.

A good assistant is vital. Get yourself a highly capable PA or exec assistant to help you stay organised and put time where it is best used. You won't regret having a more senior person in this role than you might think you need.

Protect councillor/staff relations. Your councillors will inevitably want to interact with staff (and vice versa). This is generally an asset for all parties. Keep an eye on councillor behaviour towards staff. Staff don't work for councillors. Councillors don't set or change staff priorities. Councillors must not overuse or misuse their access to staff. If a councillor has complaints or concerns over staff behaviour, they should raise these with you or the CE – never with the staff member.

Be ready for an emergency. Have an understanding of your role in civil defence and emergency management, and other crises. Emergencies and crises will require significant engagement with media of all kinds, so it is important to ensure your media skills are up to scratch. When an emergency or crisis hits, it's too late to reach for the manual, so be prepared.

Maintain openness and transparency. Ensure council operates in an open and constructive way. Keep communication open and decision-making criteria clear and robust. Ensure decisions are well documented.

Build a small circle of trusted advisors. Develop a network of people and experts outside your council you can use for advice and as sounding boards. Make sure you constantly hear from people who have different views to your own. Stay open minded.

Praise in public – criticise in private. Never criticise your CE, staff, or councillors in public – or allow them to be criticised. Any performance issues should be dealt with in private.

Speak often and well. When you speak in public, know your subject, and put yourself in your audience's shoes as you prepare. It's essential to customise your message to your audience.

Use the “front page test”. Use the ‘How would my actions look to the media’ test to help you make choices. Be honest and show integrity. Don't rely on anything remaining unknown to your community.

Know your numbers and detail better than any other councillors. Know the current work programme and fiscal situation from the LTP and Annual Plan. Know what's going on in your district and region so you get early warning of issues and opportunities.

Be highly visible in your community. Take every community invitation seriously. Your attendance is important to those involved and you can easily offend.

Know your priorities. Always have a set of priorities you want to achieve and constantly re-evaluate that list.

Executive summaries must be your friend. With so many papers to read, you and your councillors can struggle to stay across the critical bits of information in often very lengthy reports. Instruct your CE to make sure all reports have high quality, brief executive summaries that highlight all that's important. Use these to make sure that you're across the critical information.

Look after yourself. The role can be all encompassing and at times, overpowering. If you don't look after yourself, your success will eventually suffer. Things to consider are:

- // You can't do everything; don't be afraid to delegate attendances at events on occasions.
- // Set time aside for what is important. Your community will probably fill your diary if you let it, so block out time in advance for yourself; to exercise, to relax, to spend time with family and friends, then do it without guilt.
- // Use the “Do Not Disturb” function on your phone; set a time at night for when your phone will stop alerting you to calls/messages. Think about doing the same for mealtimes with family or put the phone in another room while you eat. (**Note** – phones can be set so some calls get around this function, say from your CE or CDEM manager).
- // Use LGNZ connections to find people you can confide in as this can be a lonely job. Consider regular, informal catchups with other Mayors and Chairs, perhaps remotely, as they are the only ones who really understand what the job is like.

Get a good media advisor. As your community's key spokesperson, you'll be called upon to comment on all sorts of issues. Make sure you're prepared. Never answer questions straight off the bat – get some advice and always have strong key messages that you stick to.

Getting started

// Te tīmata >

When to begin: mayors

// Mō āhea tīmata ai: ngā koromatua

You are not officially elected to your role until all special votes are counted and the final election results are announced. This usually occurs within five days of polling day.

If, on election night, you have won by a majority that is unlikely to be overturned by special votes, you may wish to contact the people who will be critical to your operations: your council chief executive (CE) and elected councillors.

However, a Mayor may not act as a member of a local authority until they have made an oral, written, signed and witnessed declaration, which occurs during the inaugural council meeting.

When to begin: chairs

// Mō āhea tīmata ai: ngā heamana

A regional council Chair is elected by other councillors: as such, the Chair will be elected at the inaugural meeting of the council. Until the Chair is elected, the CE will chair the meeting.

Prior to the election of the Chair, the governing body must agree which voting system to use. There is a choice of two: First past the post or a form of preferential voting, see Cl.25 (Schedule 7 LGA 2002). Once the Chair is elected, the CE will vacate the chair and the new chair will chair the remainder of the meeting. The Deputy Chair is also elected by this process. *See more information on the inaugural meeting below.*

Meeting and working with your chief executive

// Te hui me te mahi ngātahi ki tō tumu whakarae

An early meeting with your chief executive is recommended. The CE is now your employee, and you need to understand and action your responsibilities as a good employer, as required by law. In addition, the first meeting of your council following a general election is called by your CE as soon as practicable after the results of the election are known.

At your initial meeting with the CE, it is recommended you cover topics such as the administrative support available to you, setting up the mayoral office, technology (phones, laptops etc), arrangements for the inaugural meeting and any essential reading. You will also want to cover the plan for induction.

“ ”

It is your job to lead – do it with respect for people’s feelings and preserve self-worth. There are lots of roles to fill.

Respect the vote – make the best of the cards you’ve been dealt.

(Rachel Reese, former mayor of Nelson).

Support staff

// Ngā kaimahi tautoko

Depending on the size of your council, the Mayor or Chair's office may have its own staff. This can range from, in the smallest council, a shared executive assistant with the CE, to a team of officials in larger council. The Mayor of Auckland is unique as this office receives a guaranteed proportion of the city's budget to employ mayoral advisors and staff.

For a larger council, a Mayor or Chair should expect to have access to their own executive assistant, a communications advisor and a policy adviser. Talk with your CE about what staff you believe you need and what might be possible within the council's budget constraints.

Meeting with your councillors and induction

// Te hui me ō kaikaunihera me te hātepe whakatau

Apart from the Mayor of Auckland council, Mayors and Chairs do not have any 'executive' powers. Making decisions and taking actions depends upon gaining the support of a majority of your councillors. It is recommended that prior to the inaugural council meeting, you meet with each member of your governing body individually to ascertain their goals and objectives for the coming three years, their interests and relevant skills and experience. It is recommended you review the needs of your councillors regularly.

Your CE will brief you on plans for the new council's induction process. Some councils hold a workshop where members of the governing body are asked to agree fundamental questions, such as their preferred style of working, their expectations for the coming triennium and agree strategic issues, goals and objectives.

The inaugural council meeting

// Te hui tuatahi a te kaunihera

The first meeting of your council following a general election is called by your CE as soon as practicable after the results of the election are known. It is chaired by your CE until swearing in is completed or, in the case of regional councils, until the Chair is elected. This meeting includes specific statutory requirements, described in your council's standing orders and must include:

- a) The oral and written declarations of members (LGA 2002, Sch. 7, cl14);
- b) A general explanation of:
 - i. LGOIMA; and
 - ii. Other laws affecting members, including the appropriate provisions of the LAMIA; and ss 99, 105, and 105A of the Crimes Act 1961; and the Secret Commissions Act 1910; and the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013.
- c) A decision on the date and time of the next meeting, or the adoption of a schedule of meetings;
- d) In the case of territorial authorities, where the Mayor has not appointed a Deputy Mayor (s41A(3)(a) of the LGA 2002) prior to the meeting, the election of the Deputy Mayor.

The general explanation of Acts can also include the LGA provisions relating to the Register of members' pecuniary interests (ss 54A – 54I). A Mayor or Chair may not act as a member of a local authority until they have made an oral declaration in the required format, accompanied by a written and signed declaration witnessed by the CE or an officer appointed by the CE.

Following the declaration, they will take the chair from the CE and witness the oral declarations of all other members.

By resolution, the inaugural meeting will agree the date and time of the first 'ordinary' council meeting or, if it chooses, agree to a schedule of meetings.

Choosing the deputy mayor or chair

// Te kōwhiri i tētahi koromatua tuarua, heamana tuarua rānei

A district or city mayor/council must elect one of its members to be the deputy mayor. As mayor, unless you use the powers set out in s.41A (LGA 2002) to appoint your deputy prior to the meeting, the deputy mayor will be elected by the governing body.

While mayors can use the powers in s.41A to immediately appoint their deputy (if for example two candidates ran for mayor and deputy mayor together in the elections) or set up their committee structure and make relevant appointments, if support is lacking the governing body can overturn the mayor's selections.

A regional council must elect one of its members to be deputy. The Chair does not have the authority to appoint their deputy directly.

“ ”

Choosing a deputy – one Mayor's approach

Councillors need to have confidence in their Deputy Mayor, therefore it is important that they have a say in the appointment.

I interviewed each councillor about who they thought the Deputy Mayor should be and what their committee and portfolio preferences were.

I recommended to council the committee structure, Deputy Mayor and committee chairs and this was adopted virtually unchanged; and made a recommendation with clear reasoning for each of those appointments.

(Mayor quoted in www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/publications/the-role-of-mayors-and-the-impact-of-the-lga-2002-amendment-act-2012/)

Adopting standing orders

// Te whakaū i ngā ture tū

Standing orders give the meeting chair (the Mayor or regional Chair, in relation to governing bodies) the ability to manage debates and decision-making so that all members can have their say. Where the behaviour of a member becomes unacceptable in a meeting, standing orders provide you with options for managing that behaviour.

Please note: Through its Systems Improvement Bill, the Government is intending to remove the ability of councils to choose or amend their own standing orders. Early in 2026 we expect the Secretary of Local Government to publish a mandatory set of standing orders that all councils will be required to adopt. Until then, the standing orders being used by councils at the time that the Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill is passed must stay in operation.

Adopting the code of conduct

// Te whakaū i ngā ture whanonga

It is a legal requirement for the council to have a code of conduct. A codes of conduct should promote effective working relationships within a local authority and between the authority and its community. It should promote free and frank debate which should in turn result in good decision making. It sets boundaries on standards of behaviour and provides a means of resolving situations when elected members breach those standards.

Please note: Through its Systems Improvement Bill, the Government is intending to remove the ability of councils to choose or amend their own code of conduct. Early in 2026 we expect the Secretary of Local Government to publish a mandatory code of conduct that all councils will be required to adopt. Until then, existing codes of conduct (those being used by councils at the time that the Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill is passed) must stay in operation.



My best advice for someone who has just been elected a council leader

- // You will be judged not by what you say but whether you engage.
- // Meet and talk with your councillors and chief executive so you understand their perspective, i.e. listen and take that time to listen.
- // Sort out your priorities – which ones really matter and the sequence that you want to move through in your time in office.
- // Your biggest asset is your PA – recognise that and build a relationship.
- // As a Mayor the job can be lonely (your working environment is surrounded by staff) and having someone you can talk to is incredibly important.

(Mayor Andy Watson 2025).



Being successful

// Kia angitu >

Being a successful community or regional leader involves having and communicating a vision about the future of your district or region. At the same time, you need to ensure that your council, as an organisation, has the capacity and ability to deliver that vision in a way that lands well with your community. Key aspects of being a successful leader include:

Providing vision and strategic leadership

// Te whakatakoto i te moemoeā me ngā ārahitanga whai rautaki

- /01.** Fully understand your council and community's social, cultural, political, economic and environmental context and any relevant trends. Ensure their implications are factored into the council's policy, planning and operations.
- /02.** Lead meaningful engagement to help create a compelling community vision and plans that deliver on that vision.
- /03.** Ensure council's vision and priorities are accurately reflected in the LTP, annual plans, strategies and budgets in a way that can respond to change and unexpected events.



My best advice to any Mayor, new or returning, is to select your deputy and chairs of committees carefully; take time to know your team.

As Mayor, it is essential to build a healthy relationship with your CE, it's a two-way street but probably one of the most important roles to get right.

As Mayor, it's not possible to attend every meeting and event so time management, timely and transparent communication between governance-management and the community is crucial.

Media training and your own personal health are very important too. The role of Mayor is a great honour but can come with great workload and stress at times.

Share the workload, take care of your physical and mental health.

(Mayor David Moore 2025).

Ensuring good governance

// Te whakaū i te kāwananga pai

- /04.** Ensure meetings are well chaired and operate in an inclusive and collaborative manner with broad collective buy-in to council decisions, while also encouraging the expression of diverse views.
- /05.** Ensure committee structures, and terms of reference reflect council's work and priorities, that membership is competent and balanced, and that committees are well chaired and supported.
- /06.** Create opportunities for councillors to be involved in the work of the council and ensure councillors have access to professional development options, including mentoring.
- /07.** Ensure councillors work collaboratively and respectfully with one another, and that divisive or unacceptable behaviour is resolved quickly and effectively.

Supporting and partnering with the CE

// Te tautoko me te mahi ngātahi me te tumu whakarae

- /08.** Ensure council has the right CE who performs to a high standard.
- /09.** Build a strong, productive, relationship with the CE based on a 'No secrets' and 'No surprises' basis. Assist and drive your CE to deliver your LTP.
- /10.** Ensure your CE has clear KPIs, regular feedback, ongoing development opportunities and support.
- /11.** Ensure your CE builds an organisation that is safe, healthy and has a highly engaged workforce capable of delivering on your vision and LTP.

Championing community interests

// Te kōkiri i ngā hiahia o te hapori

- /12.** Ensure active engagement with all parts of the community to understand their issues and concerns, and make sure their views and preferences are properly considered in decision-making.
- /13.** Promote opportunities for communities to directly participate in the design and provision of services in a way that connects relevant individuals and groups within your rohe.
- /14.** Work to create a governance and administrative culture that delivers value to residents and responds quickly and constructively to concerns and complaints.
- /15.** Advocate for additional funding and support (including from central government and critical stakeholders) where that's needed to improve outcomes for your community.

Advocating for your city, district, or region's interests

// Te hāpai i ngā hiahia o tō tāone, tō takiwā, tō rohe

- /16.** Build strong productive relationships with all organisations that contribute to community outcomes, including with other councils, LGNZ, government departments, businesses, community groups, Iwi/Māori, urban and rural interests, etc.
- /17.** Be the leading advocate for your city, district or region's interests and needs, and ensure your council's vision and strategy are proactively and effectively articulated to all organisations that impact on your community's wellbeing, as well as media.
- /18.** Understand government and local government politics and support mechanisms (including LGNZ) and navigate these effectively to promote your city, district or region and achieve results for your council and the community.
- /19.** Build a sense of civic pride, community identity, and citizenship for current and future generations.

Building strong iwi relationships

// Te whakarite i ngā hononga pakari ki ngā iwi

- /20.** Have an appreciation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensure the significance and relevance of Te Tiriti is understood by the council, the organisation, and the community.
- /21.** Lead the council's relationship with mana whenua and ensure partnerships are nurtured and maintained.
- /22.** Championing good financial and risk management.
- /23.** Understand the finances of council and ensure budgets are met and prudent financial strategies are adopted.
- /24.** Ensure risks (including financial, legal, technical, engineering and people) are identified and eliminated or managed and monitored.
- /25.** Have a good understanding of funding opportunities, options, and availability to enable completion of important initiatives.



Leading the governing body

// Te hautū i te rōpū kāwana >

Setting the tone

// Te whakatakoto i te āhua o ngā mahi

The governing body of the council consists of the Mayor or Chair and all the elected councillors. It is responsible for setting the direction of the council, exercising stewardship and holding the organisation to account (through the CE).

As Mayor or Chair, you get to set the style by which the governing body works. A productive and supportive culture will not happen by itself. It's too easy for elected members and officials to get caught up in the pressures of the day, and not invest time in building relationships or even reviewing how they are working as a team. But this is critical to creating a high performing team culture.

It is good practice to schedule time each year to review how things are working and, together with members, consider whether changes may be warranted. You should also look at the governing body's operating style and the degree to which it is achieving its goals, and whether the goals are still relevant.



Mayors and Chairs must be able to unify people and lead them as a collective. Local body elections are a contest and candidates are rivals, until elected.

It is a leader's responsibility to get all councillors to work together as a team and to lead that team on behalf of the community.

Being the presiding member: chairing meetings

// Te noho hei heamana: te whakahaere i ngā hui

As Mayor or Chair, you are required to chair all meetings of the governing body unless a conflict of interest applies. Your council's standing orders and the Local Authorities Members Interests Act 1968 provide guidance on such cases. For more information refer to the LGNZ Code of Conduct template.

Meetings are critical to the performance of a local authority and the way in which they function will determine whether council are able to work as a constructive team, and how the governing body and the council is perceived by its communities.

Meetings that are unable to achieve their business, due to rancour and frustration, set an operating style that will cascade throughout the local authority itself, undermining public confidence and damaging relationships with citizens.

You set the 'policy agenda' by recommending the issues that the governing body gets to discuss at their meetings. In doing so, you will not only work with your CE and councillors but also the myriad of local organisations that make up your community.

Setting the agenda

// Te whakatakoto i te rārangi take

The process for setting the agenda of council meetings is covered in your standing orders. Agendas are prepared, on your behalf, by your CE or their nominee in consultation with you, or, in the case of a committee, the chair. As leader you set the tone for how agendas are set, a tone that should be inclusive encourage members to contribute. The agenda should include the topics or matters that you believe should constitute the business of the meeting.

Business items may include:

- // matters raised by a previous resolution of the governing body,
- // matters raised by notice of motion,
- // matters raised by recommendation from a standing committee, community or local board, and
- // matters raised by the CE, such as where there is a statutory requirement for a matter to be considered or an ongoing decision-making process.

As Mayor or Chair, you are also able to highlight matters through your report, should you choose to give a regular report.



More advice on setting agendas can be found in the LGNZ Guide to Standing Orders available from www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/



Establishing your decision-making structures

// Te whakatū i ō hanganga whakatau

The effectiveness of your council is directly linked to the decision-making model you put in place and the approach you take to delegations. It is vitally important to find the model that works for your council and its specific circumstances.

One option involves the use of committees that enable in-depth discussion and debate to occur outside of council meetings. While committees can be given decision-making or advisory roles, they enable the governing body to focus on governance, strategy and overall performance and not get distracted by operational detail. Committees can work in a less formal manner than meetings of the governing body, which allows elected members to ask questions directly of staff and engage with stakeholders and the public. It is an approach that ensures policy decisions are based on good information and community views.

Each local authority has a certain amount of flexibility associated with its committee and subcommittee structures. A local authority can discharge or reconstitute them at any time. Unless the local authority resolves otherwise, each committee and subcommittee will be deemed to be discharged after a triennial local body election, when newly elected members come into office.

Two committees essential to the good governance of your council are an Audit and Risk committee and a CE Performance and Management committee.

At the first 'ordinary' meeting of a council's governing body it's customary for members to be asked to decide on how the governing body should operate, such as whether to establish committees and, if so, who the members and chairs will be, and what delegations they should have. It's vital that committees have the appropriate delegations to do their job.

The CE will provide the governing body with a proposed structure, usually the result of discussions with yourself as Mayor or Chair and members of the governing body, prior to the relevant council meeting. As Mayor or Chair, it's usual for you to lead this discussion.

The right governance model will be strongly influenced by the nature of each council and your specific context. Smaller governing bodies (those with six to eight members) consisting of six councillors and Mayor or Chair may need to make external appointments to get value from a decentralised committee structure.

A district with no large main centre and multiple communities might find delegating responsibilities to community boards the most effective way of working. A council facing specific issues (such as sea level rise) may choose to establish a specific committee to take leadership on the issue: one with appointed expertise and which can work flexibly with affected communities.



More information can also be found in the Guide for Governance and Decision-making Structures at www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

“ ”

Go slow to go fast. Good leadership and governance is reliant on having strong, clear, future-focused direction and a team-approach.

Spend the time to build your team and relationships. Then put the building blocks in place for good governance and executive interface so that any change you make is more likely to be supported and successful.

(Mayor Alex Walker 2025).

Committees

// Ngā komiti

If your council has resolved to adopt a committee structure, then the allocation of committee chairs can be an opportunity to build leadership skills within the governing body. A well-designed committee structure should enable those given responsibility to be chairs the opportunity to:

- // play an active role in setting the agenda for their respective committees including participation in 'pre-agenda' meetings with the Mayor or Chair, other chairs and relevant senior staff,
- // speak publicly about matters that fall within the terms of reference of their committees, and
- // meet regularly with the Mayor or Chair, other committee chairs and the CE to review how existing and emerging issues should be addressed and to set the policy agenda.

Committee chairs may receive higher remuneration to reflect their responsibilities. Some council have a policy of changing committee chairs halfway through the term to give as many members as possible the opportunity to enhance their skills.

The powers in s.41A of the LGA allow a Mayor, to decide a committee structure and directly appoint chairs; however, these decisions can be over-turned by agreement from a majority of councillors (see Appendix B). The same powers, however, do not apply to regional council Chairs.



One successful urban mayor used to give the chair of the council's finance committee to the most vociferous critic of the council's financial performance during the election campaign.

To delegate or not

// Me tautapa rānei

A delegation means that the body with the delegated power has the full authority of the governing body in respect of the decision-making powers defined in the delegation. The governing body, while retaining legal responsibility for the exercise of any powers it has delegated, cannot overturn or amend a decision made by a body that is exercising a delegation, although it can always revoke the delegation at some later point. The reasons for delegating include:

- // **Freeing up time to focus on strategic matters:** delegation can reduce problems of governing bodies spending time on detailed issues or matters that are urgent but minor.
- // **Scale:** some decisions are better made in a smaller group where all members can participate, and matters can be explored in detail.
- // **Workload:** some issues, such as a review of a district plan, will require frequent meetings and considerable reading and research. This is simply impractical for the governing body as a whole.
- // **Building knowledge and capability:** some issues may require decision-makers to build up expertise in a specific area, such as asset management, to enable them to properly scrutinise management's performance. In some cases, the members may not have the necessary expertise. External appointments can be made to committees but not the governing body.
- // **Facilitating community engagement:** governing bodies tend to operate in a formal manner with limited time for debate. This is not conducive to citizen engagement. Delegations to committees or community boards enable communities to be more actively involved with the council.



More information on delegations can be found in the LGNZ Guide to Standing orders, available from www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

Portfolios

// Ngā kōpaki

Portfolios are positions that give councillors responsibility to lead on specific policy issues, such as transport or arts and culture. Councils tend to appoint portfolio holders for a variety of reasons; for example, to make up for having no committee structure, to ensure issues get attention or to create issue-specific spokespeople. The nature of a portfolio holder's responsibilities is not prescribed and varies between council. Portfolio holders are often given higher levels of remuneration to reflect their additional responsibilities¹.

Portfolio holders need a job description that sets out the purpose of their position, the extent of their discretion and the process by which they liaise with officials. Clarity is also needed about how policy positions that portfolio holders promote are decided, as well as a system for reporting back to the full governing body.



For further information see the LGNZ Guide for establishing governance and decision-making models at www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

Making external appointments

// Te kopou i waho

Councils have representatives on a range of external bodies, from joint committees with other council to regional land transport committees, and while, in most cases, no additional remuneration is attached to such roles, they do give councillors an opportunity to raise their profile and increase their networks. Mayors and Chairs can recommend appointments to external bodies and portfolios. Appointments are normally agreed at the second or third meeting of a governing body after the elections on the recommendation of the Mayor or Chair.



For more information on establishing governance and decision-making structures, go to the LGNZ guide at www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

¹The approach established by the Remuneration Authority provides a discretionary amount that can be used to reward positions, such as committee chairs or portfolio holders.



New mayor elected mid-term

// Koromatua hou kua pōititia i waenga tau

Mayors who are elected or chosen between elections inherit a governance environment that they have limited ability to change. The Deputy Mayor or Chair will be in place, committees and delegations approved, critical documents adopted, and the council's priorities and spending agreed.

Regardless, there are steps you can take to get up-to-speed quickly, establish your own approach, and to increase the chances of your success.

Expect your CE to provide a comprehensive briefing on the way in which the council works (including how they worked with your predecessor), the LTP and any issues that you need to get on top of quickly. As part of that briefing, don't hesitate to discuss how you and the CE will work together in the future. You are not obliged to follow the style adopted by your predecessor.

One-on-one meetings with all councillors

Ask your office to set up one-on-one meetings with each of your councillors. These meetings are to understand their reasons for becoming a councillor, their view of current performance and to understand their thoughts and expectations about the remainder of the term. You should also seek agreement to hold an "away day" to not only get yourself up to speed, but also to create a culture and style of working that you feel comfortable with. It will give members a chance to review progress against the council's priorities and to get to know you.

A majority of councillors will need to support any changes to the governance model that you may wish to make, such as changing the Deputy Mayor or Chair, amending the committee structure or replacing committee members or chairs. Ensure you have majority support before formally placing these matters on the agenda.

Finding a mentor

One of the quickest ways of getting up to speed is to have a mentor, ideally a retired Mayor who you can contact for advice on an 'as required' basis, or an existing Mayor who is prepared to be a buddy. LGNZ can suggest a possible mentor or buddy.

Learning about local government

Learning how local government works, how LGNZ represents its members and the nature of the relationship between local government and central government will help you meet your political expectations and goals for your community. It's particularly important for a new Mayor who has never been in local government before.

As well as attending Mayors' School immediately post-election, another way of getting up to speed quickly is to ask LGNZ to organise a briefing programme for you. This involves spending a few days in Wellington during which you will receive briefings from LGNZ officials, meet central government officials, Ministers if possible, and parliamentary agencies like the Office of the Auditor-General.



For a more comprehensive understanding of local government, go to the LGNZ Guide to Governing Councils at www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

Leading your council

// Te hautū i tō kaunihera >

The organisational culture of the council will have a significant impact on how you are viewed by your community.

Culture is often described as ‘the way we do things around here’ and it covers things like values and behaviours, including the approach to managing poor performance or behaviour; commitments to open and transparent democracy, diversity, inclusion and community engagement; how you are meeting your health and safety obligations and your obligations to being a good employer, and how you are putting into practice your obligations to Iwi Māori.

A good Mayor or Chair will work with their CE on the appropriate policies and practices needed to support the chosen culture of the organisation and the process of reporting on key policies to the council.

MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

One Mayor managed to put paid to warring factions on council by doing some quite simple things like changing seating arrangements. She also consulted groups and councillors beforehand about proposals or projects that were to come to council, so that when the formal report reached the order paper at a council meeting, “everyone was on board with it”

(Her Worship the Mayor; women’s leadership in local government in NZ, PhD thesis, Tremaine).

Being a good employer

// Te tū hei kaitukumahi pai

Schedule 7 of the LGA 2002 states that council must be a good employer and that this requires an employment policy that achieves:

- // Good and safe working conditions.
- // Equal employment opportunities.
- // The impartial selection of suitably qualified persons for appointment.
- // Opportunities for individual employees to enhance their abilities.

The Act also includes a range of considerations around workforce diversity and makeup.

A culture of openness and transparency

// He ahurea tuwhera, pono hoki

A key principle set out in LGA 2002 is that a council “conducts its business in an open, transparent, and democratically accountable manner, and give effect to its identified priorities and desired outcomes in an efficient and effective manner.”

In acting efficiently and effectively, your council must ensure it is also open, transparent and democratically accountable in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA).

LGOIMA means any person can request and receive information held by local authorities unless there is a valid reason for withholding the information. The Act also sets standards for local government transparency, requiring that meetings of local authorities be publicly notified and open to the public and that their agendas, reports, and minutes be available to the public. Local authorities can exclude the public from part of a meeting only after a resolution and for specified reasons.

Council should consider making as much information as possible publicly available. This avoids the public’s need to request it. For example:

- // Have an online calendar that allows citizens to see who meets with the Mayor or Chair.
- // Have a public list of all the companies that the council does business with, including all successful tenderers.
- // Put all LGOIMA responses on the council’s website.
- // Provide a public forum at the start of every council meeting.
- // Only go into public-excluded session when it is absolutely necessary.
- // Keep workshops that are not open to the public to a minimum.
- // Put the register of elected members’ interests and gift register on the council’s website.

ĀKONA – MEETING YOUR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

All LGNZ members have full access to LGNZ Ākona development. Ākona caters to the unique learning needs of elected members regardless of background and prior experience. This comprehensive programme offers learning activities across the full range of skills required by elected members – whether you’re a Mayor, Chair, councillor or community board member. At your fingertips are short micro-modules, workshops, live online interactive sessions, templates, glossaries, case studies and more. You can pick and choose learning that suits your style, your schedule and what you need at any given time.

As local government changes, Ākona changes right along with it, so you can be sure you’ll always be accessing the most up-to-date guidance. Once you’re elected, if your council is a member of LGNZ, you’ll receive an email welcoming you to Ākona with instructions for logging in. The Ākona team are there to answer questions and support you to achieve your goals. [Get in touch with us](#) to find out more.

Health and safety obligations

// Ngā here hauora, haumaru anō hoki

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 aims to create a new culture towards health and safety in workplaces. A council is deemed a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU). Everyone involved in work, including elected members, are required to have a duty of care. Elected members are “officers” under the Act and officers are required to exercise due diligence to ensure that the PCBU complies with its duties. However, certain officers, such as elected members, cannot be prosecuted if they fail in their due diligence duty.

Despite this, as officers, the key things to be mindful of are:

- // stepping up and being accountable,
- // identifying and managing risks,
- // making health and safety part of your organisation’s culture, and
- // getting your workers involved.

Councils have wide discretion about how these matters might be applied, for example:

- // adopting a charter setting out the elected members’ role in leading health and safety – with your chief executive,
- // publishing a safety vision and beliefs statement,
- // establishing health and safety targets for the organisation with your chief executive,
- // ensuring there is an effective linkage between health and safety goals and the actions and priorities of your chief executive and their senior management, or
- // having effective implementation of a fit-for-purpose health and safety management system.

Elected members, through their chief executive, need to ensure their organisations have sufficient personnel with the right skill mix and support to meet health and safety requirements. This includes making sure that funding is sufficient to effectively implement and maintain the system and its improvement programmes.

Working with the chief executive

// Te mahi ngātahi me te tumu whakarae

Any retired Mayor or Chair is likely to tell you that the most important working relationship they had was with their CE. Your performance, and the performance of your council, will be significantly more successful if the relationship between you and your CE is constructive and based on trust and openness.

In general terms, the CE is responsible for the administration of the local authority while councillors and Mayor or Chair are responsible for its governance. This means that you and your councillors provide the vision, the goals and objectives, while the CE and staff get on with bringing that vision to life – in other words, getting things done.

The boundary can vary according to the size of a local authority. Elected members in small council may find themselves more closely involved with the operations of their council than elected members in a large metropolitan area.

The chief executive employs all the staff on behalf of the local authority and is responsible for providing elected members with advice. They oversee the day-to-day matters of your local authority, carry out the policies set by the council and enforce regulations.



The performance of the council is heavily influenced by the quality of relationships formed, particularly within the governing body and between elected members and the council chief executive.

Relationships must be based on effective communication, mutual respect, and an understanding of the different roles that each member plays if they are to work.

The council's governing body is responsible for hiring and evaluating the performance of the chief executive. The chief executive is responsible for:

- // implementing the decisions of the council,
- // ensuring that all functions, duties and powers delegated to them are properly performed,
- // determining the means of achieving the outcomes sought,
- // ensuring the effective and efficient management of the activities of the local authority,
- // maintaining systems to enable effective planning and accurate reporting,
- // providing advice to councillors and members of community boards, and
- // appointing and terminating staff, including negotiating their terms of employment.

Council staff are accountable to the chief executive: elected members cannot direct them. Successful council have explicit protocols for guiding day-to-day interactions between elected members and staff, and demonstrate an appreciation that there are limits to the level of work that the administration can undertake.

As employers, Mayors and Chairs should commit themselves to never criticising their CE to others. Any issue should always be shared with the CE directly. It's important to be open and up-front about any issue you are aware of as well as being approachable. Raising issues needs to be done in a respectful manner. Concerns of an operational nature that people raise with you should be immediately passed on to your CE.

Early conversations with your CE should deal with working styles, expectations and channels of communication. It's recommended that you meet one-on-one with your CE on a regular basis. A shared commitment to the council's vision and an agreement to be open with each other are essential ingredients to success.

Your role in the chief executive's performance

// Te wāhi ki a koe i ngā ekenga ā-mahi o te tumu whakarae

The council itself, or acting through a subcommittee, is responsible for negotiating and managing an employment agreement with their CE. LGNZ can support this process, and more detail is provided in Appendix D: Structures for managing your chief executive.

Recommended good practice involves the establishment of a standing CE performance (sub)committee consisting of the Mayor or Chair and usually two councillors and with a level of delegated authority. A standing (sub)committee can build a more meaningful relationship with the CE, and this makes it more manageable to deal with issues in a timely manner if they arise.

The role of a CE performance (sub)committee involves:

- // agreeing with the CE annual performance targets,
- // undertaking regular reviews to provide feedback and assess progress against objectives,
- // conducting annual performance reviews,
- // undertaking annual remuneration reviews and making recommendations to council (or acting within delegated parameters),
- // conducting and completing the CE review required under cl.35 Schedule 7 LGA 2002. This specific review is required if a CE wishes to extend their contract for an additional two years, and
- // overseeing any recruitment and selection process for a new CE.

When establishing a CE performance committee, provision should be made for:

- // access to a specialised HR advisor. This person could be co-opted on to the committee itself or have a contract to advise it over time, and
- // a delegated budget to enable the committee to commission legal advice, should this be required as part of the CE performance process (otherwise the Mayor or Chair and committee will be required to ask the CE to commission such advice).



For further information see the Guide to recruiting and managing your CE at www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

CE PERFORMANCE – ONE MAYOR'S APPROACH

"At the beginning of the year, we agree the CE's Performance Agreement. This is a collaborative effort.

"We have quarterly feedback meetings, as well as an end-of-year annual review with input from all elected members, senior managers and external stakeholders. The process is supported by an independent performance specialist to ensure it is robust and fair.

"The CE and I meet informally one-on-one every Monday morning at 8am for 30 minutes. These are essential meetings to keep the dialogue open and the ways of working at the forefront of our minds."

Your role in the council's performance

// Te wāhi ki a koe i ngā ekenga ā-mahi a te kaunihera

Performance means meeting your community's needs and expectations as well as performing any statutory duties and obligations that have been set by legislation. It is the governing body that you as Mayor or Chair lead, which is ultimately responsible. The council:

- // determines the level of revenue,
- // agrees the work programme,
- // sets the priorities and expected levels of service, and
- // employs and manages the CE.

Two of the key principles set out in LGA 2002 that are relevant to managing performance are that a council:

- // conducts its business in an open, transparent, and democratically accountable manner, and give effect to its identified priorities and desired outcomes in an efficient and effective manner, and
- // actively seeks to collaborate and co-operate with other local authorities and bodies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which it achieves its identified priorities and desired outcomes.

The first principle emphasises the fact that councils operate in the public sphere. In acting efficiently and effectively, your council must ensure it is also open, transparent and democratically accountable in accordance with the requirements of the LGOIMA.

The second principle places an obligation on local authorities, when assessing efficiency and effectiveness, to explore shared service options with other local authorities. Your CE will also provide advice on alternative service delivery options, a review required by s.17A LGA 2002.

How does a mayor or chair know how well their council is doing?

// Me pēhea e mōhiotia ai e te Koromatua, te Heamana rānei, te pai o ngā mahi a tana kaunihera?

There are a range of options for measuring council performance, which include:

- // performance against the targets set in its annual plan (the statement of service performance) and collated in each annual report,
- // surveys of citizens' satisfaction with council services, which most councils carry out annually,
- // the prudent financial regulations required by central government and reported on in each council's annual report,
- // the statutory non-financial performance measures (infrastructure),
- // financial benchmarking against other council, and
- // annual well-being indicator reports.

However, Mayors and Chairs need a much broader and comprehensive understanding of performance. This means asking questions like: "how good are our governance processes?"; does the council have an effective process for managing risks?"; and "are we exercising an appropriate level of stewardship?". To answer these questions, LGNZ has developed Te Korowai, local government's continuous improvement programme, formerly known as CouncilMARK.



To find out more visit our website: [Cultivating change for good - Te Korowai](#)



Leading policy and planning

// Te hautū i te kaupapahere me te
whakamahere >

Mayors and Chairs are responsible for leading the development of planning, policy and budgets. It is a two-way process in which leaders get to know the community while at the same time ensuring that community concerns and aspirations are reflected in the council's ongoing programme of policy development.

It includes leading the development of strategic plans and policies that reflect these aspirations as well as overseeing the implementation of those plans and policies, both statutory and non-statutory. More information on each of these planning documents can be found in LGNZ's 'Good Governance Guide' Handbook at <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/>

Policy leadership involves translating community aspirations into defined outcomes and, in many respects, as Mayor or Chair, you get to monitor the policy and planning processes and so are best placed to ensure that such documents give effect to those aspirations.

Being an effective policy leader requires Mayors and Chairs to be strongly connected to their communities. You are a key person in determining the nature of the issues that inform policy choices and the aspirations and objectives that underpin your statutory plans. This requires you to be strongly "networked" and known by key local businesses, public services, community organisations, Iwi and Māori, and institutions. You have a critical role in bringing communities together, brokering solutions and advocating for residents – and ensuring their concern and issues are reflected in the council's policy and plan making.

The key policy and planning documents that you have a leadership responsibility for include:

The Long-term Plan (LTP): LTPs are adopted in the mid-year of a triennium which means, unless you consciously amend your LTP, that a newly elected council will spend the first half its term implementing the programme adopted by its predecessor. To amend or change the LTP in the first year of your term requires what is known as an LTP amendment – your officials will provide you with advice. While planning for the adoption of your next LTP can start almost two years before it is adopted, the critical feature involves meaningful engagement with communities at the start of the process, rather than at the end. And as Mayor or Chair, you and your colleagues need to give officials a clear statement of your expectations and meet with officials regularly to ensure the draft LTP is on track to meet those expectations.

Leadership may include:

- // setting the overall theme and context. This can include budgetary constraints and/or whether there should be a focus on specific well-being outcomes,
- // determining the priorities that should be reflected in the draft plan,
- // overseeing the process to ensure the council's objectives and priorities are being reflected in the planning process. This can involve different approaches, such as providing regular progress reports to a committee or subcommittee set up for the purpose.

Most importantly, an LTP is only as good as the information on which it is based. As leader, you need to be confident that the council's information about the state of its infrastructure is correct and the assumptions that staff are using, such as likely population growth or decline, are reasonable.

The annual report: Annual reports tell your citizens whether the council has achieved the objectives and performance measures that you, as Mayor or Chair, and councillors have agreed through the annual plan. It is an important document as it is a public statement of the governing body's accountability and performance. It is also important to remember that as Mayor or Chair you sign off the annual report – along with the council's auditor. Annual reports must be audited and adopted by 31 October each year.

Significance and engagement policy: Local authorities must have a significance and engagement policy setting out their criteria for deciding how significant a proposal and decision are likely to be and, consequently, how they will engage with communities about it. As a rule of thumb, the more significant a proposal, is the greater the level of engagement required. While the policy is intended to enable people to identify the significance of a particular issue, proposal, or decision and provide clarity about how and when communities can expect to be engaged in decisions about such matters, this is not always the case.

Your significance and engagement policy is an important signal to your citizens and communities about how much you value their involvement in decision-making and how committed you are to ensuring your decision-making processes are inclusive. As a new leader you should make a review of your significance and engagement policy a priority and it is important that any review is undertaken with your communities.

Leading the community

// Te hautū i te hāpori >

The Local Government Act 2002 defines local government's purpose. This purpose is currently before parliament. While yet to be confirmed, the purpose of local government looks as though it will emphasise local government's democratic role, its role in providing local public services (efficiently and effectively), and promoting economic growth.

It is up to you, the members of your council, and your communities, to decide how the purpose will be implemented to meet the needs of the city, district or region. It is important to note, however, that the leadership style you adopt may have an impact on how successful you will be in fulfilling that purpose.

To deliver better outcomes for communities, leaders need to learn to work with and through others.

Engaging with iwi/māori

// Te whai wāhi ki ngā iwi/te iwi māori

One of the most important relationships for your council is with your local Iwi, hapū and Māori organisations. In fact, your council is likely to have multiple relationships with Iwi and Māori, including with mana whenua, and policy relationships with maata waka groups (Māori who whakapapa to other areas).

As Mayor or Chair, you play a vital role in both establishing relationships and ensuring relationships are meaningful and ongoing. It is recommended that you prioritise meetings with representatives of these organisations. You are also in a position to ensure that the council takes its relationships seriously and undertakes evaluation on a regular basis. LGNZ and Te Maruata, local government's network of Māori in local government, can offer guidance.

Initial steps that others have taken to recognise the importance of their relationships with Māori have included:

- // Inviting mana whenua to welcome the new council at the inaugural meeting with a mihi whakatau; and
- // Including an item on the agenda for the first meeting that discusses the nature of the council's relationship with Iwi/Māori so that new members are brought up to speed, and which may include a presentation from mana whenua about how they perceive the quality of the relationship.

Many councils and Iwi will have an agreed Charter or Memorandum of Understanding. These agreements, which are signed by the Mayor or Chair on behalf of the council and a kaumatua on behalf of the Iwi, set the parameters for the relationship. Typically, they will describe how interactions between the Iwi and local authority will occur, providing clarity at which level engagement should take place and may include an annual meeting between the senior leadership of both parties.

Most agreements include:

- // shared goals and values,
- // commitment to Treaty of Waitangi principles,
- // recognition of different engagement mechanisms,
- // agreement on process for Māori to engage with council,
- // methods of consultation with Iwi/Māori,
- // method of conflict resolution,
- // a review clause,
- // resourcing provisions, and
- // a commitment to capability development.

As more Iwi negotiate settlements with the Crown, there has been a growth in mana whakahono ā rohe, or Iwi participation agreements. These agreements, which are often designed specifically for each situation, involve the Crown, Iwi and local council, with guidance on how they will work together within the context of the Resource Management Act 1991.

It is important to realise that Mayors and Chairs, as leaders of their respective organisations, will be expected to lead their councils' relationships with mana whenua. It will be vital that communication with mana whenua occurs regularly at both a formal and informal level. Most agreements will have provision for a regular review and assessment of the relationship, and it is important that your Iwi/Māori partners participate in these reviews on an equal basis.



See the LGNZ Guide to Standing Orders for specific suggestions of how to incorporate regular engagement into your regular governance work, <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/our-policy-priorities/governance>

Community engagement

// Te whai wāhi a te hapori

It is critical that we maintain public trust in the integrity of the democratic process. Elected members must be proactive in their engagement with others and sharing publicly available information about council decisions and activities. They must take ownership and responsibility for their actions and not misrepresent themselves or others for personal gain. Elected members must also consider the interests of the whole community to reflect the wishes of most, rather than a sole group or special interest faction. This means you will need to always listen carefully to all advice and views and weigh up all the pros and cons before making recommendations or decisions.

Suggestions for keeping on top of local issues and identifying innovative solutions include:

- // Hosting regular meetings with your local Member of Parliament(s).
- // Organising a regular meeting with the heads of the leading organisations and agencies which are based in your town or city.
- // Adopting a 'citizens' charter' whereby a set of principles for engagement are adopted and published.
- // Organise regular council sponsored forums with well-known speakers to encourage citizens to learn more about what's required to make your city a great place to live.
- // Look closely at your city's 'night' economy and whether or not you should appoint a 'night mayor';²
- // Hold online polls on challenging issues or matters where the support of residents is necessary to give the council a mandate and leverage to advance a critical issue.
- // Hold regular briefings with your local media.
- // Allow time at the start of meetings for citizens to raise issues that they wish.
- // Engaging with your community via social media channels.



For more information see LGNZ's practical guide to localism, which can be downloaded at [Localism guide - Localism](#)

²See report on the night economy from <https://nzinitiative.org.nz/reports-and-media/reports/living-after-midnight-for-a-better-night-time-environment/>

Advisory panels and community appointments

While your CE and their staff are your council's primary advisors, you will often confront issues where local organisations may need to play a significant role, both for their knowledge and expertise about an issue, and also their mandate. For example:

- // A mayoral business forum or panel may be established to ensure that the mayor and council can engage directly with business leaders about the economic well-being of their city;
- // A regional advisory panel drawn from environmental organisations within the region may be set up to give a chair independent advice on the state of the environment; and
- // A mayoral youth forum might be established to ensure youth are able to speak directly to the council's leadership.

Both are examples of structures established to give decision-makers direct access to sectors within their communities which have a perspective that is important for policy making. They also show that the council is taking an issue seriously as well as providing opportunities for co-designing future solutions. Another approach is to appoint representatives from different sectors onto relevant standing committees.



Some Mayors described how they were in constant contact with their communities. One described their practice of being interviewed by Community TV after every council meeting and of having a recording of the interview placed on the council website.

Another makes a point of meeting three to four times a year with community groups in each of the district's towns as well as with the Department of Conservation, and Iwi.

(LGNZ survey of mayors, 2014).

Increasing participation

Co-designing and co-producing services see council and communities working with each other in partnership. The result is greater inclusivity. Specific activities include:

- // Specific area and a representative sample of that area's population is charged with determining how that earmarked amount is spent.
- // **Citizen assemblies:** a way of resolving complex and controversial questions. Citizens' assemblies involve selecting a large group of citizens who profile as a community and tasking them with solving a troubling or complex issue, such as rewriting a constitution or working out how to deal with the impacts of climate change.
- // **Devolving responsibilities to community boards:** inclusivity can be enhanced by shifting decision-making on relevant matters to community boards, shifting decision-making closer to communities enabling them to participate in a way that would otherwise be difficult.



More information on each of these options can be found in the Guide to governing local authorities at <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/our-policy-priorities/governance/> and LGNZ's Guide to Localism which can be downloaded at [Localism guide - Localism](#)

Engaging with media


// Te whai wāhi ki ngā arapāho

Transparency and accountability are critical to your success and the media are critical stakeholders in communicating council messages to wider audiences. You should consider media engagement as an opportunity to share your council's work and success, as well as to seek wider engagement in the challenges faced by the community.

Consider options such as arranging media briefings after each council meeting or on a weekly basis. At these briefings journalists can ask you, and others such as the CE or a committee chair, questions about the council, its policies and programmes. You can also live-stream council and committee meetings; provide regular briefings to all media; and put all information, except that which is confidential, on the web for public scrutiny.

When the media calls asking for comment on issues or council decisions, make sure you take all the details and think carefully about your messages before answering. It's perfectly okay to call the journalist back when you're ready and know what you want to say. Practice your responses with your communications advisor or get advice from LGNZ – our media team are always here to help.



A man wearing a dark cap and jacket is seen from the side, herding a group of cows in a grassy field. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Case study - the mayors' taskforce for jobs

// Rangahau whakapuaho
– te rōpū mahi a te koromatua >

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ) is a nationwide, networked movement of Mayors across Aotearoa New Zealand working collectively to ensure that all young people can fulfil their potential and determine their own futures.

Established in 2000, MTFJ remains committed to leveraging the power of localism — activating local knowledge, networks, and relationships — to build pathways that enhance the economic wellbeing of young people and deliver positive outcomes in partnership with communities.

MTFJ is governed by a Core Group of mayors and, in 2025, established a Charitable Trust to strengthen its impact across all levels of activity. These include advocacy, elevating youth voice and leadership, co-designing youth-centred development initiatives, and delivering funded partnerships — most notably with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) — to reduce youth unemployment.

In partnership with MSD Industry Partnerships, MTFJ has delivered over **7,160 employment placements** with a focus on young people aged 16–24, especially those in rural and smaller provincial communities. This has seen more than **\$60 million** in direct investment into local council areas.

In addition to the employment programme, MTFJ supports a range of initiatives that enable mayors to connect meaningfully with young people and with one another, including:

- // **Tuia programme** – An intergenerational kaupapa Māori initiative that develops the leadership potential of young Māori through mayoral mentorship, community service projects, and shared wānanga. Delivered through a tuakana-teina model.
- // **Youth employment data and insights** – Partnership with **Dot Loves Data** to provide a single point of timely, localised data to monitor and respond to youth unemployment trends. This includes access to a unique dataset tracking NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rates at a granular TLA level, supporting evidence-based local decision-making.
- // **Industry training graduations** – Collaborations with vocational training providers to host mayor-led celebrations recognising local youth who complete industry training and apprenticeships.
- // **Policy advocacy** – MTFJ has led national advocacy on issues such as universal access to driver licensing, resulting in the creation of the Driving Change Network.
- // **Youth sector partnerships** – Partnership with **Ara Taiohi** to support professional development for youth practitioners, grounded in the *Code of Ethics and Mana Taiohi* frameworks.
- // **Outward Bound scholarships** – Supporting mayors to nominate rangitahi to attend life-changing leadership development courses through Outward Bound.
- // **Child safety and safeguarding** – Facilitating council access to professional development in child protection through **Child Matters**, including the development of child and vulnerable adult policies.

MTFJ exemplifies the value of local leadership and cross-sector collaboration in creating sustainable pathways for rangitahi. Its success demonstrates how empowered local government, when resourced and trusted, can lead transformative change for communities.



For more information on how you can be involved go to: [Home | Mayors Taskforce for Jobs](#)

Calling a state of local emergency

// Te karanga i tētahi tūāhuatanga
ohotata >

Under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act (CDEM Act) 2002, a Mayor can declare a state of local emergency. Where this occurs, CDEM Controllers can exercise additional powers to direct and coordinate personnel, material and other resources for an effective and timely response to an emergency.

It is important to note that declaring a state of local emergency enables powers that can restrict individuals' normal rights, and should only be used where the powers are, or are likely to be, necessary.

Mayors should also consider using their powers, under section 25 of the CDEM Act, to delegate the powers to call an emergency or give notice of a local transition period to a member of the governing body or CDEM Committee.

Controllers are officials whose role is to lead, direct and coordinate the response to an emergency, whether at national, local or group level. Given their statutory powers, functions and community responsibilities, controllers are usually first- or second-tier council managers.

Your controller will have a checklist for you to use when considering whether a declaration is needed and can advise you on the arrangements your CDEM Group has in place.

The following tests should be met before a state of emergency is called, although an element of judgement is always required. If access to extraordinary powers is required (or may be required), such as needing an evacuation, then a state of local emergency should be declared.

Criteria to be met when calling a state of emergency

A declaration of a local state of emergency can only be made if all the tests in the CDEM Act are met.

- /01.** Does it appear to you that an emergency has occurred or may occur within the area?
- /02.** Is the situation an emergency as defined in the CDEM Act 2002?
 - //** The result of a happening, whether natural or otherwise including, without limitation, any explosion, earthquake, eruption, tsunami, land movement, flood, storm, tornado, cyclone, serious fire, leakage or spillage of any dangerous gas or substance, technological failure, infestation, plague, epidemic, failure of or disruption to an emergency service or a lifeline utility, or actual or imminent attack or warlike act; and
 - //** Causes or may cause loss of life or injury or illness or distress or in any way endangers the safety of the public or property in New Zealand or any part of New Zealand; and
 - //** Cannot be dealt with by emergency services or otherwise requires a significant and co-ordinated response.

Indicators that an emergency may require a significant and coordinated response include:

- //** many agencies involved,
- //** lifeline utilities aren't functioning or are having difficulty functioning,
- //** social utilities such as schools are closed, and
- //** the consequences of the emergency are complex, and effective community support may require significant coordination.

A local state of emergency expires after seven days. You may need to extend the declaration of the emergency if powers are still required, or you can terminate it earlier if it is no longer needed.

Local transition notices

The CDEM Act also provides for a Mayor (and a member of a Civil Defence Emergency Management Group if appointed) to give notice of a local transition period following an emergency. This provides powers for recovery managers to manage, co-ordinate or direct recovery activities.

A local transition notice period ends 28 days after the time and date from which it came into force, but you retain the option to extend the period, or you can terminate it earlier if it is no longer needed.



Further information can be found on the National Emergency Management Agency website www.civildefence.govt.nz/ particularly factsheets on declaring states of emergency and transition periods.





Citizenship ceremonies

// Ngā kaupapa kirirarautanga >

The Citizenship Regulations Act 2002 enables Mayors to hear the citizenship oath or affirmation. Until this process is complete, an applicant is not deemed to be a New Zealand citizen. The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) will provide the necessary guidance and certificates.

Each council is encouraged to design their citizenship ceremonies so that they reflect the character of its city or district and acknowledge the traditional role of Iwi and Māori. They provide an opportunity for each council, and in particular the Mayor, to highlight the positive characteristics of the area and promote the values that the community aspires to.

Your council will have a memorandum of understanding with DIA that describes the nature of the assistance available from the Department, for example:

- // Schedule of dates for citizenship ceremonies,
- // New Zealand citizenship certificate,
- // If required, copies of Choice Whiriwhiria, the commemorative book and/or DVD, and
- // Oath, affirmation and national anthem cards.



For more information go to: [Citizenship ceremonies | New Zealand Government](#)

Being a justice of the peace

// Te tū hei kaiwhakawā tūmatanui >

Once elected, Mayors and Chairs become a Justice of the Peace for the length of their tenure. The technical description is “ex officio Justice”, which means that their role is limited to what are known as ministerial rather than judicial functions. Ministerial functions include:

- // Witnessing signatures: JPs witness signatures on various legal documents, ensuring they are signed willingly and correctly.
- // Certifying documents: JPs can certify copies of documents as true and accurate, often needed for official purposes.
- // Taking declarations and affidavits: JPs administer oaths, declarations, and affidavits, which are formal statements used in legal proceedings.
- // Confirming identity: JPs can verify someone's identity for financial institutions and other agencies.
- // Administering oaths: JPs can administer oaths for various purposes, such as before giving evidence in court.

It is recommended that *ex officio* JPs attend training provided by the local Justice of the Peace Association. They must also take the oaths of office as a Justice of the Peace, which are set out in the Best Practice Manual.

Ex officio JPs cannot administer “judicial” functions, such as taking oaths under the Oaths and Declarations Act 1957. If a Mayor or Chair wished to be able to exercise the full range of JP responsibilities, both ministerial and judicial, they will need to undertake the full nomination, training and assessment process set out in the Best Practice Manual at:



<https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/20161003-justice-of-peace-best-practice-manual.pdf>

Stepping down – thinking about your legacy

// Te heke tūranga – te whakaaro mō ō
whakareretanga >

For the many Mayors/Chairs who make the decision to voluntarily stand down or retire, the following question can come to mind: “what can I do to ensure that the good work continues”? Putting thought into succession planning will increase the chances that a departing Mayor or Chair leaves with confidence.

Neither Mayors nor Chairs can choose their successor. However, there are a number of actions that you can take during your time in office to help build the skills of others, including the appointments of your deputy and committee chairs. Giving others responsibility for leading a high-profile policy area or acting as a spokesperson, delegating responsibilities to committee chairs or allowing others to attend meetings and seminars so that they better understand what being a Mayor or Chair entails are all good ways to build confidence and capability in others and give them a taste of what it’s like to lead.

Whether you’re retiring or planning to stand again, it is helpful to provide a briefing for your successor to open when they take office. In that briefing, you could outline the priorities that the council pursued under your leadership, what you see as the achievements, the work still in progress and any hints on getting things done.

Providing advice to the incoming council can also involve the full governing body. If they agree, it’s the sort of matter that might be a useful topic for a workshop. It might also involve a review on how well the decision-making structure worked or didn’t.

The interregnum

// Te āputa kopounga >

Between polling day and the swearing in of members at the first meeting of the new council, there is a period of approximately two weeks where no elected members are available to make decisions. As Mayor or Chair, you should ensure that the governing body has passed a “time-limited” delegation to the CE to give them a broad discretion to act, should urgent matters arise. The LGNZ Guide to Standing Orders has advice on this matter, including a draft delegation for the period.



References

// Ngā tohutoro >

**CITIZENSHIP
CEREMONIES**

+

GO TO:

[Citizenship ceremonies | New Zealand Government](#)

**GUIDE TO GOVERNING
LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

+

AVAILABLE AT:

www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/our-policy-priorities/governance/

**GUIDE TO
LOCALISM**

+

WHICH CAN BE DOWNLOADED AT:

www.localism.nz/localism-guide/

**GUIDE FOR
ESTABLISHING
GOVERNANCE AND
DECISION-MAKING
STRUCTURE**

+

AVAILABLE AT:

www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

**LGNZ GUIDE TO
STANDING ORDERS**

+

AVAILABLE FROM:

www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

**GUIDE TO
RECRUITING AND
MANAGING YOUR CE**

+

AVAILABLE AT:

www.lgnz.co.nz/learning-support/governance-guides/

**JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
BEST PRACTICE MANUAL**

+

AVAILABLE FROM:

[www.justice.govt.nz/assets/20161003-justice-of-peace-
best-practice-manual.pdf](http://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/20161003-justice-of-peace-best-practice-manual.pdf)



Appendix A: the behaviours of success

// Āpitihangā A: ngā whanonga angitu >

A local government leader's responsibilities are well understood, given there are many who have held this position over the years. Amongst other things, you need to provide vision and strategic leadership, demand good governance, support and partner with the chief executive, champion community interests, and build strong relationships.

The success of your term and of your council comes down to not only what you do, but how you do it. As Mayor or Chair, you play a critical role in setting the style and tone by which the governing body and the council operate and are perceived by communities. You can influence the degree to which the council is regarded as open, receptive and responsive or closed, unreceptive to new ideas and unresponsive to community concerns.

Collaborative, positive and respectful

One of the challenges local government leaders face is the fact that elections are a contest and candidates are rivals, until elected. One of your first priorities is to be the unifier; get your councillors to work together as a team. Your challenge is to assist members to identify matters in common while recognising differences, so that they are united as far as possible on how to address the major issues facing your community.

Leaders should model positive and collaborative values and behaviours and discourage those that are unethical.

Inclusive and responsive

Mayors, Chairs and councillors must consider the interests of the whole community rather than the interests of a sole group or special interest faction. This means listening carefully to all advice and views and weigh up the pros and cons before making recommendations or decisions. Being inclusive can mean encouraging the development and uptake of innovative engagement methods and communication and information tools or community participation in local governance, such as participatory budgeting.

Responsible and impartial

Mayors and Chairs should act impartially and declare any interests that could be perceived as indicating a bias or conflict of interest. You must work to promote issues or actions that you believe are in the public good across a range of considerations, both ethical and financial. You should be able to defend your council's decisions as being in the long-term interests of the whole community.

Trusting and trust-worthy, transparent and accountable

Relationships that are constructive and based on trust and openness will be significantly more successful than when this is not the case. A key principle set out in LGA 2002 states that a council must “conducts its business in an open, transparent, and democratically accountable manner, and give effect to its identified priorities and desired outcomes in an efficient and effective manner.” Mayors and Chairs should be proactive in their engagement with others and share publicly available information about council decisions and activities. This means taking ownership and responsibility for their actions and not misrepresent themselves or others for personal gain.

Building capability in others

As Mayor and Chair, you have a responsibility to help build skills in your councillors, some of whom will be new to council. There are several actions that you can take during your time in office to help build the capability of others, particularly community engagement and leadership skills. This includes using the appointments of your Deputy Mayor and committee chairs to support professional growth; giving others responsibility for leading a high-profile policy area or to act as a spokesperson; delegating responsibilities to committee chairs or allowing others to attend meetings and seminars so that they gain greater awareness of the role of leadership. By preparing others to be leaders, you can have confidence in the ongoing success of the council once you depart.

Working with and learning from others

Being open to advice and a willingness to listen to the experience of others will significantly aid you in achieving success. One of your most valuable resources are the Mayors and Chairs of your neighbouring districts and cities. They may have experienced, and solved, the same challenges you find yourself facing and they can be an incredible source of support. Consider asking your council about inviting a retired Mayor or Chair to act as a mentor and take part in the networks, zones, sectors and All-of-local-government meetings facilitated by LGNZ.



Appendix B: s.41A: mayoral powers

// Āpitihianga B: ngā mana o te
koromatua (s.41A) >

In 2012 the Government amended the LGA 2002 to provide Mayors with a range of new powers. In addition to clarifying their leadership roles, the Act was amended to allow a Mayor to make specific appointments. As the legislation went through select committee, council were given the right to overturn a Mayor's appointment.

/01.

The role of a Mayor is to provide leadership to:

- a) The other members of the territorial authority; and
- b) The people in the district of the territorial authority.

/02.

Without limiting subsection (1), it is the role of a Mayor to lead the development of the territorial authority's plans (including the Long-Term Plan and the Annual Plan), policies, and budgets for consideration by the members of the territorial authority.

/03.

For the purposes of subsections (1) and (2), a Mayor has the following powers:

- a) To appoint the Deputy Mayor;
- b) To establish committees of the territorial authority;
- c) To appoint the chairperson of each committee established under paragraph (b), and, for that purpose, a Mayor:
 - i. May make the appointment before the other members of the committee are determined; and
 - ii. May appoint himself or herself.

/03A.³

- a) However, nothing in subsection (3) limits or prevents a territorial authority from:
 - b) Removing in accordance with Cl. 18 of sch. 7, a Deputy Mayor appointed by the mayor under subsection 3a; or
 - c) Discharging or reconstituting, in accordance with cl. 30 of Sch. 7, a committee established by the Mayor under sub section (3)(b); or
 - d) Appointing, in accordance with cl. 30 of Sc. 7, one or more committees in addition to any established by the Mayor under subsection (3)(b), or
 - e) Discharging, in accordance with cl. 31 of Sch. 7, a chairperson appointed by the Mayor under subsection (3)(c). (LGA 2002).

/04.

A Mayor is a member of each committee of a territorial authority

/04A.

To avoid doubt a Mayor must not delegate any of his/her powers under subsection (3)

/05.

To avoid doubt:

- a) Clause 17(1) of Sch. 7 does not apply to the election of a Deputy Mayor of a territorial authority unless the Mayor of the TA declines to exercise the power in subsection (3)(a); and
- b) Clauses 25 and 26(3) of Sch. 7 do not apply to the appointment of the Chairperson of a committee of a territorial authority established under subsection (3)(b) unless the Mayor of the TA declines to exercise the power in subsection (3)(c) in respect of that committee.

³Section (3a) was added by the Local Government and Environment Select Committee.

Appendix C: mayoral powers flow diagram

// Āpitihianga C: he hoahoa ripo o ngā
mana o te koromatua >

As soon as possible after an election, the chief executive briefs their Mayor on options for the committee structure and the appointment of the Deputy Mayor and committee chairs. The Mayor has two alternatives:

s.41A



- // Mayor chooses to use their s.41A powers to determine committee structure and appoint Deputy Mayor and committee chairs.
- // Deputy Mayor and committee chairs begin formal duties immediately after receiving confirmation from the Mayor.
- // Councils advised of appointments at first meeting (or shortly thereafter).
- // Deputy Mayor and committee chairs continue unless removed by a decision of the governing body, or the Mayor using their s.41A powers.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION



- // Mayor chooses not to use s.41A powers and seek council approval for her nominations.
- // Undertakes a process (workshop or interviews) to determine potential Deputy Mayor, committee structure and committee chairs.
- // Mayor recommends committee structure, Deputy Mayor and committee chairs to first or second meeting of council for approval or amendment.
- // Deputy Mayor and committee chairs continue unless removed by council resolution.

Ko Tatou
LGNZ.