Kaupapa Here Tāpaetanga

Submission Policy



MASTERTON
WHAKAORIORI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ihirangi | **Contents**

Horopaki | Context 3
Pūtake | Purpose 3
Whānuitanga | Scope 3
He aha rā te tāpaetanga? | What is a submission? 3
[Te Reo] | Who can make a submission? 3
He puka tūmatanui ngā tāpaetanga | Submissions are public documents 3
Te mōkito o ngā paearu o ngā tāpaetanga | Submission minimum criteria 4
He kōwhiringa pārongo | Optional information 4
Ngā momo taera tāpaetanga me ngā reo e whakaaetia ana | Accepted submission formats and languages 5
Ngā tikanga tāpaetanga e whakaaetia ana | Accepted submission methods 6
He pārongo hei āpitihanga | Supplementary Information 6
Te maunu i tō tāpaetanga | Withdrawing your submission 6
Ngā tāpaetanga tōmuri | Late submissions 6
Ngā tāpaetanga arowhānui | Pro forma submissions 7
He kōwhiringa kia rangona ai | Option to be heard 7
Ngā herenga o ngā tāpaetanga | Submission content conditions 7
Reo | The use of AI and submissions 8
[Te Reo] | Results of consultation and decision 9
Ētahi anō ara e tuku ai i ō kōrero | Other ways to have your say 9
Arotake Kaupapa Here | Review of Policy 9
Tuhinga Hāngai | Related Documents 9
Ngā Tohutoro | References 9
Whakahaere Kōnae | Version Control 9

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Horopaki | **Context**

Submissions made by the community to Masterton District Council (the Council) are an important part of Local Government decision-making processes. The Council receives submissions in response to a proposal or matter that is being consulted on with the community.

Pūtake | **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Council's submissions process and minimum requirements for submissions content.

Whānuitanga | **Scope**

This Policy relates to the receiving and processing of submissions through a Council engagement process, including submissions received under the Local Government Act 2002 (including Annual and Long-Term Plans). The principles in this policy may also be used for other areas of legislation. It does not cover submissions under the Resource Management Act 1991, Planning Act 2026, and Natural Environment Act 2026 where a separate process is required by legislation.

He aha rā te tāpaetanga? | **What is a submission?**

A submission is formal feedback to the Council from an individual or an organisation/group in response to a proposal or matter upon which a decision is required by the Council. It is one of the main ways the Council can be better informed of community views on an issue and consider them as part of their decision making.

For avoidance of doubt, a submission does not include ad hoc or informal feedback provided to the Council. This includes comments received on Council social media platforms or comments made in the wider media or non-council social media platforms. See Other Ways to Have Your Say section in this Policy.

Ko wai mā e taea ana te tuku tāpaetanga? | **Who can make a submission?**

Anyone can make a submission regardless of their age or place of residence. You don't need to be a ratepayer to make a submission. Submissions can be made by individuals or representatives of an organisation, group, or agency.

Sometimes the Council only seeks the views of certain affected individuals or groups, and we make this clear when we consult.

He puka tūmatanui ngā tāpaetanga | **Submissions are public documents**

Submissions are public documents. While personal contact details and demographic information may be removed from any publicly available copy, the submitter's name will be published.

Only relevant staff members will have access to un-redacted versions of submissions in accordance with our Privacy Statement. Submissions will be kept in accordance with the Public Records Act 2005.

If a submitter contacts the Council with extenuating circumstances for withholding their name prior to the submission closure date, we may remove their name from publication. This is at the discretion of the Group Manager Strategy.

Te mōkito o ngā paearu o ngā tāpaetanga | **Submission minimum criteria**

To be considered and valid, all submissions must include:

- First and last name (the name you are known by).
- Organisation, if you are submitting on behalf of your business or organisation.

We ask for this information to ensure that it is a fair and transparent process. For example:

- We need to know if someone is trying to have more than one opportunity to have their say to ensure the results can be presented as accurately as possible.
- It would be considered a conflict of interest if an elected member (or their organisation/ business) was to submit on a proposal then participate in the decision on the proposal.

The Council encourages all submitters to provide contact details so that you can be contacted if we have a question about your submission.

We sometimes require your address or location, so we know what parts of our community we are hearing from. This is so we know if affected individuals or groups are providing feedback.

We need your contact details if you want to be heard at the Hearing

The Council Hearing process is an opportunity to be heard by the Council or speak to your submission in some consultation processes.

The Council needs to be able to contact you if you want to participate in a Council Hearing process you will need to at least provide an:

- email address; and/or
- telephone number.

This will enable us to contact you to schedule a hearing time and provide you with a copy of our hearing procedure.

Regional Submissions

From time to time the Council consults on topics jointly with other district, city or regional councils or council-controlled organisations. Where a regional submission process is taking place, further information may be required to align with the policies of the other councils we are consulting with.

He kōwhiringa pārongo | **Optional information**

In Council submission forms, we sometimes ask optional questions about age, gender, ethnicity, location, and whether a person lives with impairments or long-term health conditions or identifies as tāngata whaikaha/disabled.

Responses to these types of questions help us understand, which parts of our community are providing the Council with feedback. It helps us to improve our engagement approach with key groups from our community. In some instances, it may indicate that further engagement is needed with the community.

This demographic information will not be made public with your submission (via our website or in a Council meeting agenda). Only collated (anonymised) demographic data will be reported to the Council in line with our Privacy Statement.

The format of our demographic questions aims to allow submitters to identify themselves in ways that best reflect who they are.

Ngā momo taera tāpaetanga me ngā reo e whakaaetia ana | **Accepted submission formats and languages**

The Council will accept submissions in the following formats:

- Written submissions.
- Verbal submissions.
- Audio recordings.
- Video recordings.

Submitters may also provide supporting material, including photographs, images, maps, plans, drawings, or other visual documents where relevant to their submission.

Submissions may be made in:

- Te reo Māori.
- New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL).
- English.

The Council can provide assistance for people who need help to make a submission. Guidance on the content of the submission cannot be provided.

Submitters are encouraged to advise the Council in advance if they wish to make a submission in te reo Māori or NZSL, or require interpretation, translation, or other accessibility support.

Note: Submitters should be aware that the Council may have limited ability to redact personal information from audio or video recordings.

Processing of submissions across multiple formats

Some consultations may receive submissions across multiple formats or platforms (for example, handwritten, verbal and online). In these cases, all submissions are entered into a single online platform (currently What's Up Whakaoriori) by Council officers. This ensures information is presented consistently to Elected Members and supports efficient analysis.

Where a handwritten or verbal submission is transcribed into the online platform, a copy of the typed submission will be provided to the submitter, provided they have supplied an email address.

Ngā tikanga tāpaetanga e whakaaetia ana | **Accepted submission methods**

The Council provides submission forms in a range of formats for completion. In most cases a submission form will be available in online and/or physical (hardcopy or electronic) format.

Submissions will be accepted by means of:

- Online via our website, or our engagement platform (currently What's Up Whakaoriori)
- Post to Masterton District Council, Freepost 112477, PO Box 444, Masterton 5840
- Hand delivered to our Customer Service Centre, 161 Queen Street, Masterton
- Email sent to submissions@mstn.govt.nz or other specified email address.
- Orally by phone (06) 370 6300
- Orally at a hearing (notified through a submission form)

We do not accept submissions via social media platforms.

He pārongo hei āpitihanga | **Supplementary Information**

After making a submission, and within the consultation period, you may provide supplementary information to add to your submission (this will not be treated as an additional submission). This must be provided in the methods and formats indicated above. If you provide supplementary information outside the consultation period, this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and depending on whether the hearings and deliberations have occurred.

Te maunu i tō tāpaetanga | **Withdrawing your submission**

If you wish to withdraw your submission you should do so within the consultation period. If you wish to withdraw your submission after the consultation period has closed this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and depending on whether the hearings and deliberations have occurred.

Ngā tāpaetanga tōmuri | **Late submissions**

A late submission is any submission received after the specified consultation closing date and time. For postal submissions, this is any submission post-marked after the consultation's closing date.

Acceptance of late submissions will be at Council's discretion. Accepting or refusing a 'late submission' will take into consideration:

- the submission is received at a practical point in the process (e.g. before hearings begin); and/or
- the submitter will have an unfair advantage over others.

The Group Manager Strategy will sign off any refusal or acceptance of late submissions.

Where a 'late submission' is refused, and where it's possible to do so, the submitter will be advised.

Ngā tāpaetanga arowhānui | **Pro forma submissions**

Pro-forma submissions, (e.g. multiple submissions with identical content), will be presented to decision makers as a single submission with all submitters' names and a tally at the top. These submissions may not all be made publicly available on the Council website, rather a single version of the submission with a tally and submitter names will be displayed. However, all submissions will still be counted individually.

He kōwhiringa kia rangona ai | **Option to be heard**

When required, the Council will provide an opportunity to be heard at the completion of the submission period. Speaking at a hearing allows submitters to highlight the main points of any written submission, as well as allowing the Council the opportunity to ask the submitter questions.

- Hearing dates (if applicable) will be advertised as part of the consultation information available during the consultation period.
- Persons wishing to speak to their submission must indicate this to the Council and provide their contact details.
- Speakers will be given the opportunity to present in person or online (via Microsoft Teams).
- Hearings will be open to the public and will be livestreamed via a relevant platform (currently YouTube).

Speakers will be given a set length of time to cover off the main points of their submission. Additional time will not be granted to individual submitters or organisations, however where an individual has made a submission as part of a group or organisation and as an individual, they may be able to speak to their separate submissions at separately allocated times.

Ngā herenga o ngā tāpaetanga | **Submission content conditions**

The Council reserves the right to remove from publication, any submission (in part or in full) that contains content that is determined to be of the following nature:

1. Contains offensive language.
2. Discriminatory, defamatory, or derogatory.
3. Personal threats or harassment of Council or staff members.
4. Would be an abuse of the hearing process to allow the submission (or part thereof) to be taken further.

In addition:

- If specific staff members names are used in the submission, other than the Executive Leadership Team level, they will be redacted. Role titles will not be redacted.
- Where a submission includes the name or personal details of another identifiable individual, those details will be redacted unless the information is already publicly available or the individual has consented to its inclusion. This includes an individual's contact details, address, or other personal information. This does not apply to information that is already publicly available, such as authors' names on published articles, journals, reports, or other publicly available documents.

- If the submission does not make specific reference to the topic/s outlined in the consultation document or statement of proposal, or if they are not relevant to the topic/s being consulted on in any annual plan or other relevant consultation, they will be considered 'out of scope' and will be redacted.
- All submissions must be legible, and staff won't be held responsible for misinterpreting a semi-legible submission (e.g. a handwritten submission with spelling errors that makes it difficult to interpret).

Submitters will not be denied the opportunity to make genuine submissions. Where there is uncertainty, the default position will be to allow the submission with every effort made to preserve as much of the content as possible.

The Council's Group Manager Strategy will be responsible for the final decision on whether any submission or part thereof should be removed from publication.

Pro-forma submissions, (e.g. multiple submissions with identical content), will be presented to decision makers as a single submission with all submitters' names and a tally at the top. These submissions may not all be made publicly available.

Sensitive or confidential information

The Project Owner[1] will use their discretion and the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 to determine whether further information should be withheld from publication.

If there is information that is confidential or sensitive that is included in your submission, it is recommended you specify this in your submission.

Te whakamahinga o AI i ngā tāpaetanga | The use of AI and submissions

All submissions, as written by the submitter (subject to the content conditions above), are provided to decision-makers (including elected members) as part of engagement processes. These form the basis of any analysis undertaken by the Council.

The Council aims to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools ethically, with caution, and safely. AI may be used to assist with the analysis of submissions where appropriate.

AI will not be used where the Council determines that the nature of the submissions, privacy considerations, cultural considerations, or other factors make its use inappropriate.

Council officers will read all submissions (as submitted), and review any analysis produced using AI tools before information is relied upon for decision-making.

Where AI is used:

- personal information will be removed or otherwise protected in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020 and Council policies;
- only approved Council AI tools may be used; and
- all AI-generated outputs will be subject to human review.

[1] The Project Owner is the person ultimately responsible for the project and will be specifically defined for all consultation projects.

Ngā hua uiui me ngā whakataunga | **Results of consultation and decision**

Once a decision is made, the Council will make the decision and any supporting information available to submitters and the wider community.

Information will be shared in the most appropriate way for the consultation. This may include publication on the Council website, Council agendas and minutes, direct communication with submitters, or other communication channels.

Ētahi anō ara e tuku ai i ō kōrero | **Other ways to have your say**

The Council will encourage our community to make submissions when the Council is engaging on an issue or matter.

Where relevant and appropriate during the consultation period, Council may provide additional opportunities for the community to have their say. This may include community drop-in sessions, workshops, or suggestion boxes. These opportunities are dependent on the type of engagement required as outlined in the Significance and Engagement Policy.

Arotake Kaupapa Here | **Review of Policy**

This Policy will be reviewed every three years.

Tuhinga Hāngai | **Related Documents**

- Significance and Engagement Policy
- Masterton District Council Privacy Statement
- Social Media Policy

Ngā Tohutoro | **References**

- Local Government Act 2002
- Privacy Act 2020 and Masterton District Council Privacy Statement
- Public Records Act 2005
- Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987

Whakahaere Kōnae | **Version Control**

Version	Date	Summary of Amendments	Approved By
1	2/08/2023	Version 1 Approved	Council
2	28/10/2026	Policy reviewed and updated to reflect current submission practices, accessibility requirements, privacy considerations, hearing processes, AI-assisted analysis, and legislative and operational improvements.	Council