



**Report and Minutes of a Meeting of the
INFRASTRUCTURE & COMMUNITY FACILITIES COMMITTEE
held in the Council Chambers and via Teams, 15 Seymour Street, Blenheim on
THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2026 commencing at 9.00 am**

Present

Cllrs B G Dawson (in the Chair), S R W Adams (Deputy), J D N Croad, C M W Dawson, T P Sowman, B D Stace and Ms D McConnell (Iwi representative)

Present via Teams

Cllr D A Dalliessi

Also Present

Cllrs S J Arbuckle, B A Faulls, R J Innes

Also Present via Teams

Cllrs G A Hope

In Attendance

Messrs J Lyall (Group Manager Property & Community Facilities), G Blake (Chief Financial Officer), R Conningham (WSO Establishment Chief Executive (Acting) and Ms N Chauval (Committee Secretary)

Apologies

Cllrs B Dawson/Croad:

That the apology for absence from Mayor N P Taylor be received and sustained.

Carried

I&CF-0226-280 Declaration of Interests

-

No interests with items on the agenda were declared.

ATTENDANCE: David Craig, Council's Finance Business Partner - Operations and Tessa Dever, Council's Financial Reporting Manager were present for the following item.

**I&CF-0226-281 Capital Projects Report for the year to
31 December 2025**

F275-001-02

Tessa Dever noted that the purpose of the report was to present the Capital Projects Report for the Infrastructure and Services and Property and Community Facilities Departments for the year ending 31 December 2025.

The report covered the period from 1 July to 31 December 2025 and included information from Infrastructure and Services, Three Waters, and Property and Community Facilities. The report provided a detailed overview of capital project expenditure for the current financial year, outlining tracking at the individual project level, comparing actual expenditure with budget, and setting out forecast projections and any variances. The report provided members with clear visibility of progress on capital delivery, highlighting any emerging risks or delays, and supported informed decision-making regarding resource allocation and project prioritisation.

It was reported that forecasts have been aligned with the projections used in the 2026/27 budget process where available and will continue to be updated throughout the year.

During the discussion, members asked a number of questions and raised the A&P Park Pavilion construction and the possibility of arranging a site visit. Mr. Lyall agreed to organise a visit once the project reaches an appropriate stage.

To highlight the report a powerpoint presentation was shown (presentation filed in CM Record No. 2646976)

Cllrs Croad/Stace:

That the capital projects report for the year to 31 December 2025 be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Gregor Punzel, Senior Rivers Operations Engineer was present for the following item.

I&CF-0226-282 June – July 2025 Flood Damage Report R710-05-001

Gregor Punzel provided members with an overview of the drainage and flooding impacts from the severe winter weather events in June and July 2025, along with an update on the response actions and required repair works.

The report, which was separately attached to the item, was presented on screen, with all accompanying images displayed for context. Gregor Punzel took members through the document, providing explanations and commentary on the key points and visuals as he spoke. Members asked a number of question during the presentation.

Mr Punzel, in his background to the report, advised that the 27 June 2025 event was the third-largest recorded flood in the Wairau River, followed by another medium-sized event on 12 July 2025. Heavy rainfall caused high river flows across multiple catchments including the Wairau, Taylor, Ōpaoa, Ruakanakana, Spring Creek, Awatere, and Picton/ Waikawa areas. Peak flows reached 4,400 m³/s in the Wairau River and a 1-in-100-year event occurred in the Awatere River.

Members were advised that overall, the flood protection scheme performed well, though several areas experienced pressure, including stopbank WP01 at the Waihopai–Wairau confluence, which had no freeboard during the June peak. Stormwater pumping continued for extended periods in Blenheim and low-lying rural areas.

The events caused minor to moderate damage, worsened by the July flood. Urgent repairs have largely been completed, including stopbanks, tributary clearing, and SVIS intakes. Further permanent repairs are required across the Wairau, Waihopai, Diversion, Taylor, Omaka and Lower Ōpaoa systems. High-priority works are needed to stabilise eroded berms and protect stopbanks, particularly at Pauls Road, Giffords Road, Selmes Road, Lower Wairau and the Diversion.

It was reported that the total estimated repair cost is \$11.5m, with potential recoveries of up to \$1.0m from LAPP and \$4.4m from NEMA. Council's share is estimated at \$6.1m, with a further \$2.9m contingency signalled.

Members were advised that one option is to fund Council's share through a five-year loan serviced by the Infrastructure Upgrade Reserve, which would avoid additional rates increases and allow time for the Emergency Events Reserve to rebuild. Alternative options include a rates-funded loan or drawing directly from the Emergency Events Reserve.

It was emphasised that priority B works need to progress without delay due to the increased risk of further erosion should another major flood occur.

A discrepancy in the figures referenced in paragraphs 41 and 45 were identified. The discussion was paused at 9.45 am to allow Geoff Blake, Council's Chief Financial Officer, to leave the meeting and obtain the correct information. Members then proceeded to consider Item 5.

Geoff Blake returned to the meeting at 10.05 am during Item 7. At the conclusion of Item 7, the meeting returned to Item 4, where Mr Blake provided the corrected figures. Mr Blake apologised for the error, noting that while the correction makes a difference, it does not change the recommendation.

The following amendments to paragraphs 41 and 45 were noted:

41. *As per option 2 a five year loan would redirect approximately ~~\$0.7m~~ \$1.4m of loan funding requirements from this reserve and a ten year loan would redirect ~~\$0.4m~~ \$0.8m.*
45. *Draw down a loan and increase the Wairau River targeted rate to repay the loan. A five year loan would add approximately ~~\$0.7m~~ \$1.4m to rates (a ~~0.64%~~ 1.28% increase overall) and a ten year loan adds ~~\$0.4m~~ \$0.8m to rates (a ~~0.36%~~ 0.72% increase overall).*

It was noted that the cost is higher than originally anticipated; however, the reserve has the capacity to absorb this. Although careful management of the reserve will be required going forward, and decisions following the establishment of the Water Services Organisation will be critical.

Members were advised on the importance of paying down the loan more quickly, as similar funding demands are expected in the future. If the loan is not fully repaid within five years, it may become more difficult to fund subsequent projects from the Infrastructure Upgrade Reserve Fund.

Before the motion was put to the Committee, the Chair noted the minor amendment to point 6, that Option 3 should be referenced as Option 1.

Cllrs Adams/Croad:

1. **That the report be received.**
2. **That Council note \$1.1m has been committed to complete emergency works (priority A).**
3. **That Council note the importance of progressing the high-priority (priority B) works as soon as practicable to reduce the risk of further erosion and potential damage to critical stopbank infrastructure.**
4. **That Council note staff will proceed with the recommended schedule of repairs, commencing with the high priority works (priority B) estimated at \$4.0m.**
5. **That Council note the remaining repair works (priority C), estimated at \$7.0m, will be completed thereafter.**
6. **That Council approve a five year Infrastructure Upgrade Reserve funded loan, estimated at \$6.1m for Council's share, as per Option 1 below to fund the repayments for these emergency works.**
 - (a) ***Option 1: Draw down a loan and use the Infrastructure Upgrade Reserve to fund the repayments. Of note approximately \$2.5m to \$3.5m of River Land Lease income provides input to this reserve on an annual basis with the reserve being applied to infrastructure loan repayments.***

Carried

Note: At the conclusion of the item the meeting then returned to agenda Item 8 – Decision to Conduct Business with the Public Excluded.

ATTENDANCE: Jane Tito, Council's Manager, Parks & Open Spaces and Cheryl Steiner, Council's Parks and Open Spaces Planner, were present for the following item.

I&CF-0226-283

Liquidambar Tree Replacement in the Blenheim CBD

R510-034-002-25

Jane Tito noted that the purpose of the report was to outline a proposed plan for the replacement of liquidambar trees in the Blenheim town centre. The report noted that the town centre currently contains 54 liquidambar trees, most of which were planted in the early 2000s and continue to contribute positively to the streetscape

through their amenity and environmental benefits. An arborist assessment confirmed that the trees remain in good health, with most issues relating to tree form.

Members were advised that 16 of the trees overhang building verandas to varying degrees and three have been requested to be removed due to ongoing issues raised by the adjacent property owner.

Cheryl Steiner noted that while large-scale removal is not warranted at this stage, several trees continue to cause recurring issues, and it is recognised that all liquidambar trees will eventually outgrow their current space and location. The report recommended a staged and coordinated approach to tree replacement, including the short-term removal of three trees and longer-term planning aligned with future town centre revitalisation projects.

The report also provided background on the wider Blenheim CBD revitalisation programme and highlighted the role of street trees in contributing shade, amenity and environmental value. Reference was made to Council's Tree Policy 2024 as the guiding framework for managing the challenges associated with ageing tree assets. The Committee noted the history of previous removal requests relating to three liquidambar trees on Queen Street and George Street, which were declined as at the time they did not meet removal criteria under the policy.

It was acknowledged that although some residual risk remains, a planned approach to tree replacement would help reduce risk over time. Liquidambars are identified in the Tree Policy as unsuitable for street berms, and their expected growth over the next 10–15 years will eventually require removal and replacement.

It was noted that significant costs would be associated with large-scale removal due to tree size and planter bed design, and that uncoordinated removals would lead to inconsistent streetscapes and canopy gaps. A coordinated approach would require clear planning, funding and community engagement.

The estimated cost of removing and replacing each tree is \$8,000. Council's annual operating budget for Blenheim tree work is approximately \$250,000 and is sufficient to cover the removal of the three trees identified for early action. Any larger programme of work would require additional funding to be considered through the Long Term Plan.

Members sought reassurance that trees would not be removed and replaced without careful long-term consideration. It was noted that the replacement plan uses the terms "consider" and "consider options," meaning revitalisation projects will not automatically require the removal of all liquidambar trees. Instead, each project will involve a thorough assessment of whether the existing trees should be retained and, if removal is recommended, what appropriate replacement options may be suitable. It was emphasised that this is not a blanket approach and does not predetermine any specific outcome.

Cllrs Stace/Croad:

That the Committee endorse the proposed approach for liquidambar tree replacement in the Blenheim CBD.

Carried

I&CF-0226-284

Small Townships Programme Sub-Committee

D050-001-S03

The Minutes of the Small Townships Programme Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 November 2025 were attached for ratification by the Committee.

Clr Faulls requested an amendment to the minutes to record that she declared a conflict of interest for both Link Pathway items.

Cllrs B Dawson/Stace:

That the Minutes of the Small Townships Programme Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 November 2025 be ratified.

Carried

I&CF-0226-285

Information Package

-

Cllrs B Dawson/Stace:

That the Infrastructure & Community Facilities Information Package dated 26 February 2026 be received and noted.

Carried

I&CF-0226-286

Decision to Conduct Business with the Public Excluded

-

Cllrs B Dawson/Croad.:

That the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely:

- Renwick Community Memorial Hall
- Property Portfolio

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter and the specific grounds under Section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter	Ground(s) under Section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
Renwick Community Memorial Hall	In order to protect the privacy of natural persons, as provided for under Section 7(2)(a).	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists under Section 7 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.
Property Portfolio	To enable the Council, as holder of the information, to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations) provided for under Section 7(2)(i)	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists under Section 7 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Carried

Meeting adjourned at 10.10 am and resumed at 10.23 am

The meeting closed at 10.59 am.

Record No. 2647023