



End of Term Review Report: Auckland Council Demographic Advisory Panels 2022 – 2025

11 September, 2025



John Kingi

Facilitator and coordinating author.

Áine Kelly-Costello	Disability Advisory Panel
Barry de Geest	Disability Advisory Panel
Martine Abel-Williamson	Disability Advisory Panel
Dr Acacia Cochise	Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel
Ireen Rahiman-Manuel	Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel
Krish Naidu	Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel
Litiana Karika	Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel
Seumanu Matāfai	Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel
Josh Martin	Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel
Teresa Platt	Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel
Dr Claire Dale	Seniors Advisory Panel
Susanne Tapsell	Seniors Advisory Panel
Esther O'Donnell	Youth Advisory Panel
Kritika Selach	Youth Advisory Panel

Demographic Advisory Panels Review working group members.

Executive Summary

The 2022–2025 term has been a period of significant growth and consolidation for Auckland Council’s Demographic Advisory Panels. Operating for their 15th year, the six panels – Disability, Ethnic Communities, Pacific Peoples, Rainbow Communities, Seniors, and Youth – have continued to provide the Governing Body, Mayor, and council staff with strategic advice informed by lived experience and community insights.

This report provide an overview of the work of the panels across the term along with individual reports from each panel where they detail their highlights, experience, and recommendations for the future.

Establishment and Recruitment

Panels were re-established in 2022 under updated terms of reference, with changes designed to strengthen strategic engagement and cross-panel collaboration. Recruitment in early 2023 attracted strong interest, with 66 members appointed across six panels. The assessment centre model and targeted interviews were widely viewed as robust, transparent, and effective in ensuring diverse representation. Survey results indicated that 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the process was effective, though some noted gaps in representation.

The induction process was enhanced compared to previous terms, with handbooks, formal induction events, and targeted workshops. While 72% of members felt well-prepared, feedback highlighted a need for clearer role expectations, reduced time lag between appointment and induction, and identification of further training opportunities.

Leadership and Collaboration

Panels elected co-chairs who provided continuity and leadership, with most panels benefiting from a mix of returning and new leaders. The co-chairs forum emerged as a particularly influential structure, enabling shared advice on major council strategies and fostering relationships across panels. Members and staff consistently recognised the importance of strong co-chairs and effective facilitation to panel effectiveness.

Cross-panel forums and deliberative approaches including participatory forums on the Long-Term Plan, Representation Review, and emergency management, were widely valued. These forums supported shared priorities and amplified the collective voice of diverse communities. 93% of survey respondents agreed panels had a shared sense of values and purpose.

Strategic Priorities and Culture

Panels set their own strategic work programmes, later aligned into three overarching themes:

- **Climate resilience** for current and future generations.
- **Connection, belonging, and inclusion** for all Aucklanders.
- **Wellbeing and safety** across the region.

These priorities were applied to housing, transport, cost of living, and economic growth. While members valued opportunities to shape priorities, some felt more structured planning and deeper engagement on priorities would strengthen outcomes.

Panel culture was consistently described as respectful, inclusive, and collaborative. Whakawhanaungatanga (connecting with other panel members) and intentional relationship-building early in the term were highlighted as vital. The diversity of lived experiences, coupled with shared goals, was seen as a strength. Returning members played a crucial role in continuity, supporting newer members and embedding institutional knowledge.

Impact and Value

Panels contributed meaningfully to key strategies, plans, and operational work. Case studies highlighted areas of tangible and direct influence:

- **Disability Advisory Panel** led a community engagement forum that led to the development of a Disability Sector Inclusion programme, improving emergency preparedness and accessibility.
- **Cross-panel Long-Term Plan forum** consolidated diverse perspectives into principles that shaped the 2024–2034 plan.
- **Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel** advanced civic participation, contributing to increased Pacific candidates in 2025 local elections.

Staff and elected members affirmed that panels add credibility, sharpen council's strategic work, and bring community expertise that cannot be replicated internally. However, both panels and staff identified that there are further opportunities to show how advice is implemented through stronger tracking, feedback, and communication mechanisms.

Staff and Councillor Perspectives

Staff consistently described the panels as enriching, challenging, and inspiring. Co-lead officers, governance advisors, and the Principal Advisor Panels were identified as critical enablers. The Principal Advisor role was praised for leadership, continuity, and political navigation.

Elected members observed marked improvements from previous terms. Panels were seen as more integrated, influential, and representative of Auckland's communities. Councillors recommended:

- Earlier engagement in policy development, not only draft review.
- Stronger links to local boards.
- Ongoing institutional support to maintain continuity across terms.

Key Findings

- Panels have matured into a trusted and effective advisory mechanism, valued across council.
- Recruitment and induction improvements strengthened diversity and preparedness, though further clarity and training are needed.
- Cross-panel collaboration has significantly enhanced influence and visibility.
- Culture and relationships are strong, underpinned by effective leadership and staff support.
- Panels influence council strategy and planning but there are opportunities to further improve systematic mechanisms to measure and communicate impact.
- Sustainability to be considered through greater resourcing.

Acknowledgements

This end of term report reflects the collective commitment, expertise, and support of many people. We acknowledge with gratitude the six demographic advisory panels and working group members whose leadership and lived experience ensured diverse voices were represented in decision-making. Special thanks go to the co-chairs for their advocacy and strategic guidance, and to the principal advisor panels, governance advisor panels, and support team for their exceptional leadership, care, and coordination. We also recognise the co-lead officers for bridging communities with council processes, and the chief liaison councillor and panel liaison councillors for strengthening the panels' influence within governance. We thank all council staff

who engaged with the panels, listened with openness, and embraced diverse perspectives as genuine partners in shaping strategies and plans, and finally we acknowledge the mayor who once again saw the value of these panels and re-established them.

Conclusion

The 2022–2025 term has demonstrated that the Demographic Advisory Panels are a vital mechanism for embedding equity, inclusion, and diverse voices in Auckland Council’s governance. They have matured into a respected advisory body, offering lived expertise that shapes strategies and decisions. To ensure their continued impact beyond 2025, sustained investment in induction, resourcing, and impact measurement is required. Their ongoing role is essential for a Tāmaki Makaurau that is inclusive, resilient, and representative of all Aucklanders.

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1.0 Purpose

This is the end of term review report for the 2022 – 2025 Auckland Council Demographic Advisory Panels (the panels) and provides a comprehensive overview of the panels work informed by insights garnered from panel members, council staff, and elected members.

2.0 Context

Auckland Council, Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki-Makaurau, is Aotearoa, New Zealand’s largest unitary authority, providing services to more than 1.7 million Aucklanders.¹ In 2023, Auckland’s population reflected increasing diversity across age, ethnicity, and identity. There were 219,753 people aged 65 and over (13.3% of the population) and 539,829 children and young people aged 0–24 (32.6%). Ethnic diversity continues to grow, with 518,178 people (31.3%) identifying as Asian, 275,079 (16.6%) as Pacific Peoples, and 44,718 (2.7%) as Middle Eastern, Latin American, or African (MELAA), each increasing at a faster rate than Auckland’s overall population growth of 5.4% since 2018. Additionally, around 14% of Aucklanders (over 200,000 people) reported living with a disability, while 57,324 adults identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community.^{2 3 4}

The panels, first established in 2011, support the council to achieve meaningful engagement in particular, section 9 of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 which requires the Mayor of Auckland to ensure effective engagement between the council and the people of Auckland.

Since their establishment, the panels have evolved and adapted over time. Multiple reviews have been conducted, the latest being at the end of the 2019 – 2022 term.⁵ The panels were re-established in 2022 by Mayor Wayne Brown, and have been in operation for 14 years fulfilling an important function within the council’s governance, engagement and insights mechanisms. The panels ensure that diverse

¹ Statistics New Zealand. [Auckland Region, Place and ethnic group summaries | Stats NZ](#)

² Auckland Council. [2023 Census results for Auckland. Summary reports - Knowledge Auckland](#)

³ Statistics New Zealand. [Household Disability Survey 2023: Final content | Stats NZ](#)

⁴ Statistics New Zealand. [2023 Census shows 1 in 20 adults belong to Aotearoa New Zealand’s LGBTIQ+ population \(corrected\) | Stats NZ](#)

⁵ Dosmukhambetova, D and J Allpress (2019). Review of the 2016-2019 Auckland Council demographic advisory panels. Auckland Council technical report, TR2019/021

communities are able to provide expert advice, informed by their lived experiences, to the mayor, governing body, and council staff.

2.1 Overview of this report

This report was commissioned to provide a comprehensive collated end of term report for the panels work during the 2022 -2025 local body term. The report may assist in future recommendations regarding the re-establishment of the panels following the 2025 local body elections and potential changes to the panel model for consideration.

This report places a focus on the perspectives of panel members, council staff, and elected members and their experiences of the panels model throughout in helping to shape and guide the future of the panels.

This report covers the panel's activities during the period from agreement to re-establish the panels in 2022, through to one month before the 2025 local body elections when the panels completed their substantive work.

2.2 Methodology

This report process included a desktop review of panel work programmes and other key documentation, establishment of a working group of panel members to test and refine the approach and content, alongside specific engagements with each panel, the co-chairs forum, and other relevant panel meetings and engagements. A dedicated cross-panel workshop for all panel members provided an opportunity to input and provide feedback along with a detailed end of term survey. Interviews were conducted with key staff, the panels chief liaison councillor, and panel liaison councillors and feedback was provided from staff who had engaged with the panels during the term. In total, more than 400 individual pieces of feedback were considered through the report process.

2.3 Data

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilised in the development of this report including individual interviews, surveys, workshops, and regular feedback mechanisms. All data utilised in this report has been captured and provided to council staff.

3.0 Panel establishment and operation

In December 2022, the Mayor and governing body agreed to re-establish the demographic advisory panels and endorsed an updated terms of reference.⁶ The panels must be re-established at the start of each local body term due to their operation being at the discretion of the mayor.

There were six demographic advisory panels for the 2022-2025 term including:

- Disability Advisory Panel (DAP)
- Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel (ECAP)
- Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel (PPAP)
- Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel (RCAP)
- Seniors Advisory Panel (SAP)
- Youth Advisory Panel (YAP)

The council noted that panels ensure access to advice from communities of interest and supports the ability of council to respond to existing and emerging issues. Key changes to the approach for the panels included:

- A reduction in formal meetings and increase in workshops, enabling greater collaboration and flexibility in how panels operate.
- A change in how volunteer staff support the panel, from a lead to a co-lead officer model, to enable greater sharing of workload.
- An improved recruitment and induction process to support greater understanding of the role of panel members.
- Increased opportunities for earlier input into strategy development and improved feedback from Council on the impact of panel advice.
- Enhanced opportunities for cross-panel collaboration focused on Council priorities.
- Engagement with local boards on regional strategy.

⁶Auckland Council website. [Minutes of Governing Body - Thursday, 15 December 2022](#)

3.1 Role and function of the demographic advisory panels

The terms of reference 2022 – 2025, details the key role, functions, and approach for the panels.⁷ The panels provide advice within the remit of the Auckland plan across the following areas:

- Auckland Council’s regional policies, plans and strategies.
- Regional and strategic matters including those that Council-Controlled Organisations deal with.
- Any matter of particular interest or concern to diverse communities.

Each panel must develop a strategic work programme for the term to focus their work and create an integrated approach for collaboration. There is also scope to undertake specific projects or engagements of their own choosing, subject to resourcing and capacity.

During this term, the panels were required to have between eight and 12 members, with at least two members of the panel having lived experience in te ao Māori. This requirement was not mandatory for the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel and the Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel. Each panel is responsible for electing two members to serve as co-chairs who are responsible for chairing all panel meetings and workshops and acting as the spokesperson for the panel as needed.

A member of the governing body is appointed as a Chief Liaison Councillor and is responsible for ensuring an integrated panel approach working with individual Liaison Councillors who work with individual panels. For the 2022 – 2025 term these were:

- Chief Liaison Councillor – Cr Julie Fairey
- Liaison Councillor RCAP – Cr Richard Hills
- Liaison Councillor ECAP – Cr Kerrin Leoni
- Liaison Councillor SAP – Cr Alf Filipaina
- Liaison Councillor DAP – Cr Sharon Stewart
- Liaison Councillor YAP – Cr Shane Henderson
- Liaison Councillor PPAP – Cr Lotu Fuli

⁷ Terms of Reference Auckland Council Demographic Advisory Panels 2022 – 2025.
<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-council-works/advisory-panels/Documents/terms-reference-demographic-advisory-panels.pdf>

The principal advisor panels is responsible for the overall management and operation of the panels. Each panel is further supported by two co-lead officers responsible for providing strategic advice and support to the panels and their co-chairs, and governance advisors who support with crucial administration and operations.

Panels conducted their business primarily through meetings, workshops, and cross panel forums. Regularly scheduled panel meetings take place in 6-9 week cycles, with up to 6 meetings taking place per calendar year. Additional meetings were established, including a forum for co-chairs and working groups to consider specific matters such as elections. Further participatory forums were introduced during the term, to consider the long-term plan and response to cyclone Gabrielle. Across the term, the panels undertook:

- 28 individual panel meetings
- 56 panel workshops
- 49 additional engagements
- 6 community engagement meetings
- 9 cross panel forums
- 10 co-chairs forums
- 17 working group meetings

In total there was a more than 200% increase in cross panel engagements between the 2019 – 2022 and 2022 – 2025 terms.

4.0 Recruitment and induction

Panel members are selected based on a range of considerations including their individual competencies, lived experience with relevant diverse communities, experience and ability to offer policy and strategic advice, and understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi. Panel members for the 2022 – 2025 panels were appointed by the mayor in May 2023.

4.1 Recruitment process

Recruitment for members of the panels began in January 2023, following endorsement by the governing body to establish the panels for the 2022 – 2025 term. A detailed recruitment page was launched through the council careers page and marketing for the panels was conducted through advertisements placed on social media sites and job sites. Applications were open from January – March 2023.

Applicants were initially screened by council's talent acquisition team to identify a pool of appropriately skilled and qualified candidates. They were then invited to attend an assessment centre exercise, followed by individual interviews with recommendations then made to the mayor on final panel members to be appointed.

The assessment centre exercise involved candidates being split into small groups to hear a presentation from a facilitator regarding a council strategy. They were then asked to discuss the strategy, formulate advice and feedback, and present their advice to the wider group. Council staff with lived experiences of the relevant communities, alongside former panel members, were invited to assess the candidates by observing their interactions through the exercise and scoring them against a range of competencies including:

- Communication and collaboration – interacts openly and co-operatively with other candidates through sharing ideas while also showing active listening.
- Advice and feedback – demonstrates the ability to give strategic advice and provide feedback in a constructive and clear manner.
- Lived experience – demonstrates knowledge of their communities' ideas and challenges through examples and understanding of barriers.
- Intercultural competency – assessing if they can interact with people across a range of cultures, gender, and diverse perspectives.

The approach provided an opportunity to assess how candidates would interact in a similar setting and format to what would be experienced in a panel meeting. Individual interviews enabled further testing of applicant's competencies across the core skill areas.

An expedited process for returning applicants was a key area of feedback from previous terms as a mechanism to ensure continuity and experience on the panels through incentivising experienced applicants to consider returning. Returning applicants were defined as former panel members who had served on a panel during the 2019 – 2022 local body term. These applicants were not required to attend the assessment centre exercise, and instead took part in an interview. The approach further recognised that a returning panel member would have a potential advantage in an assessment exercise that replicated panel meetings which a returning applicant had experience of.

The recruitment process was completed in April 2023 and resulted in a recommendation to appoint 66 panel members for the new term, 11 members for each of RCAP, SAP, YAP, and ECAP, 10 members for DAP, and 12 members for PPAP. The recommended panel members were approved by the mayor.

Feedback from panel members indicated that the recruitment process was welcoming, and they felt they could speak freely on their experiences. The assessment centre exercise also received positive feedback, and some applicants felt they learnt about council through the process. Networking was an area highlighted also, and members felt that a strong sense of community and shared connectedness was created with other applicants. There was support for the process including one on one interviews, particularly from an accessibility perspective. The communication was noted as being clear and consistent and the end of term survey results saw 74% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the recruitment process was effective and resulted in a strong and diverse panel makeup.

4.2 The induction process

The induction process for new panel members began in May 2023. A panel handbook was provided to the panel members and included information regarding the function of the panels, how the panels operate, role descriptions, profiles of the chief and liaison councillors and key staff, information about the structure and operations of Auckland Council, and included relevant information relating to payments and expenses.

A detailed induction programme began with an inaugural event in May 2023 to formally begin the 2022-2025 demographic advisory panel term. The event included the mayor, councillors, members of council's senior leadership team, and key panel support staff. The event provided an opportunity for panel members to hear from the mayor and councillors, senior leaders, and to meet each other for the first time. Interim chairs were also announced, with responsibility for leading the panels during the first three months before permanent co-chairs were elected. Interim Chairs were supported by the principal advisor panels to focus on the development of individual panel strategic work programmes as a critical requirement laid out in the terms of reference.

Two deeper dive induction sessions were held in June and July 2023, and covered the key elements laid out in the handbook providing further opportunities to unpack and understand the panel member role, role of supporting staff, the Council's structure and to identify immediate milestones. A question-and-answer session was also held with former and returning panel members to share their insights with new members.

Feedback from panel members highlighted the importance of the induction process as a critical enabler for new panel members to understand their role. 72% of respondents in the end of term survey agreed or strongly agreed that the panels received a good induction and had greater role clarity because of the induction sessions.

“The induction, training, and ongoing learning from our panel has been excellent”. – Panel member

“The induction process was good, and helpful for panel members to understand their role in providing strategic advice”. – Panel member

Other feedback noted that a greater range of material could have been provided through the recruitment process to enable successful candidates to prepare for the role. There was feedback that the period between recruitment ending and induction beginning was time that could have been better utilised. Some panel members indicated they felt some confusion early on about whether they were expected to act as representatives of their communities. Clear guidelines of what to expect in the first few months of the panel term was noted as a potential mitigation to this confusion.

“I think there’s a gap in how well panel members understand the weight of their role and the potential for real influence. When I first joined, I didn’t fully grasp how to share our whakaaro in a way that would land and lead to change. I felt underprepared and a bit out of my depth. Over time, I’ve developed more confidence speaking to those in positions of power, like councillors and the mayor, but that was something I had to figure out on the fly. It would have made a big difference to have that support and insight upfront. I’d recommend we think more deliberately about how we equip panel members with the tools, context, and confidence to contribute meaningfully from the outset. There’s a real opportunity to strengthen that part.” – Panel member

A broader induction process was also noted as being necessary, which could involve presentations from different departments on their role and functions and a technology induction.

5.0 Co-Chairs

Each panel was led by two co-chairs who were members of the panel elected within the first three months of the term. The role of a co-chair is laid out in the terms of reference, and is responsible for chairing all panel meetings and workshops, and determining the agenda in consultation with the liaison councillor, co-lead officers, and the principal advisor panels. A role description was also provided in the panel handbook.

The co-chairs for the 2022-2025 demographic advisory panels were:

- Disability Advisory Panel – Martine Abel-Williamson and Barry De Geest
- Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel – Krish Naidu and Ireen Rahiman-Manuel
- Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel – Litiana Karika and Seumanu Matāfai
- Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel – Josh Martin and Teresa Platt
- Seniors Advisory Panel – Dr Claire Dale, Dr Edwina Pio (to October 2024), Susanne Tapsell (from December 2024)
- Youth Advisory Panel – Sanat Singh, Vira Paky (to September 2024), Kritika Selach (from September 2024)

Except for the Youth Advisory Panel, who had no returning panel members due to term limits or panel members choosing not to return, at least one of the co-chairs elected for each panel was a returning panel member. This ensured a level of experience alongside fresh energy and new ideas and was noted as being of benefit to the panels.

“(it is important to have) ...strong co-chairs”. – Panel member

“Having a co-chair who was here in the previous term was helpful”. – Panel member

“Our team, especially our co-chairs, are super onto it and ensure that accountability and needed feedback are given” – Panel member

Some panel members felt that the co-chairs could have provided more feedback to members, particularly where new panel members joined part way through the term due to resignations.

“Perhaps the feedback mechanism between co-chairs and panel members isn’t the best. I felt a bit behind because it took me time to learn and become comfortable and confident...” – Panel member

5.1 The co-chair's forum

During the 2016 – 2019 term an optional chairs' meeting was established as an informal opportunity to provide for cross learning between the panels and to gain strategic input into the overarching panels programme of work. This was developed further during the 2019 – 2022 term, with a regular co-chairs forum established to further strengthen cross panel ties and to enhance the influence of the panels as a collective group with many shared perspectives on issues of importance to Aucklanders.

When establishing the panels for the term, the mayor and governing body agreed to provide enhanced opportunities for cross-panel collaboration, and the re-establishment of and development of an enhanced co-chairs forum was a key element within this approach.

A specific co-chairs induction programme was designed, to recognise the importance of the co-chair role, the need for more specific training to support aligned to the responsibilities and duties of the role, and to support the development of relationships amongst the cohort. Three sessions were held across the term in 2023, 2024 and a final session in early 2025. The co-chairs also developed a cross panel work programme to further enhance this collaborative approach. Panel members reflected that the co-chairs forum was a visible and influential component of the term.

“I saw most change affected by the co-chairs forum” – Panel member

Feedback from co-chairs was supportive of a more intensive and targeted co-chairs approach to support them in their role and they noted the strong sense of camaraderie and relationships that were developed through the approach.

“I have really appreciated the co-chairs forum and working with the chairs of the other panels” – Panel co-chair

Council staff also utilised the forum as an additional mechanism for targeted advice and engagement in addition to regular panel meetings. The principal advisor panels and the governance advisor panels were instrumental in supporting the co-chairs forum to identify strategic opportunities for engagement which included opportunities to engage with the governing body, council committees, and external engagements. The schedule of these engagements is included as [Appendix A – Advisory Panels: cross-panel work and additional engagements in the 2022-2025 term](#) to this review.

6.0 Cross panel and deliberative approaches

A range of cross panel activities were undertaken during the term, in line with the strategic decision to enhance these activities across the term. These opportunities were seen as a mechanism to enhance and increase the panels influence by identifying shared perspectives from across the panels and how they impact many of the diverse communities across the city in similar ways. Cross panel forums were created to provide a collaborative space for consideration of these shared issues.

Through the term, the council, at the urging of the mayor, sought to introduce greater deliberative democratic principles into how council undertakes engagement as a means of increasing levels of participation. These principles were most evident in the implementation of participatory forums to consider key strategies and plans. Participatory forums involved a more direct and intensive approach to discussing issues, often supported by a facilitator with responsibility for garnering perspectives from panel members and invited community partners and then crafting bespoke pieces of advice to the mayor and governing body.

The topics considered through cross panel, co-chairs, and participatory forums during the term included:

- The Long-Term Plan 2024 – 2034 participatory forum
- Representation Review participatory forum
- Local Board and Advisory Panel members cross panel forum on draft Local Board Emergency Response Plans
- Storm Recovery and Resilience cross panel forum
- Te Ara Hauāuru – Northwest Busway cross panel forum, Auckland Transport
- Māori Advisory Panel members cross panel forum
- Community Civil Defence and Emergency Management cross panel forum
- Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19: Lessons Learned Te Tira Ārai Uruta co-chairs forum
- End of Term report cross panel forum
- Community City Centre Safety Plan Refresh cross panel forum

Each of these fora resulted in key strategic advice being provided to the mayor, governing body and staff.

Working groups were another mechanism continued from previous panel terms and provided opportunities for panels to consider in greater detail particular projects or areas of focus. The working groups established during the term included the Elections working group and a Māori representatives cross panel group.

6.1 Panel members feedback on the cross panel and deliberative approaches

Panel members were supportive of the cross panel and deliberative approach utilised throughout the term. The approach was seen as enhancing a shared and more strategic way of working to increase the panels collaboration and influence. The cross-panel experience was noted as providing the opportunity for broader perspectives and insights to be developed and was seen as critical to developing a sense of connection amongst panel members.

“The cross-panel culture is very positive and as a result we work together to produce agreement on issues effectively. What I find interesting about the culture of our panel and the cross panel is that despite the....structures of our meetings we are able to reflect....problem solving korero that crosses the diverse cultures of our panels. It is my view that this adaptability around how we talk to one another is a key strength and if we are looking at what to build on it would be that ability. The beginnings of a cross Māori group is an excellent initiative that is yet to develop its own culture (but will).” – Panel member

“Cross-Panel engagement has been enriching for all” – Panel member

Examples were given of how the cross panel and deliberative approaches supported intersections between panels such as between members of the ethnic and rainbow panels’, or between the seniors and disability panels’ and of the efficacy of the working group approach.

“Panels have been effective in....sharing insights.....An excellent example has been the Cross-panel Elections Working Group, where the Council staff have acted on recommendations and supported Panel members in their desire for better grassroots understanding of the functions of local government and improved voter participation as a consequence.” – Panel member

“We had a number of inter-panel meetings where all demographic panels could share their priorities and points of views which were very helpful” – Panel member

93% of respondents in the end of term survey either agreed or strongly agreed that the panels have a shared sense of values and an aligned purpose which may reflect the greater investment this term in cross panel and deliberative approaches.

Some areas of feedback noted the need for strong facilitation to ensure all voices are heard when engaging in larger numbers. Some members felt that even greater cross panel collaboration is needed. The time and pace of the cross panels and forums was also commented on.

“Cross panel meetings have sometimes felt a bit rushed and time pressured, and at times could be better facilitated to enable panel members to make the best contribution they can.” – Panel member

“Sometimes Panel and cross-panel meetings feel a bit rushed, with not quite enough time for discussion.” – Panel member

The cross-panel approach has become a well-established and embedded element of the panels and has contributed significantly to the work undertaken as the panels have continued to mature and embed over successive terms.

7.0 Strategic work priorities

The terms of reference require that the panels develop a work programme and set a strategic agenda for the term to support integration and collaboration across the panels, and guide their work. Panels are also empowered to consider specific projects or topics that they may have a particular interest in.

An early element of the induction process was focused on supporting interim chairs to guide their panels to focus on identifying their priorities and areas of focus for the term. Each panel undertook further development of their strategic work priorities across their first six months. Once set, the strategic work priorities provide a guide to focus the panels on their work across the council. Co-lead officers and support staff, alongside the principal advisor panels were responsible for supporting co-chairs and panel members to maintain a focus on their priorities through the term and identify relevant strategies, plans, and teams to engage with and advance their priority areas.

72% of respondents in the end of term survey strongly agreed that they were encouraged and given the opportunity to contribute to the panel's priorities while other respondents indicated that there could have been greater opportunities to focus on the priorities.

*“I think we've got a ways to go still in figuring out how we work more proactively on our priorities, maybe we could spend a bit more time not just identifying them but talking to our staff and making a plan about *how* we're going to tackle them in a more strategic way thinking the whole way across the term. No one's doing anything wrong - I just feel like we could structure our time better, say no to some things to input more deeply on others” – Panel member*

As noted previously, a cross panel work programme was also developed by co-chairs, which identified from the individual panel strategic priorities areas of overlap and common interest across the panels. Key themes were identified and included vision-based statements that reflected the aspirations of diverse communities:

THEMES		
Tāmaki-Makaurau, Auckland as a city which is climate resilient for current and future generations of Aucklanders.	Tāmaki-Makaurau, Auckland as a city which fosters connection, belonging, and inclusion for all Aucklanders.	Tāmaki-Makaurau, Auckland as a city which supports the wellbeing and safety of Aucklanders.

These themes were then applied across key priority areas including transport, economic growth, development and cost of living, and housing. The intention of this approach was to highlight areas within the council’s remit, that panels could then focus their advice around on a regular basis.

7.1 Panel member insights

The impact and associated value that the panels make is felt most keenly through the advice and influence they have, as opposed to having responsibility for decisions. Their impact is largely felt through the engagement that is undertaken with the mayor, governing body, and staff and through their ongoing and increasing utilisation as they mature and embed within council over time. This section summarises the key insights shared by panel members relating to their experiences during the term. Each panel has also written a specific report summarising and highlighting their specific areas of focus which are available as separate reports.

7.3 Strategic advisory role

Panel members articulated that the panels are provided good opportunities to give feedback and advice and have a strong platform to influence council strategies and policy. The focus on providing advice and setting clear expectations around outcomes was also a frequent matter raised. Overwhelmingly panel members noted that the panels are held in good regard by council and contributed to several significant strategies, plans, and areas of work.

“I think we’re doing an amazing job with the time we have to fulfil our tasks. Members on the panel feel comfortable to bring forth any concerns or issues they may have with a system or topic of discussion when needed and we have in depth, collaborative, and respectful korero. We have a good mix of people from different backgrounds which brings a rich well of experience to the table.”
– Panel member

“Over the last term we have contributed on some significant matters such as the floods and the consequent work of emergency management. I note that in this instance our feedback/suggestions were not only noted but there are examples where that feedback was reflected in policy. I suspect our contributions do two things - reinforce ideas and proposed actions already understood as needed or, more rarely, when we alert council to a new aspect of an issue.” – Panel member

“The panel offers a strong platform for us to share feedback and challenge Council strategy and policy. That part is working well.” – Panel member

Panel members advocated for more deliberate mechanisms to be implemented for panels to have visibility of how their advice is implemented and reflected in council outcomes. While the advisory nature of their roles is evident, and opportunities are provided, some members advocated for more regular and frequent meetings and engagements and that at times the meetings and forums felt rushed and lacked sufficient time to engage meaningfully in discussions.

“A little bit more info is needed in terms of what advice have been considered, executed or discussed” – Panel member

“Sometimes there can be a misunderstanding between providing advice and doing something more 'concrete.’” – Panel member

“Being a late entrant to the Panels I found that my understanding of the scope of the Panel’s work and what we can do was less obvious at first, and something that took some time to understand. This could be more clearly defined moving forward, for future staff members and panellists, in a straightforward way - for example, here’s a policy that needed consulting on, here’s the feedback from xyz Panel which informed it, and this was the outcome.” – Panel member

7.4 Culture of the panels

Culture is a critical element to the effectiveness and cohesion of the panels, with a strong need for collaboration to support a constructive panel environment. Due to this importance, ensuring panel members are able to operate collaboratively is a skillset specifically sought through recruitment and reinforced through the induction. Panel members highlighted a range of key elements that were critical to developing a strong culture within panels including the role of co-chairs, a productive working relationship with staff, and time being invested in building

relationships through the process of whakawhanaungatanga (connection) early in the panel term.

“The culture is what keeps the panel involved- the culture really comes down to the co-chairs and the council staff working together well. Where the panel finds comfort and security within the Co-chairs, it seems they're more likely to feedback with confidence and safety.” – Panel member

“I have had an incredible time working with my fellow panelists, they are incredibly knowledgeable and generous with their time and expertise and are always kind and supportive.” – Panel member

Panel members noted that overall they felt their panels and colleagues operated respectfully and they valued the opportunity to hear a range of diverse perspectives and views. Intersectionality within individual panels and across different panels was frequently commented on as a strength, with panel members having a range of different backgrounds and lived experiences, but also a shared goal of wanting to make Auckland a thriving city for all. Returning panel members were noted as critical to continuity and supporting new panel members.

“Panel members come from very different backgrounds and experiences but have a strong shared desire for the best outcomes for Auckland.” – Panel member

“From my experience, the culture of the panel is respectful, and we all have a chance to speak if we wish to do so. Having whakawhanaungatanga is a great way to connect with each other and maintain our mutual relationship with a common purpose.” – Panel member

The end of term survey results on culture are attached at [Appendix B](#).

8.0 Measuring the value and impact of the panels

The impact and value of the panels has continued to improve markedly during the term. The panels have demonstrated their strategic influence across council as they have provided valuable advice, feedback, and perspectives. The panels are acknowledged for reinforcing existing ideas and occasionally surfacing new issues. Cross panel contributions have been highlighted as effective and showing evidence of influencing policy decisions with one example being the role that SAP played around the \$50 weekly transport cost cap.

Panel members noted at length how they have been able to provide valuable advice and perspectives that inform improved outcomes.

“The panels are effective and trusted as advisors to mitigate risks and reflect the voices of diverse communities” – Panel member

“The panels are performing well in their advice and interactions with council staff, and have ongoing relationships with many of Council’s departments and strategic plans” – Panel member

They further noted the increased quantity of advice given through a range of enhanced mechanisms.

“This term has been a great improvement from the previous term because of the amount of advice we have given, the invitations to be involved in many workshops opportunities to collaborate with other panels, staff and GB (governing body).” – Panel member

Through the end of term survey panels members identified several areas where they have shown value to council and communities including:

- **Diverse representation:** Panels brought value by bringing lived experiences and cultural perspectives that help shape inclusive policies. Panel members described panels as “a strong platform” for communities’ voices to be heard in council.
- **Trusted advisors:** Survey data showed panels are generally trusted by staff and the Governing Body and recognised as contributing positively to organisational culture and decision-making.

- **Community connection:** Panels give councillors and staff direct access to insights from Auckland’s diverse communities. Visibility of panel contributions to the wider public and external stakeholders is growing.
- **Internal value:** Staff and councillor support was praised as a key enabler of panel effectiveness. The panels were also seen as spaces for members’ personal growth, learning, and leadership development.

The role of key support staff was noted as being critical to supporting the impact of the panels. Both staff and panel members had a range of views on how to continue to show the impact of the panels and to close the loop on what advice had been given and what changes or outcomes were as a result.

“I think a good example of closing the loop was the long term plan process....panel members could see how their advice flowed into the outcomes. That isn’t possible however for every piece of work so setting clear expectations with panel members will be important” – Panel member

Advice that panel members provide is now captured enabling further consideration of how advice can influence council decisions.

The overall value and impact of the panels is only continuing to grow, and they are widely viewed as a valuable and necessary mechanism for ensuring diverse voices inform council decisions. They provide cultural richness, constructive challenge, and community insight. Effectiveness has improved compared to past terms, continuing to enhance closing the feedback loop and strengthening engagement with decision-makers are critical to maximising impact and sustaining value.

Three case studies detail the impact that the panels can have on council work.

8.1 Case studies

Case Study: Disability Sector Inclusion in Emergency Preparedness – Auckland Emergency Management.

Research shows that disabled people are disproportionately affected during disasters. In 2019, New Zealand’s National Disaster Resilience Strategy highlighted the specific challenges faced by disabled communities in emergency situations including barriers to information, facilities, and services during emergencies, a lack of disability perspectives being incorporated into emergency planning and response frameworks, and consideration of specific challenges faced by disabled peoples

during emergencies. The Disability Advisory Panel (DAP) chose to focus their community engagement in this area, and organised a community led hui attended by 80 members of disability communities to foster relationships, share lessons from the 2023 Auckland extreme weather events, and to inform local and regional emergency preparedness planning.

Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) responded to this and worked with the DAP and disability organisations to shape the Disability Sector Inclusion (DSI) programme. Key actions included:

- **Accessibility reviews** of civil defence centres.
- **Accessible public education materials** (alternative formats, plain language).
- **Exploring relief facilities** that could be managed by disability organisations.
- **Building relationships** with disability groups to share readiness information and co-design solutions.

AEM undertook specific engagement with the disability community as a result of the leadership of the DAP to discuss emergency preparedness. These conversations emphasised the importance of the community determining and communicating its own needs, active involvement in decision-making at all levels, and ensuring dignity and equity during emergency events.

The process undertaken has seen increased collaboration between the DAP, AEM, and community organisations. Tangible progress toward more inclusive facilities, communications, and planning is being made with greater recognition of the disability community's role as partners in resilience, not just recipients of support.

The key lessons in this work include:

- **Inclusion requires partnership:** solutions are stronger when co-designed with the disability community.
- **Accessibility is proactive:** embedding accessibility into planning is more effective than reacting during emergencies.
- **Equity builds resilience:** reducing barriers for disabled people strengthens preparedness for the whole community.

AEM will continue implementing DSI programme actions, assess progress against recommendations, and maintain ongoing engagement with the DAP and disability communities to ensure emergency management in Tāmaki Makaurau is inclusive,

equitable, and effective and acknowledged the role of the DAP in influencing change.

Barry De Geest KSO, co-chair of the DAP noted the progress and challenged agencies to continue to do more and was pleased with the progress undertaken by AEM to improve the safety and experiences of disability communities.

Case study – Auckland Council Long Term Plan engagement.

To inform its 2024–2034 Long Term Plan (LTP), Auckland Council held three forums with demographic advisory panels and community partners. Over 70 participants shared perspectives from ethnic, pacific, youth, rainbow, senior, and disability communities.

The LTP process sought to balance the need for financial constraint to limit rate rises with the need to invest in an inclusive and future focused manner, while also addressing significant historical underinvestment across key infrastructure.

To facilitate a more meaningful engagement approach with the panels, a series of forums were held where participants could assess the proposals put forward by the mayor through the consultation process and test them against three shared principles:

1. **Visionary, future-focused, and inclusive** – investing for resilience, innovation, and community access.
2. **Equitable outcomes** – addressing historic underinvestment and ensuring fair distribution of resources.
3. **Centring communities** – prioritising wellbeing, accessibility, and local voices.

Through an external facilitator, key priority proposals were identified around transport, parks and community, and the proposed Auckland Future Fund. There were also several gaps identified for council to consider in the future including:

- Lack of a clear long-term **vision** beyond financial framing.
- Limited **impact analysis** on “pay less get less” proposals.
- Missing perspectives from **mana whenua** and local boards.
- Insufficient transparency on **budget implications** and Auckland Future Fund management.
- Engagement barriers due to complex or inaccessible consultation materials.

The forums process produced a consolidated set of community-informed principles and practical advice for the Governing Body. Council staff noted the value of the panel's engagement through the process:

“As lead for the LTP, I found the panels engagement and feedback invaluable to our process but more importantly to the outcome of such a significant project. This term was especially impressive due to the nature of the panel members cross-panel collaboration forum. This was incredibly effective when advocating for diverse communities and the intersectional nature of the challenges faced by so many. On a personal level I found the panels incredibly thoughtful and generous – it was a great pleasure to spend time getting to understand the varying perspectives of individual members.” – LTP project lead

Case study – Civic participation in pacific communities

The Pacific People's Advisory Panel hosted a fono in April 2025 to work with their communities to increase civic participation. Pasifika communities in Auckland continue to experience low voter turnout compared to the city-wide average. In the 2022 local elections, turnout in areas with the highest Pacific populations was 26–32%, compared with the Auckland average of 35.5%.

The participants identified that barriers to participation are varied involving systemic and contextual challenges including:

- Limited visibility of Pasifika leaders in decision-making roles.
- Economic pressures (Covid recovery, weather events, cost of living).
- Lack of accessible civic education and voter information.
- Distrust or disconnection from political systems.
- The fono identified opportunities to address these challenges and barriers through:
 - **Representation:** Supporting Pasifika candidates to build trust and visibility.
 - **Education:** Youth and schools are key drivers of long-term change.
 - **Community mobilisation:** Churches, sports clubs, and cultural groups are trusted hubs.
 - **Accessibility:** Make voting easier with localised support and culturally tailored resources.

These insights were further progressed through the elections working group within council and has contributed to an increase in Pacific candidates standing for election at the 2025 Local Body elections, with more than 60 candidates standing across the various roles up for election. This piece of work highlights that Pasifika communities are not disengaged but face systemic and contextual barriers. By centring youth leadership, increasing representation, and empowering community-led initiatives, Auckland can ensure local democracy better reflects its diverse voices.

9.0 Staff and the advisory panels

Providing advice to council staff, informed by their lived experiences, is a critical element of the panel role. Council staff engage with panels for a range of reasons, including consultation on key council plans and strategies such as the long term plan or the annual budget, or on specific issues or matters such as emergency management matters. As has been noted previously, panel members have expressed a mixed range of views regarding how effective they feel they have been in their engagement with staff. Interviews were undertaken and feedback received from 31 staff members including co-lead officers, governance advisors, staff who presented or engaged with the panels, and the principal advisor panels.

9.1 Principal Advisor Panels

The principal advisor panels provides governance and operational oversight, works closely with panel members, co-chairs, co-lead officers, governance advisors, and the chief liaison councillor and liaison councillors and provides pastoral care and strategic and political management.

There was universal support from panel members, staff, and elected members for the role and its importance to the effectiveness of the panels. Survey feedback from panel members consistently highlighted the principal advisor panels as an instrumental and highly valued leader, critical to the effectiveness of the panels. The role is seen as integral to the panel's success, and is relied upon for continuity, guidance, and reassurance, and as a trusted advisor who helps panels to navigate and influence council's complex structures.

“The Principal Advisor Panels... is amazing at helping and supporting us. Truly, a gift.” – Panel member

“The hard mahi of the Principal Advisor Panels... ensured that opportunities were presented to the panels.” – Panel member

“The council team in charge of the panels led by the Principal Advisor Panels was very informing and always eager to explore our requests.” – Panel member

The principal advisor panels played a central role in agenda-setting, resourcing, and ensuring panels are well organised and supported. Panel members felt that the principal advisor panels leadership significantly lifted the quality of resourcing and processes this term. Alongside the governance advisor panels, there has been a dedicated focus on improving how staff close the loop, with a more proactive approach ensuring that panel advice is not only captured but responded to, further enhancing the trust between panels and council.

The principal advisor panels has been a key driver of the panels’ effectiveness this term and ensuring resource sustainability will be important to support increasing demand for panels input in the future.

9.2 Governance Advisor Panels

Since November 2023, the principal advisor panels has been supported by a governance advisor panels. These two roles work to support the operation and effectiveness of the panels.

The governance advisor panels role, was established to sits across the advisory panels and supports the other governance advisors to ensure that meetings are adequately prepared and planned for. The co-lead officers noted how the establishment of this role has assisted them in their work.

“The governance advisor panels has picked up so much of the heavy lifting, particularly around meetings, chasing of reports, and support staff who present. She has been outstanding.”

“I don’t know what we would do without them; they have been critical and constant advocates for the panels and their value.”

It was noted by the governance advisor panels that their role often spans several of the functions of the panels, from co-lead officers and co-chairs to panel members, they play a role in supporting the principal advisor panels across all the panels work.

9.3 Co-Lead Officers

Each panel was supported by up to two volunteer co-lead officers to support the integration of each panel into council work and to provide a support to the co-chairs, panel members, and the Principal Advisor Panels.

The role of a co-lead officer is generally described as connecting, enabling, and assisting panels to navigate the complex workings of council. Co-lead officers are current council staff, and they may be members of the communities of the panel they are supporting, but this is not a requirement. They provide support to the co-chairs in setting of agendas and consideration of strategic matters and attend the regularly scheduled panel meetings. During the 2022 – 2025 term there were also regular meetings with all the panels' co-lead officers to discuss matters of interest and to further enhance cross panel collaboration.

*“The co-lead officer role, in my experience, is an influential one and the panels do listen to our advice and insights. Council is such a large organisation that I think we help panels to demystify and understand how the council works.” –
Co-lead officer*

Selection for these roles was undertaken by the Principal Advisor Panels and involved an internal recruitment process where appropriately skilled staff with an interest in supporting improved engagement and community voices through the work of council applied, were interviewed, and then were offered a role.

“The co-lead officer role is a critical one to the success of each panel. When looking for a co-lead officer we are looking for someone who understands the workings of council and can identify strategic connections and opportunities to enhance the influence of the panels” – Principal Advisor, Panels

Given the position is voluntary and does not attract additional remuneration, a desire to be involved and passion for the work of the panels is a critical factor for most staff who take up the role.

*“I took up the co-lead officer role this term because I wanted to contribute to the kaupapa of the panels to lift the voices of diverse communities within council. It is different to my day-to-day role, and I have loved the experience.” –
Co-lead officer*

“It is super exciting to be involved....I truly believe that council should engage with all parts of the community and the panels support that objective” – Co-lead officer

“I really enjoyed my experience with the panels and am really grateful for the experience and development it has provided” – Co-lead officer

The co-lead officer model, a change from the previous term, was generally well supported, with many stating that the role was manageable alongside their normal duties. Several co-lead officers noted that their workload was significantly assisted by the principal advisor panels and the governance advisor panels compared to previous terms where co-lead officers tended to shoulder more work. There was also a need noted for managers to support co-lead officers through recognition of hours worked on panel mahi outside of normal business hours are recognised.

“It is simply non-negotiable that without the core panel staff, the work of the panels and the co-lead officers would not be possible” – Co-lead officer

“The principal advisor panels and governance advisors were fantastic at managing the work of the panels and ensuring that the work was progressed” – Co-lead officer

“The role description indicated 1 – 2 days per work, I wonder if this should be increased to better reflect what the expectation of the role is to be as effective as possible” – Co-lead officer

“Some of my work for the panels took place during the evenings or on weekends. This was said to be voluntary, but I think needs to be recognised” – Co-lead officer

These roles were seen as critical dependencies to the success of the panels. The structure of having two co-lead officers was noted as allowing for collaboration and sharing of ideas and workload. Further incentivising the role with clear expectations and specific acknowledgement of time may further enhance what can be achieved.

Panel members also noted how valuable the co-lead officer roles have been through the term. As staff who operate at various levels of council, the panel members valued the guidance role that the co-lead officers were able to provide, particularly earlier in the term as panels were setting their strategic work programme priorities.

“The co-lead officers provided necessary guidance and direction to our panel, particularly as we were coming into the role. They knew how we could work strategically to influence in our priority areas”. – Panel member

“I really appreciated the support from the co-lead officers, as we were both new co-chairs, it made the first few months navigating new members and setting our priorities much easier” – Panel co-chair

The current approach to meetings was supported by co-lead officers, with a range of views shared regarding potential changes to the meeting approach. One co-lead officer noted that there could be greater opportunities to support panels to meet in a less formal manner, that removes the requirement for a formal agenda and minutes. Other co-lead officers felt that the meeting format allowed for formal tracking and record keeping.

“We have fallen into a choice around workshops and meetings. Both require certain processes....a more informal approach that has less rigour may allow more focus on strategic priorities and discussion than meeting a set agenda.” – Co-lead officer

There was strong feedback from the co-lead officers that in-person attendance would better enable the work of the panels. Co-lead officers noted that some panel members would only attend online, and would at times have cameras off, limiting their ability to engage meaningfully.

“In person attendance is really important. There could be a requirement that some meetings would only have in person attendance. Creating connection and engagement is difficult if panel members are online with their camera off.” – Co-lead officer

“The mixed mode of attending meetings was challenging and moving forward, there could be consideration of ensuring some meetings were in person and others fully online.” – Co-lead officer

The co-chairs, and their selection, were a key determiner identified by the co-lead officers for the relative success of each panel. The co-chairs model was overwhelmingly supported with the co-lead officers noting that the sharing of workload between co-chairs was a positive element of the model, allowing both experienced co-chairs to partner with new or first time co-chairs. The selection process was seen as being critical to ensuring the success of the panel over the term.

“The co-chair model worked for our panel....the co-chairs were able to juggle the workload and could support each other as needed.” – Co-lead officer

“I really support the co-chair model, we had a returning panel member and a new panel member as our co-chairs, and they were able to blend their relative skills and experience to form a good team for the term. It worked really well” – Co-lead officer

“Having a new co-chair with a returning co-chair worked really well. Through the term I saw the growth in the relationship, and I am hopeful that this will mean continuity going forward” – Co-lead officer

There were challenges identified also by co-lead officers, with some noting that the workload was not always shared equally, which at times created tensions on one panel. Other feedback noted that there could be greater opportunities for other panel members to pick up some of the co-chair duties where appropriate to further share the workload and to develop other panel members to step up.

“One of our co-chairs did carry most of the workload and that created tensions at times. There could be greater clarification on how the work of the co-chairs is shared to ensure this is avoided in the future” – Co-lead officer

“There could be greater opportunities for other panel members to undertake some of the duties of the co-chairs to build their skills and development.” – Co-lead officer

Recruitment was also a critical area for the co-lead officers, with some indicating that the process was outstanding and resulted in a strong panel featuring a range of perspectives and lived experiences, while other feedback indicated that greater diversity of representation was needed on some panels. The group assessment centre was seen as a good indicator of how some applicants would operate in a setting like a panel meeting. There was feedback that there were some gaps in representation on some panels, and that these gaps could inform a more targeted approach to some communities in the future.

“The recruitment process was outstanding in my view, and I was pleased to see that translate into the panel during the term.” – Co-lead officer

“I applaud the group assessment approach, as it meant we could see how people would interact with others in a group, and more importantly, who was well suited to that style of engagement with others”. – Co-lead officer

The co-lead officers were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences, and many attributed this to the work of key support staff.

“The principal advisor panels has been amazing....without her work we wouldn’t have been able to achieve what we have. Thank you!” – Co-lead officer

“The core panel team has simply been outstanding; they need every recognition under the sun and more”

9.4 Governance Advisors

The governance advisors support the operation of the panels and handle administrative tasks relating to meetings including agendas, minutes, and ensuring the meetings run smoothly. A team of four staff supports the panels, in addition to their work supporting council committees and elected members. Unlike the co-lead officers who are selected, the governance advisors support the panels as part of their day-to-day duties.

The governance advisors indicated that they the experience of supporting the panels was positive and noted that they enjoyed the opportunity to hear the discussion and perspectives shared by panel members. The advisors noted that

through their observations, the panel model worked well, with many panel members showing growth throughout the term.

“I saw the growth of the panel members on my panel throughout the term; they were really engaged and gave some good advice.” – Governance Advisor

“The panel members got closer and more joined up as the term progressed, it was good to see them working closely together as a panel.” – Governance Advisor

There was feedback also that at times, panel members may have seen their role as going beyond just an advisory one, and they often wanted more time spent on discussing matters and less time on hearing from council staff on any particular issues.

“Some panel members felt that they need to have more influence and impact....they perhaps did not fully appreciate that they are advisors and not decision makers.” – Governance Advisor

The governance advisors felt that their workload was manageable and that the meeting frequency and approach was appropriate. An increase in meetings was not seen as viable within current resources, and it was noted that the pool of staff in the team reduced by one during the term. Critically however, panel members need to ensure they read relevant materials, and some staff noted this was a challenge at times.

“I think the meeting approach works well. The only potential tweak would be including more time for discussion, as that was an area that I heard panel members often say there wasn’t enough time for” – Governance Advisor

“The meeting approach means papers are prepared and panel members have a view as to what the items are ahead of time....ensuring they engage with this material was important and it was clear at times which panel members had read the materials fully” – Governance Advisor

The co-chairs and co-lead officer models were supported by the governance advisors, but they noted that understanding of these roles was important for governance advisors, so they were aware of what each role is responsible for and how they need to provide support to those roles. For co-lead officers, it was noted that there appeared to be differences in approaches between different panels and that greater consistency could be sought.

“The Co-Chairs and Co-lead officers’ model is good, it just depends on the person in the role and how they approach it.” – Governance Advisor

The governance advisors noted that generally they felt their panels were representative but there are some gap areas that could be addressed in future panels.

9.5 Broader staff insights on the panels

Staff across council have provided insights about the significant value of engaging with the panels. Their reflections highlight the panels’ expertise, lived experience, and diverse perspectives, as well as the tangible ways their advice has influenced council work.

For some staff, particularly those new to council, engaging with the panels was an affirming and confidence-building experience:

“As someone new into Auckland Council, I felt incredibly nervous being asked to present to an advisory panel fairly early on – but I didn’t need to be. I quickly discovered we had the same overarching aims, to understand where things are now and to figure out the best way to improve them. I’ve enjoyed thinking about the best way to distil our internal work into a few slides to share with the panels and have appreciated their thoughtful questions and ideas to gently challenge our thinking and add value to our plans. On a more personal note, their support and appreciation for me, my work, and my time with them was especially helpful when my team was in a state of flux – helped me to feel I was on the right path with my mahi.”—

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion staff member

Staff consistently described how the panels’ feedback sharpened and improved their work.

“I had the privilege of engaging with the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel as part of my role as kaitiaki for a research project. Their thoughtful and sometimes challenging feedback prompted our team to revisit key research questions, commit to ongoing engagement, and reflect more deeply on ethical considerations when working with Pacific communities in a council context. The panel brought deep expertise, wisdom, and lived experience, and their input undoubtedly strengthened both the quality and integrity of our work.” — Researcher staff member

“As part of our Metropolitan Servicing Strategy, we had the privilege of presenting to the youth and senior advisory panels....what we found most valuable from engaging with the Youth Advisory Panel is the remarkable professionalism, drive, and curiosity they bring. They ask challenging questions that push us to think differently about engaging with youth and inspire us to do more (the thinking not only had local, but global views, which was unexpected and talks to the connected culture that is youth). They can tap into platforms and perspectives that we might not have considered. Having many diverse young people in one room allowed us to explore a wide range of perspectives and hear strong advocacy for our kaupapa, which has been energising and insightful. From the Senior Advisory Panel, we have valued their lived experience and their role in holding us accountable, both for past actions and for setting high expectations for the future. They bring perspectives from all walks of life, offering a path travelled with wisdom and a deeper understanding of the water journey, including where we have not delivered as well as we should have. Their reflections lift our expectations and challenge us to improve, reminding us of both our successes and areas for growth.

As engaging with the Auckland Council advisory panels is a first for us in this consultation phase, it is encouraging that both panels showed genuine interest in the kaupapa and invited us back. We appreciate their openness to joining us on the Water journey.” — Watercare staff member

“My experience working with the cross panel working group has been very valuable for the elections programme. I have loved their enthusiasm and dedication to the elections kaupapa. Their advice, pertinent comments and questions, and fresh perspectives has helped inform and adjust our approach across the programme to better reach our diverse communities. Among other things, they have positively influenced our engagement plans, our marketing campaign and our website designs and features.” — Elections staff member

“This year the demographic panels provided advice that broadened our thinking, particularly in regard to the diverse circumstances of specific communities and intersectional considerations. Some of the panels worked with us on very successful community engagement activities that created meaningful engagement with attendees. These events enabled us to receive the community’s expertise directly and, in one case, also through a comprehensive report on the engagement hui. That report is an input that has shaped a large programme of work.” — Emergency Management staff member

“Engaging with the demographic advisory panels has been invaluable in providing a quick and authentic lens into the perspectives of our diverse communities. They have offered constructive feedback, championed innovation, and actively advocated for projects with merit across Auckland Council, helping to amplify good ideas and support positive change.” — Governance & Engagement staff member

“I really appreciated the opportunity to engage with the panels this term. They were very engaged and were not afraid to ask questions, and they provided insight and feedback from a range of perspectives that we may not have otherwise thought of. We had thought about the range of vulnerabilities (physical or otherwise) across our community that we had to find a way to try to accommodate in the Auckland Unitary Plan provisions, but it was feedback from a member from another panel that was something we hadn’t explored as much.” — Planning staff member

The Disability Advisory Panel was acknowledged for its significant contributions:

“It’s been great to work with the Disability Advisory Panel this term. They are a group of knowledgeable, experienced, kind, and passionate people who have had a real positive impact on council’s mahi, and notably, the direction of our refreshed Disability Action Plan. Their insights have been incredibly valuable and will no doubt help us as council better serve our disabled communities in Tāmaki Makaurau into the future.” — Policy staff member

“I feel very grateful to have had the privilege to work with the Demographic Advisory Panels and especially working closely with the Disability Advisory Panel. Hearing first-hand their unique perspective, concerns, views and feedback on various topics, has made a lasting impact on me as a person. In my current role supporting the Elections 2025 programme and engaging with diverse communities, I have incorporated the approach of ‘What would the advisory panel members say? What feedback would they provide?’, and if I’m not sure then to go and ask them for guidance, so we can be as inclusive in our practices as possible.”
— Governance and Engagement staff member

Other staff emphasised the value of the panels’ diverse voices across council projects:

“Last year we spent time hearing from a wide variety of people about changes to city centre parking. We met with individuals, business associations, unions, community support networks, elected officials and some of council’s panels. Each group tends to share information specific to who they represent. Looking back on this experience, I have found it is more helpful for us to ask panels for feedback on topics that aren’t making headlines, so that we have space to educate and inform, before asking for their thoughts. I found the ethnic, disability and small business panels the most helpful in terms of widening my understanding about project impacts, but these were project specific relevant as well.” — Auckland Transport staff member

“The Rainbow, Disability and Ethnic Communities panels have challenged us to show how our DEI work is making a difference. Their advice has helped to sharpen our initiatives, and their focus on kaimahi equity and inclusion has pushed us to back up our efforts with evidence and impact.” — Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff member

“As an employee tasked with leading the development of a new approach to play across the council group, it was very helpful to be able to engage with the advisory panels early in the process and seek their feedback. Their diverse perspectives contributed to the broader strategic direction that the work has taken, which has resulted in 19 local boards adopting play plans that set out ways to provide play as ‘an everywhere activity’. I look forward to continuing to engage with the advisory panels in the future as the play plans are implemented across the region, both to keep them updated on progress and to seek further direction as required.” — Community Wellbeing staff member

“The panels have provided great advice and feedback on our engagement approach for Elections. This advice has been both practical and actionable and therefore of great value to our team and the elections engagement workstream. In addition, we received some suggestions for additional partnership opportunities for elections. These have extended our reach into diverse communities and offered the potential to increase voter turnout in under-represented sectors.”
— Engagement staff member

Taken together, these reflections paint a clear and consistent picture: the advisory panels enrich the work of council by challenging assumptions, broadening perspectives, and strengthening connections with diverse communities. Staff describe the panels as a source of inspiration, accountability, and practical guidance — not just advisors, but genuine partners in shaping more inclusive and effective outcomes for Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

10.0 Chief Liaison and Liaison Councillors

As noted previously, councillors are appointed to act as liaisons between panels and the governing body – strengthening their advisory role and providing a regular mechanism for insights to be shared between panels and the governing body. These councillors may be members of the relevant communities that the panels represent or have a strong commitment to enhancing and supporting the diverse voices of panels. There is a chief liaison councillor, responsible for oversight and connection across councillors, and each panel has an individual liaison councillor. Interviews were conducted with six councillors.

10.1 Councillor insights

The chief liaison councillor and councillors expressed strong support for the work of the panels and noted the marked improvement from previous terms in how the panels have become integrated and empowered in council. Councillors noted that as the panels have matured, they have become more embedded and increasingly show initiative and leadership in their approach to advising council. Panels were seen as providing practical advice informed by their lived experiences, able to shape policies and plans alongside public consultation, and filling knowledge and perspective gaps that may not be recognised otherwise. Councillors expressed high praise for how panels operated noting that the work of the panels during the term was high quality, and that panels had established strong relationships with councillors and staff.

Councillors were able to cite numerous examples of where the input of panels has influenced decisions including public transport, safety and event funding priorities. Councillors highlighted how direct feedback from community members carries more weight than internal staff advice alone and the cross-panel approach was noted as being particularly valuable, with panels seen as functioning as a type of citizen assembly in line with deliberative democracy approaches.

Councillors had several views regarding how to further enhance the role of the panels including engaging panels earlier in formal processes relating to strategies such as the long-term plan, annual budgets, and other key strategies. Councillors felt that the panels should be seeking to influence policy development, in addition to providing advice on drafts and that this could be facilitated through several mechanisms including bringing panels into workshops with committees on topics of relevance to them.

The importance of having the right staff engaging with panels was noted, including being clear on having the right staff presenting who can then action feedback and advice.

Regarding the liaison councillor role, councillors described the role as supporting and enabling panels to lead and determine their priorities and advice and that they guide panels to balance their ambitions and aspirations for what is achievable, without stifling innovative or challenging ideas. Councillors expressed a strong commitment to the role but acknowledged that there are significant time constraints that they face alongside their other duties, and this limits their ability to engage in the panels work. To address this, some councillors suggested that greater opportunities for networking and engagement with councillors through committees could be considered.

While all the councillors were clear on the value add of the panels, they noted that given the panels operate at the discretion of the mayor, there is a need for continued advocacy and evidence showing the value of the panels. Ensuring that institutional knowledge and momentum is not lost term by term was expressed as critical to this objective.

Local Board engagement was the final area noted by Councillors as a gap, and that formal local board engagement could be built into future panel's work programmes. This was seen as important for connecting the work of the panels into communities across the region. Councillors acknowledge this was beyond the current remit of the panels and that this would require discussion with the new Mayor following the local body election.

11.0 Acknowledgements

This end of term report has been made possible through the commitment, expertise, and support of many people.

Panel members and working group members

We acknowledge with gratitude all members of the six Demographic Advisory Panels – Disability, Ethnic Communities, Pacific Peoples, Rainbow Communities, Seniors, and Youth and the end of term working group members. Your leadership, lived experience, and dedication to equity and inclusion have ensured that the diverse voices of Tāmaki Makaurau are heard at the decision-making table.

Co-Chairs

A special acknowledgement to the Co-Chairs of each panel. Your leadership, advocacy, and ability to guide respectful and strategic discussions have been critical to the panels' effectiveness and influence.

Principal Advisor Panels and Support Team

The Principal Advisor Panels has provided exceptional leadership, continuity, and support, ensuring the panels were empowered to deliver meaningful advice. Alongside the Governance Advisor Panels and the governance advisor team, your work has enabled panels to function effectively, often going beyond expectations to provide pastoral care, coordination, and strategic guidance.

Co-Lead Officers

We thank the co-lead officers who volunteered their time and expertise to connect panels with council processes and ensure advice was integrated into strategies and plans. Your commitment and passion have been vital to bridging communities and Council and ensuring panel success.

Elected Members

We acknowledge the Chief Liaison Councillor and panel Liaison Councillors for your commitment, support, and advocacy. Your engagement has strengthened the panels' advisory role and ensured their perspectives were considered at the highest levels of governance.

Council Staff

To all staff who engaged with the panels – thank you for your openness to challenge, your willingness to listen, and your commitment to embedding diverse voices in your work. Your recognition of the panels as genuine partners has been essential to their impact.

12.0 Appendices

12.1 Appendix A – Advisory Panels: cross-panel work and additional engagements in the 2022-2025 term.

The work listed in the following table is in addition to the demographic advisory panels regularly scheduled meetings and workshops over the term.

COUNT	CROSS-PANEL ENGAGEMENT	DATE
1.	Inaugural induction, Advisory Panels.	22/05/2023
2.	Induction one, Advisory Panels.	26/06/2023
3.	Induction two, Advisory Panels.	17/07/2023
4.	Cross-panel forum: Storm Recovery and Civil Defence Emergency Management Plans.	24/08/2023
5.	Co-Chairs: NZ Royal Commission COVID-19: Lessons Learned Te Tira Ārai Urutā.	6/09/2023
6.	Co-Chairs Induction one.	25/09/2023
7.	Presentation to Governing Body of the cross-panel report on Storm Recovery and Resilience.	28/09/2023
8.	Early engagement on LTP Direction with Co-Chairs, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Cr Fairey.	2/10/2023
9.	Co-Chairs Presentation to Planning, Environment and Parks Committee, approval of Panel Strategic Priorities.	5/10/2023
10.	Co-Chairs Induction two.	09/10/2023
11.	Individual panel workshops to agree on feedback into Mayor's Draft Proposal for LTP.	30/11/2023
12.	Online Co-Chairs Forum: discuss approach to meeting with Mayor on LTP.	1/12/2023

13.	Co-Chairs: Advisory Panels meeting on LTP – with Mayor Wayne Brown and Cr Julie Fairey.	4/12/2023
14.	DAP co-chairs: Local Boards Chairs Forum – gauging interest in engaging with the Panels where the priorities of some Local Boards may align with panel priorities.	11/12/2023
15.	Testing the draft LTP public consultation feedback form.	16/01/2024
16.	Co-Chairs Forum one.	24/01/2024
17.	RCAP: Extraordinary workshop on Active Communities inclusion guidelines.	01/02/2024
18.	Advisory Panels Participatory Forum on Auckland’s governance model (Representation Review).	15/02/2024
19.	Forum one: LTP Participatory Forum.	7/03/2024
20.	Online Disability-Led Community Engagement on the Long-Term Plan.	22/03/2024
21.	Forum two: LTP Participatory Forum.	23/03/2024
22.	Forum three: online LTP Participatory Forum 3.	8/04/2024
23.	Advisory Panels and Community Partners report to Budget Committee to the LTP – Participatory Forums Engagement Report.	24/04/2024
24.	Representation Project Working Group meeting one.	21/05/2024
25.	Local Board and Advisory Panel Members’ Forum.	27/05/2024
26.	Co-Chairs Forum two.	29/05/2024
27.	Workshop to help develop the Auckland City Centre Parking Plan – Room to Move i te Pokapū Tāone.	24/06/2024
28.	Wellington delegation hosted by Auckland Council on the Advisory Panel model.	09/07/2024

29.	Co-Chairs Forum three.	10/07/2024
30.	Follow-up: Advisory Panel Co-Chair discussion on strategic priorities.	15/07/2024
31.	PPAP: Community fono on ‘How to get ready for an emergency!’	24/07/2024
32.	Advisory panels mid-term report to Governing Body.	1/08/2024
33.	SAP: Safety and Accessibility Audit for Seniors in the Central City.	12/08/2024
34.	Co-Chairs Forum four.	21/08/2024
35.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting one.	17/09/2024
36.	Disability Advisory Panel meeting with Eke Panuku - Karanga Plaza Tidal Pool and broader Te Ara Tukutuku project.	20/09/2024
37.	Cross Panel Workshop, Te Ara Hauāuru - Northwest Rapid Transit. Advisory Panels in partnership with Auckland Transport and NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi.	24/09/2024
38.	Disability and Seniors Advisory Panels meeting with Auckland Transport and Eke Panuku CEOs - wider conversation about accessibility and universal design.	25/09/2024
39.	Māori rōpū cross-panel workshop one.	25/09/2024
40.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting two.	22/10/2024
41.	Co-Chairs Forum five.	23/10/2024
42.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting three.	12/11/2024
43.	Disability Advisory Panel: Auckland Disability Community Hui on Planning for Emergencies.	13/11/2024

44.	PPAP Extraordinary workshop on Council Cemeteries and Crematoria Bylaw 2014 and Cemeteries and Crematoria Code of Practice 2014.	13/11/2024
45.	Co-Chairs meeting: The Final Year.	20/11/2024
46.	Advisory Panels online session with elections team.	27/11/2024
47.	Auckland Council's City Centre Experience team, Nighttime Experience Assessment "walkshop".	28/11/2024
48.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting four.	10/12/2024
49.	Thriving Rangatahi – council's plan to support thriving children and young people. YAP representatives at the meeting of the Policy & Planning Committee alongside Thriving Rangatahi.	10/12/2024
50.	Co-Chairs Forum six.	11/12/2024
51.	Māori rōpū cross-panel workshop two.	28/01/2025
52.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting five.	29/01/2025
53.	Extraordinary panel round of meetings on strategic priorities going into the final year of term.	11/02/2025
54.	Cross-panel workshop: Open Space, Sports & Recreation Strategy.	25/02/2025
55.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting six.	26/02/2025
56.	PPAP representatives presenting at Pacific Community events on elections.	10/03/2025 – 19/03/2025
57.	Co-Chairs Forum seven.	19/03/2025
58.	DAP meeting with Design Chapter, Council Digital Team.	21/03/2025
59.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting seven.	26/03/2025
60.	Community Civil Defence and Emergency Management Forum at Te Manawa.	29/03/2025

61.	Cross-panel engagement: Strengthening the Auckland Unitary Plan for Natural Hazards. Online information session.	9/04/2025
62.	RCAP: Extraordinary workshop on proposed community engagement.	14/04/2025
63.	Cross-panel workshop, in-person: Strengthening the Auckland Unitary Plan for Natural Hazards.	15/04/2025
64.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting eight.	16/04/2025
65.	Co-Chairs: Report to Budget Committee on Annual Plan.	30/04/2025
66.	End of Term Reporting Cross-Panel Working Group meeting one.	1/05/2025
67.	Youth Entrepreneurship in Auckland: Empowering Young Entrepreneurs. Youth Advisory Panel alongside members of King's Trust Aotearoa.	7/05/2025
68.	Co-Chairs Forum eight.	14/05/2025
69.	RCAP Community Engagement event: elections and the role of the panel.	22/05/2025
70.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting nine.	28/05/2025
71.	End of Term Reporting Cross-Panel Working Group meeting two.	29/05/2025
72.	YAP: Extraordinary workshop on Best City for Students Action Plan and the Youth Voice Project.	03/06/2025
73.	Co-Chairs: NZ Royal Commission COVID-19: Lessons Learned – Auckland Council Forum.	09/06/2025
74.	Presentation of Disability Advisory Panel report “Are we included in your plan?” to Civil Defence and Emergency Management Committee.	17/06/2025
75.	Cross-panel forum: End of Term Review and Reporting.	17/06/2025

76.	PPAP representatives: Elections 2025 Panel discussion on Samoan Radio.	24/07/2025
77.	Co-Chairs Forum nine.	9/07/2025
78.	End of Term Reporting Cross-Panel Working Group meeting three.	15/07/2025
79.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting ten.	23/07/2025
80.	End of Term Reporting Cross-Panel Working Group meeting four.	31/07/2025
81.	End of Term Reporting Cross-Panel Working Group meeting five.	19/08/2025
82.	Co-Chairs Forum ten.	20/08/2025
83.	Cross-Panel Elections Working Group meeting eleven.	27/08/2025
84.	Cross-panel workshop: City Centre Community Safety Plan.	03/09/2025
85.	DAP representatives presenting at D*List Community Partner elections event.	05/09/2025
86.	ECAP and PPAP representatives - Welcoming Communities accreditation.	09/09/2025
87.	Advisory Panels End of Term Report to Policy & Planning Committee.	11/09/2025
ONGOING ADDITIONAL ENGAGEMENT		
88.	DAP representative: Disability Led Climate Adaptation Project.	
89.	DAP representative: Grant Advisory Panel.	
90.	PPAP representative: Development of Pacific Peoples Policy Toolkit.	
91.	SAP representatives: Age-Friendly Auckland Rōpū.	

12.2 Appendix B – End of Term Survey results

Demographic Advisory Panels – End of Term survey results

