

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the Deerstalkers Hall Wairere Drive
Saturday the 25th of July 2026 commencing at 11.09am

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby

Councillor's: S. Smith, G. Annan E. Williamson, O. Kent, A. Brown, P. Dell, A Sapich,
D. Cocks, M. Barker, P. Dell.

Staff: D. Klee, M. Osborne, C. Robertson

APOLOGIES:

G. Dickey, B David

ABSENT: T Clarke_

that apologies be accepted.

Annan/Smith– CARRIED

1. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

None

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE 21st OF MAY 2026:

that the minutes of the meeting of the 21st May 2026 be accepted as true and correct record.

Annan /Brown – CARRIED

1. MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE 28th OF MAY 2026:

that the minutes of the meeting of the 28th May 2026 be accepted as true and correct record.

Dell /Williamson – CARRIED

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Access and Controlled Fishery: The Chair and Chief Executive updated Council on the official opening of the Stone Jug Road property, noting that the event had been a significant success. The Minister was highly complementary of the initiative during his speech and

acknowledged the innovative work being undertaken by the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council to secure long term public access to freshwater fisheries.

The Chair and Chief Executive also advised that constructive discussions had been held with DOC, mana whenua, adjoining landowners and other stakeholders regarding opportunities to improve public access to additional sections of the Whakapapa River. The concept of establishing a controlled fishery had been socialised with key parties, although no further feedback had been received at this stage.

The Chair further reported that discussions with DOC regarding restoration of public access via Intake Road had progressed, with a decision expected in the near future.

Publicity: Councillor Brown advised that he had received positive feedback regarding the recent social media post highlighting compliance activities undertaken by staff. Council noted that the post had been well received and provided a positive opportunity to showcase the important work undertaken by Fish and Game officers across the region.

3. INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From NZC Chair: Council noted that it disagreed with a number of the assertions made in the NZC Chair's letter and considered its circulation to be unhelpful at a time when considerable uncertainty already existed due to the ongoing organisational reform process. Council was concerned that the letter had the potential to create additional anxiety and uncertainty amongst regional staff.

Council also noted the apparent inconsistency of regions being asked to make significant budget reductions and consider staff cuts, while National Office had continued to expand its staffing levels and engage a substantial number of consultants and contractors.

Letter from Sia Aston (DOC): The CE highlighted the needs for Councillors to remain politically neutral in election year.

4. OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Chairs letter to the Minister: The Chair updated council on the meeting he and the CE had with the minister and subsequent positive engagement.

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

5.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report

Hampton Downs Landfill: Hampton Downs Landfill: Councillor Williamson noted that odour issues associated with the Hampton Downs Landfill had, on occasions, affected nearby Fish and Game wetlands and queried whether the current resource consent application adequately addressed those effects.

Ms Robertson advised that Fish and Game had reached a settlement with the applicant prior to the hearing. While odour effects had not formed part of Fish and Game's submission, she undertook to confirm the extent to which odour management had been addressed through the consent conditions and report back to Council.

Lake Karapiro Fishing Competition: The Chair and Mr Osborne updated Council on the recent children's fishing competition held at Lake Rotoroa, Hamilton. The event attracted 180 registered participants, demonstrating the strong public interest in family fishing events. However, catch rates were low, with only seven fish landed during the competition.

The Chair noted that the level of public participation highlighted an opportunity to hold a similar event at Lake Karapiro, particularly in light of the recent establishment of perch in the lake. While the introduction of perch was unfortunate, Council noted that, now the species was present, there was merit in actively managing the fishery. Perch are relatively easy for children to catch, are regarded as good table fare, and encouraging recreational harvest may assist in reducing population growth and the risk of stunting.

Council discussed working with the Hamilton Anglers Club and the Te Awamutu Fish and Game Club to undertake some preliminary scouting to identify locations where catch rates were likely to be high, thereby maximising the success of any future community fishing event.

Financial Report: The Chair and Chief Executive presented the financial report, noting that licence sales continued to track strongly within the Auckland/Waikato region despite national sales remaining below the previous year. Based on current trends, Auckland/Waikato was expected to be the only region to record year on year growth in both fish and game bird licence sales.

The Chief Executive also presented a new customised balance sheet developed to provide Council with a clearer picture of its financial position throughout the year. The report separately identifies the balances held within each reserve category, enabling Council to more accurately monitor unrestricted General Reserves, restricted reserves, the Asset Replacement Fund, and dedicated reserves.

The Chief Executive highlighted that, during the previous financial year, Council's unrestricted General Reserves, excluding restricted reserves, the Asset Replacement Fund and dedicated reserves, were below the 30% policy threshold for all but one month of the year. The new reporting format would provide improved transparency and enable Council to better monitor reserve levels and inform future financial decision making.

It was moved;

That the bimonthly Chief Executive and financial reports be accepted.

Williamson/Smith – CARRIED

- Council rose for lunch at 1.10pm
- Clare Robertson left the meeting.
- Council reconvened at 1.45pm

6. AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL FINANCIAL RESERVE POLICY

The Chair and Chief Executive presented the proposed Financial Reserves Policy. It was noted that, despite the region consistently achieving its licence revenue budgets and operating within approved expenditure, Council's unrestricted General Reserve position has continued to become more constrained despite the region meeting revenue targets (licence sales) and remaining within budget.

The Chief Executive advised that the proposed policy was based on the current National Budget Policy circulated by NZC Chief Executive Corina Jordan last year as the operative national budget policy. That policy establishes General Reserve targets of between 30% and 50% and recognises separate reserve categories, including Historical Reserves, General Reserves and Asset Replacement Reserves. Historical Reserves are defined as funds generated from the sale of an asset or accumulated for, or dedicated to, a specific purpose over time.

It was noted that, while NZC's current budget methodology includes Asset Replacement Funds and funds dedicated for specific purposes when assessing a region's reserve position, the adopted National Budget Policy identifies these as separate reserve categories. Council considered that the proposed Auckland/Waikato policy better reflected the intent of the National Budget Policy by separately identifying unrestricted General Reserves from funds that have been dedicated for specific purposes or set aside for asset replacement.

Council noted that the proposed Auckland/Waikato policy builds upon that framework by providing a more contemporary methodology that better reflects the region's financial risks and seasonal cashflow profile.

Councillor Barker noted that, given the significant seasonal fluctuations in Council's cashflow and reserve balances, a General Reserve equivalent to 30% of annual operating expenditure at the start of the financial year would not necessarily be sufficient to keep the region in a positive cash position throughout the year. The Chief Executive clarified that the policy intends to maintain General Reserve above the 30% minimum threshold throughout the financial year. In practice, this would require reserve levels to be closer to 50% at the beginning of the financial year to accommodate the seasonal drawdown that occurs before the majority of licence revenue is received.

The Chief Executive further advised that Council had been raising concerns regarding the increasingly compromised nature of its General Reserve position for a number of years, including seeking formal arbitration with NZC during the 2023/24 financial year. That request was declined, and levies were further increased meaning council has not had the ability to restore its reserves position. Given Council's current financial position, restoring the General Reserve to the proposed minimum threshold may take several years. The policy therefore recognises that temporary reductions below the minimum threshold may occur during the financial year due to the timing of licence revenue and NZC levy payments, provided appropriate governance oversight is maintained, and reserves are forecast to recover.

Councillor Barker noted that maintaining unrestricted General Reserves equivalent to approximately six months of operating expenditure was common financial practice in organisations he had been involved with. By comparison, the proposed policy provides for approximately four months of operating liquidity and should therefore be regarded as a conservative minimum rather than an excessive reserve target.

Council further noted that its current financial position, whereby it is required to rely on the Overseas Angler Fund and Asset Replacement Fund to manage operational cashflow and maintain day to day operations, was neither sustainable nor consistent with sound financial

management. Council considered that funds dedicated for specific purposes or future asset replacement should not be relied upon to finance normal operating activities or seasonal cashflow requirements.

Council considered that the policy would provide a clearer and more transparent framework for monitoring Council's financial resilience, improve governance oversight of reserve management, and better distinguish unrestricted operating funds from reserves that have been dedicated or restricted for specific purposes.

It was moved;

That Council Adopts the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Financial reserves policy.

Barker/Cocks – CARRIED

7. NZC BUDGET PROCESS LICENCE FEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND AUCKLAND/WAIKATO 2026/27 BUDGET

The Chair updated Council on the recent NZC meeting he attended, advising that his presentation appeared to be well received. It was particularly pleasing to note that advisors to the Minister were in attendance.

Council discussed the report, and the Chief Executive advised that, since it had been prepared, the Minister had approved a \$2 increase in the adult licence fee.

The Chief Executive confirmed that, aside from the proposed budgets, no additional information had been provided by NZC to address the matters previously raised by Auckland/Waikato. In particular, the email sent to NZC Chief Executive Corina Jordan on 23 June 2026, which reiterated a number of questions raised through the formal budget consultation process, remained unanswered. No further responses had been received regarding Council's previous budget consultation feedback.

The Chief Executive advised that staff had undertaken a further review of the draft budget to identify additional cost savings where possible. While a small number of further efficiencies had been identified, Council noted that some expenditure, including essential office maintenance to address ongoing building leaks, may need to be deferred in order to maintain a balanced budget. Council expressed concern that continued deferral of essential maintenance and investment was not sustainable and reflected the increasing financial constraints facing the region.

It was moved;

That Council

- 1. Notes the contents of this report.***
- 2. Notes that preliminary feedback has already been provided to NZC by the Chair under delegated authority previously granted by Council.***
- 3. Endorses Auckland/Waikato's preliminary feedback and strengthens that feedback consistent with the matters outlined within this report and previous feedback.***

4. *Reaffirms that Auckland/Waikato supports a financially sustainable Fish and Game and acknowledges that a licence fee increase may be necessary where supported by transparent financial information, equitable funding arrangements and sound governance.*
5. *Reaffirms that Auckland/Waikato does not support the proposed budget on the basis that NZC has not adequately explained:*
 - *the methodology used to determine Auckland/Waikato's levy;*
 - *the basis for the proposed increase;*
 - *how levy revenue will be redistributed;*
 - *how Auckland/Waikato's reserve position has been considered; or*
 - *how the proposal aligns with NZC's financial policies.*
6. *Notes that the adopted Auckland/Waikato Financial Reserves Policy establishes the framework within which future levy obligations should be considered.*
7. *Delegates authority to the Chair and Chief Executive to determine the Councils budget, levy quantum and timing to ensure consistency with Council's adopted Financial Reserves Policy and communicate this as required to NZC and external parties.*
8. *Delegates authority to the Chair and Chief Executive to finalise Auckland/Waikato's 2026/27 Budget and Operational Work Programme following confirmation of national funding allocations, licence fee outcomes and levy obligations.*
9. *Notes that the completed Budget and Operational Work Programme will be presented to Council for formal adoption at the September 2026 Council meeting.*

Williamson/Smith – CARRIED

8. **LAKE ARAPUNI TRIPLOID TROUT**

Mr Osborne presented a high-level summary of the report. The Chief Executive thanked Mr Osborne for the considerable time and effort he had invested in compiling, validating and cleaning the underlying data, noting that this had significantly improved the quality and reliability of the information presented to Council.

Council noted that tag return data demonstrated sterile trout had significantly lower catch rates than diploid trout, with no measurable growth advantage. The report concluded that the results did not support any future stocking of sterile trout into Lake Arapuni.

Staff advised that the annual spawning survey was scheduled to be undertaken the following week. Previous surveys had identified significant flood damage to spawning habitat, with only a single spawning trout observed. Council noted that, given the current moratorium on stocking, continued monitoring of natural recruitment would be important, as any sustained reduction in spawning success could lead to declining populations and catch rates over time.

Mr Osborne further advised that relying solely on data from a single annual fishing competition was unlikely to provide sufficiently robust information to assess overall fishery

performance. Staff would investigate establishing an angler diary programme to supplement existing monitoring and provide more comprehensive long term data on the fishery.

9. MOU WITH EASTERN F&G COUNCIL

Council discussed the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with the Eastern Fish and Game Council and expressed its support for the initiative. The Chair and Chief Executive advised that the MOU would formalise the collaborative relationship that already exists between the two regions, providing a structured framework for cooperation. Council noted that the arrangement would enable both regions to better leverage the specialist skills and expertise of staff, improving organisational capability and efficiency while delivering benefits to licence holders.

It was moved;

that the MOU between the Eastern Fish and Game Council and Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council be adopted

Smith/Brown– CARRIED

10. HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORT

It was moved;

that the H&S&W report for June 2026 is accepted.

Sapich/Smith– CARRIED

11. GENERAL BUISNESS

Merit Certificates: Councillor Annan noted that a number of longstanding Fish and Game Honorary Rangers were due to retire and suggested that Council consider recognising their contribution through the presentation of Merit Certificates. Councillor Cocks further noted that several longstanding members of the Dean Wetland Committee were also retiring and considered that their significant service to the region should likewise be formally acknowledged.

It was moved;

That Merit Certificates be presented to longstanding Honorary Rangers and other volunteer contributors upon their retirement or conclusion of service, in recognition of their significant contribution to Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game and the management of the region's fisheries, game bird resources and public access opportunities.

Annan/Cocks– CARRIED

Whakapapa Fishing Regulations.

The Chief Executive and Chair updated Council on a discrepancy that had recently been identified between the Auckland/Waikato Sports Fishing Regulations booklet and the New Zealand Gazette in relation to the downstream Whakapapa River sports fishing season. The Chief Executive advised that the issue came to light after staff became aware of an angler fishing the river during what the regional regulations booklet identified as the closed season. Subsequent enquiries established that while the Auckland/Waikato regulations booklet records the downstream Whakapapa River season as 1 October to 30 June, the New Zealand Gazette records the same reach as being open all year.

Council was taken through the chronology of events leading to the discrepancy. It was noted that Council had completed its statutory three yearly review of the Sports Fishing Regulations during 2025, including public consultation, consideration of submissions, and a formal Council resolution adopting the regulations for the 2025 to 2028 period. As part of that process, Council resolved to maintain the downstream Whakapapa River season as 1 October to 30 June.

Following Council's resolution, Auckland/Waikato identified that the draft Anglers' Notice and proposed Gazette did not accurately reflect Council's decision and requested that NZC amend the Whakapapa River season before publication, along with two other corrections. Although it was initially understood that the Minister had already signed the Notice, Council was advised that NZC subsequently worked with the Minister's Office to have the requested amendments approved. Two of the three requested amendments were subsequently incorporated into both the Gazette and the Auckland/Waikato regulations booklet. However, while the Whakapapa River amendment was correctly reflected in the Auckland/Waikato regulations booklet, it does not appear to have been incorporated into the Gazette.

Council noted that the result is that the Gazette and the Auckland/Waikato regulations booklet now contain different season dates for the same reach of river.

Staff contacted New Zealand Fish and Game Council immediately after the discrepancy was identified. The Chief Operating Officer advised that, as the Minister had already approved the 2026/27 Anglers' Notice, Auckland/Waikato would need to request a formal amendment to the Anglers' Notice. He advised that this would require Auckland/Waikato Council to pass a resolution at a publicly notified Council meeting where the item was put on the agenda, requesting the amendment, following which the request would be considered by the New Zealand Fish and Game Council at its August meeting. If approved by NZC, the amendment would then be submitted to the Minister's Office, referred to the Department of Conservation for advice, and, if approved, published by way of an amendment to the New Zealand Gazette. The Chief Operating Officer also advised that the associated gazetting costs would be charged to Auckland/Waikato.

The Chief Executive advised Council that he had responded to NZC noting that Auckland/Waikato had already completed the full statutory process during the 2025 three yearly review, including public consultation and a formal Council resolution, and that the issue did not appear to be the absence of a Council decision, but rather that Council's approved regulation had not been accurately reflected in the Gazette despite the error being identified during the review process. This error had then translated through the current year where council and staff had sought no change from existing regulations, under the assumption that these were correct.

It was moved;

Council reaffirm its previous resolution setting the downstream Whakapapa River season from 1 October to 30 June, noting that this decision had already been made through the statutory regulation review process in 2025 and subsequently approved by the New Zealand Fish and Game Council. Council considered the current situation to be the result of a clerical or administrative error during publication rather than a new policy decision which unfortunately transferred through to this year's gazette.

Council resolved that the Chair and Chief Executive write to the Minister's Office seeking that the discrepancy be rectified and advising that all statutory requirements, including public consultation and Council resolution, had already been completed. The letter would request that the Gazette for the 2027 season be amended to accurately reflect Council's existing resolution and clarify that the downstream Whakapapa River was only gazetted as being open during the current season as a result of the apparent publication error.

Smith/Cocks– CARRIED

Access Fund.

Council noted that the rural property upstream of Toa Bridge, providing access to one of the premier trout fisheries within the Auckland/Waikato region, is currently on the market. Discussion was held regarding the potential use of the dedicated non-resident reserve to support the acquisition of this property, or other strategically important properties that secure permanent public access to premier trout fisheries.

Council noted that when the licence was introduced, one of its key purposes was to generate additional funding for the improvement, protection and management of New Zealand's internationally significant backcountry fisheries, recognising that overseas anglers derive significant benefit from these fisheries and should contribute to their long-term management.

It was moved;

That Council notify the New Zealand Fish and Game Council of its intention to utilise the Auckland/Waikato Non Resident Angler Dedicated Reserve to acquire strategically important properties that secure permanent public access to premier trout fisheries within the region, and that the Non-Resident Angler Dedicated Reserve be transferred into Council's Angler Access Fund to facilitate those acquisitions and associated access initiatives.

Williamson/Smith-CARRIED

Council moved into publicly excluded at 3.11pm

It was moved;

That the public be excluded from the following part of the proceedings of this meeting pursuant to section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, on the grounds that the public conduct of the proceedings would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists under section 7 of the Act.

The subject matter to be considered was:

- ***Confidential financial and organisational matters relating to regional budgeting and staff remuneration.***

The general nature of the information to be considered was:

- ***Information subject to legal professional privilege***
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The reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter is:

- ***To maintain legal professional privilege pursuant to section 7(2)(g) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987; and***
- ***To protect the privacy of natural persons pursuant to section 7(2)(a)***

Dell/Smith – CARRIED

It was moved;

That Council move out of publicly excluded session.

Smith/Annan – CARRIED

Council moved out of publicly excluded session at 3.43 pm.

The following resolutions were brought out of publicly excluded session:

It was moved;

That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, be delegated authority to utilise up to \$20,000 of the salary savings realised during the current financial year as a discretionary fund to recognise and reward staff for their outstanding performance and their willingness to undertake additional responsibilities and workload during the period of maternity leave cover.

Dell/Brown – CARRIED

The meeting closed at 3.45pm