

Thriving Communities Action Plan

Status Report May 2018



Cover photo credit: Bryan Iowe
Location: Mangere East Community Hall

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1 Purpose

The Status Report reflects on how the Thriving Communities Action Plan is being implemented across the council, showcases successful work against the plan's action points and makes recommendations for the plan going forward.

2 Background

People are at the heart of the Auckland Plan. Engaged and enabled communities underpin Auckland's vision of becoming a world-class city.

Auckland Council has an important role to play in building thriving communities. Informed by communities, stakeholders, partners, the Auckland Plan and The Long-term Plan (LTP), the Thriving Communities Action Plan was adopted by the council in April 2014. The plan was developed with the goal of mobilising all parts of the organisation to work in community-centric ways. This in turn would increase the council's ability to support community-led development and achieve better social outcomes.

Thriving Communities is a sister strategy to I Am Auckland: The Children's and Young People's Strategic Action Plan. The two plans were intended to complement each other as they share similar intentions, philosophies, aspirations and goals, with a particular focus on Aucklanders who are most in need.

Unlike other council strategic action plans, that incorporate the broader sector, Thriving Communities focuses on actions specifically for Auckland Council. It identifies changes to be made across the organisation to better support community-led development and social change.

The plan helped provide the thinking and impetus behind the development of the Empowered Communities Approach (ECA). The ECA model was developed and approved by Auckland Council's Regional Strategy and Policy Committee in July 2015. This was followed in 2017, by the Enabling Council initiative.

A range of strategic initiatives have since followed within the revised Organisational Strategy, ECA and Enabling Council focussed on engaging communities and creating an enabling council. This review establishes Thriving Communities current reach in light of these, identifies issues in operationalising the plan and proposes a number of potential improvements for the future of the plan.

3 Key findings and recommended improvements

3.1 Summary

Since it was adopted in 2014, the council has made some good progress against delivering actions in the Thriving Communities Action Plan and is generally working in more community-centric ways. There is broad agreement that the plan is an important framework for creating an enabling council that empowers local communities.

However, there is still more that could be done to embed this way of working across council and opportunities to apply the learnings from good practice (such as The Southern Initiative) to other areas of the region.

There is an opportunity to renew the Thriving Communities Action Plan; to clarify its role and links to other strategic plans and initiatives; and focus delivery and actions towards achieving the new Auckland Plan outcomes, in particular, ensure we focus on those most in need.

The plan needs a clear leadership champion to help drive awareness, uptake and delivery. We also need to better communicate the plan, making it simpler and more accessible; and improve the way we evaluate and measure the impact we are making.

All of which, would lead to improved outcomes for communities.

3.2 Key findings

Recognition of the value of the plan and impact in specific areas

There is general agreement on the importance of Thriving Communities. The plan is seen as providing a useful framework for creating an enabling council – a blueprint for council staff to empower local communities. The plan has had a tangible impact on certain council groups and initiatives.

The council is making good progress against the action points

A stocktake of council activity, since the launch of Thriving Communities, highlighted a range of work, completed or in progress, which addresses the plan's action points. Examples of achievements include the adoption of the Community Facilities Network Plan, Community Grants Policy and the increasing importance placed on social and cultural outcomes in the procurement process.

The council is working in a more community-centric way

Work completed against the action points demonstrates a shift in the council's approach to working with communities. The development of the Empowered Communities Approach and Enabling Council programme highlights a growing commitment to empowering communities by supporting the council to adapt existing behaviours and processes to be more community focused. Consultation and engagement with communities as part of the Facility Partnerships Policy project and in the development of spatial plans are examples of these behaviours in action.

Community-centric work not always directly influenced by the plan

Interviews and workshops with council staff indicated that delivery in other areas has not necessarily been directly influenced by the plan, but rather reflects a general shift in commitment by the council to community-led approaches.

Commitment to community-led ways of working still needs to be further embedded

While there are areas of good practice and community-facing staff and units are familiar with the plan and actively using it, other groups require further support to apply these practices. Some staff expressed a need to better understand the thinking behind Thriving Communities, and the evidence base underpinning it, with some managers concerned about the strain enabling-approaches would place on staff and resourcing.

Lack of leadership and awareness of the Thriving Communities Action Plan

Familiarity with Thriving Communities varies significantly across the council. While some were aware of the plan, they felt they were lacking a comprehensive understanding of its role and importance relative to their particular area of work.

Lack of awareness of the plan was, in part, attributed to a lack of leadership at the right level and limited oversight and coordination to drive delivery.

Lack of understanding of how the plan fits in with other plans and strategies

There is some confusion around the continuing relevance of the plan and its role within wider council strategy, given subsequent strategic and operational changes. Some respondents thought the Empowered Communities Approach (ECA) had replaced Thriving Communities, while others felt overwhelmed by the number of strategies and initiatives at the council.

New and emerging issues need to be included in the plan

There is consensus that since the launch of Thriving Communities, new issues, such as housing and diversity, have emerged in Auckland that need to be addressed in any future update to the plan.

A need to refine the plan and improve accessibility

The need to simplify or remove some of the actions in the plan was common feedback from staff, who found the length and number of actions reduced the accessibility of the report. In some instances, it was considered some actions could be merged, while others that had successfully been completed, could be removed.

The plan requires an evaluation framework

There is currently no established evaluation system for measuring the success of work in support of the plan. Thriving Communities provides suggestions on the evaluation tools that could be employed, leaving teams to decide how, or even if, they are to evaluate their work. Feedback indicated that it would be useful to provide concrete information on what successful outcomes look like for each action point and guidance on how, or what, units should/could be doing in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

3.3 Recommended improvements

This report recommends four key improvements to deliver more impact aligned to council's strategic outcomes and priorities; increase awareness; and drive delivery of the Thriving Communities Action Plan across the council family.

Improvement 1:

Create leadership champions and better communicate the Thriving Communities Action Plan to help build awareness and drive delivery.

- Identify and establish political and executive leadership champions for the plan
- Improve oversight and drive delivery; monitor and report progress.
- Better communicate, promote and socialise the plan across the council family

Improvement 2:

Target delivery of actions and interventions to achieving Auckland Plan outcomes, with a focus on those most in need.

- *Update the Thriving Communities Action Plan* to develop and prioritise actions and interventions that give effect to the new Auckland Plan outcomes - this could include, for instance, developing an intervention programme to increase inclusion and belonging tailored to specific population groups.
- *Develop place-based interventions* that take a community-centric approach to improving outcomes in areas of most need – for instance, examine the merits of replicating or scaling-up initiatives such as The Southern Initiative elsewhere in the region.

Improvement 3:

Further embed community-led ways of working across the council family to achieve better experiences and outcomes for communities.

- Support and deliver the Enabling Council programme, which is driving internal change to make council more enabling
- Show links to other strategic plans and initiatives to help drive focus and alignment
- Share good/emerging practice and evidence of benefits to encourage more uptake.

Improvement 4:

Improve evaluation of the Thriving Communities Action Plan to better understand impact

- Develop an evaluation framework with outcomes, measures and accountabilities
- Underpin the plan with clear evidence and latest community development practice
- Establish regular monitoring and reporting process

4 Methodology

A project team was formed with representatives from Community Policy, the Community Empowerment Unit, and Local Board Services. A mixed-method approach was adopted to understand the current role and influence of the plan. This approach included:

- strategic analysis of citations in key related strategies and documents
- a high-level stocktake to assess how we are tracking in delivering the plan against each action point
- semi-structured interviews with 18 managers across Auckland Council, and its associated Council Controlled Organisations. The interviews were designed to assess the strategic role and relevance of Thriving Communities and explore opportunities for the plan in the future.
- workshops with frontline staff in key delivery areas to assess delivery to date and current familiarity with the plan.

4.1 Scope

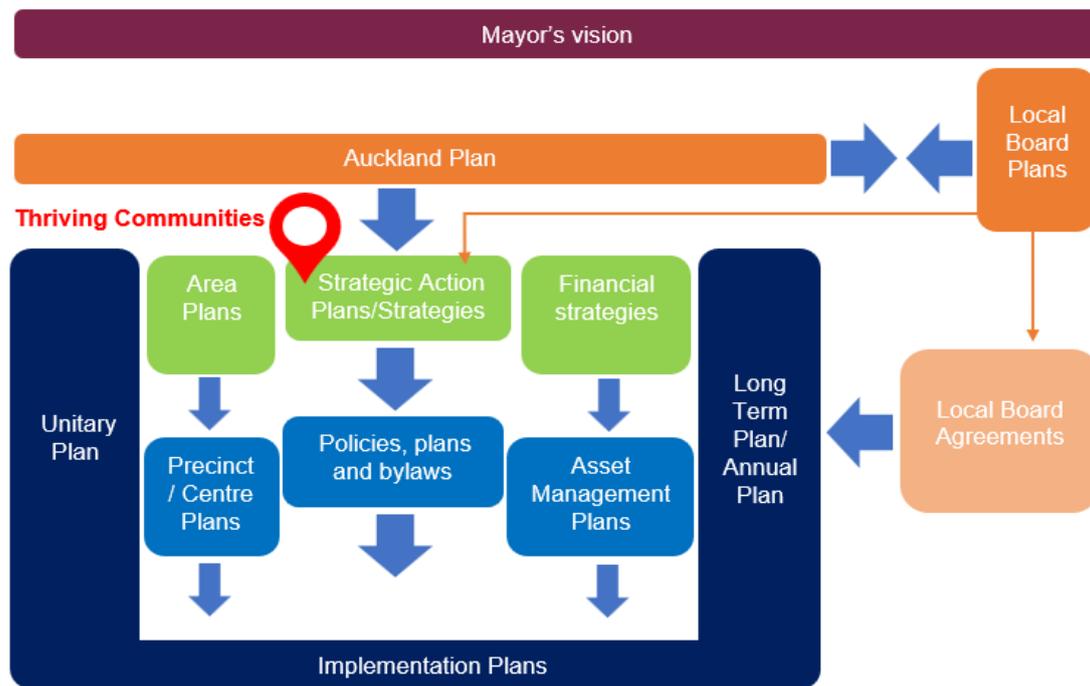
Thriving Communities focused on internal actions for Auckland Council. Consequently, external engagement was out of scope for this phase of work, with the focus of this report to establish current council delivery on actions.

5 Strategic Context

The Auckland Plan sets the high-level outcomes for our communities. The Thriving Communities Action Plan details the actions to be taken to deliver on the people-focused goals and outcomes of the Auckland Plan.

The plan prompted the development of the Empowered Communities Approach and recognised that the Community Facilities Network Plan was an important way to support thriving communities. A range of policy work currently under way will further support actions within Thriving Communities. These include the Facility Partnerships Policy, Investigation of Social Return on Investment measurement and research into social enterprise in Auckland.

Figure 1 below: Shows how councils' various strategic plans fit together



Thriving Communities was foundational to the adoption of the Empowered Communities Approach, which sets out how the council aims to work with and support communities in their development. This in turn has driven the Enabling Council programme which focuses on improving the internal council processes and ways of working, in line with the objectives of the organisational strategy.

Figure 2: Shows how the Empowered Communities Approach relates to Organisation Strategy



6 Current State

6.1 Progress overview

Thriving Communities has six key focus areas:

Facilitate grassroots action
Strengthen support to the voluntary and community sector
Enable social innovation and social enterprise
Maximise positive socio-economic impacts
Work in a holistic and integrated way
Support staff to be community centric

Each focus area contains a number of action points, which Auckland Council has signed up to. The visual below provides a high-level overview of progress against the 24 action points in Thriving Communities.

Facilitate grassroots action		
Action 1:	Facilitate and enable resident and community-led development	
Action 2:	Support community-led placemaking	
Action 3:	Enable match funding	
Action 4:	Ensure our community facilities are fit-for-purpose	
Action 5:	Showcase Auckland's resident and community-led initiatives	

 Completed  Making good progress  Starting to make progress

Strengthen support to the voluntary and community sector

Action 6:	Provide capacity- and capability-building support	
Action 7:	Investigate asset transfers and other options for communities	
Action 8:	Improve our funding processes	
Action 9:	Develop a Community Facilities Network Plan that includes key voluntary and community sector facilities	

Enable social innovation and social enterprise

Action 10:	Promote social innovation and social enterprise	
Action 11:	Support Auckland's social entrepreneurs	
Action 12:	Provide capacity- and capability-building support for social enterprise	

Maximise positive socio-economic impacts

Action 13:	Improve socio-economic impacts through procurement	
Action 14:	Continue to be an advocate	
Action 15:	Increase work-experience opportunities	
Action 16:	Role-model working conditions that promote staff well-being and are family-friendly	
Action 17:	Investigate the living wage	

 Completed
  Making good progress
  Starting to make progress

Work in a holistic and integrated way

Action 18:	Promote and enable multi-purpose social infrastructure	
Action 19:	Implement a whole-of-system approach	
Action 20:	Improve council engagement with communities	

Support staff to be community centric

Action 21:	Work through the transformation projects	
Action 22:	Increase learning and development opportunities	
Action 23:	Support collaborative and empowering practices	
Action 24:	Foster employee volunteering	



Completed



Making good progress



Starting to make progress

6.2 Implementation update

The following high-level stocktake provides commentary and examples of how Auckland Council is delivering against the actions of Thriving Communities, in each focus area. Case studies of initiatives in each area are also included.

Key take-outs:

- The council is working well across the six focus areas and has completed six of the 24 action points and has made good progress in many of the others.
- The council has been particularly successful in strengthening support for the voluntary and community sector, completing three of the four actions. Successful work in this area includes:
 - developing the Community Facilities Network Plan
 - improving funding processes, including developing the Community Grants Policy.
- There are areas of good and emerging practice across the council family particularly the work of The Southern Initiative and the Community Empowerment Unit, and these could potentially be replicated in other places in the region.
- There are some action areas where council could focus more effort, for example on enabling social innovation and social enterprise, specifically:
 - developing channels for recognising and rewarding social innovation
 - using learnings from the success of The Southern Initiative to develop systems and programmes to provide capacity and capability building support for social enterprise across Auckland.

Facilitate grassroots action



“We will have a wide range of approaches in how we work with communities, will share learning and experiences, and give priority to community-led development by providing every opportunity for communities to drive and ‘own’ their development.” Thriving Communities, 2014

Action 1: Facilitate and enable resident and community-led development

To give effect to the objectives in Thriving Communities, the Community Empowerment Unit (CEU) was set up in 2015 to deliver the Empowered Communities Approach (ECA). The CEU is responsible for working across council to build understanding of ECA in practice and support its implementation internally and within Auckland’s communities. It is also driving the Enabling Council programme which is focusing on internal improvements to council processes, so we can work more effectively with our communities.



Action 2: Support community-led placemaking

Placemaking is a central initiative in the CEU business plan. A community-led placemaking group was set up in 2013 and created a placemaking toolkit to develop community understanding of placemaking, showcase best practice and provide practical advice.



Many local boards have encouraged and supported innovative approaches to community-led placemaking (17 in the 2017-2018 financial year). A number of council staff and elected members have undertaken training in community placemaking methodologies, alongside their community partners, and have been trialling new approaches.

Community-led placemaking is central to the spatial plans of the Plans and Places team. For instance, local communities were involved throughout the development of the Newton-Eden Terrace Plan. From public idea sessions during the initial drafting of the plan to the re-scoping of the plan following public engagement, stakeholders and the general public were provided with six distinct opportunities to input, review and guide the overall direction of the plan.

Action 3: Enable match funding

The Community Grants Policy has provision for local boards to adopt match-funding and the Community Grants team have developed supplementary guidelines for this. To date, while local board plans mention and encourage match funding, no local boards have created separate grants rounds for match funding. Some boards do have a condition in their funding agreements that applicants are required to provide 40-50 percent of their project costs as part of their local grant funding round.



Action 4: Ensure our community facilities are fit-for-purpose

Achieving fit-for-purpose facilities is an ongoing challenge due to the high number and age of many of council's facilities, the ongoing financial pressures and the growing and changing needs of our communities.

The Community Facilities Network Plan (CFNP) and accompanying action plan, was adopted in 2015 to guide council's investment in the provision of community facilities. A key objective of the plan is to ensure we develop fit-for purpose, integrated and connected community facilities.

Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2015-2025, which provides direction and priorities for investment in our existing building and land assets also aims to give effect to this.

Key principles in the asset management plan direct the council's investment to develop suitable community facilities by:

- ensuring assets are fit-for-purpose for their defined activity, including lifting levels of service
- identifying opportunities to provide flexible, integrated and connected facilities

Alongside actions and measures in the network plan and in the SAMP, council is also exploring opportunities to divest or optimise under-performing facilities and reinvest in new or improved services and facilities that will achieve better community outcomes.

Action 5: Showcase Auckland's resident and community-led initiatives

Auckland Council is continuing to develop its online presence. The Communications team maintains social media accounts for the 21 local boards, as well as overall council social media. *Our Auckland* is a website showcasing both council and community-led projects, events, activities and provides a weekly email update to subscribers.



Sandringham Project in Community Empowerment

Reserve development



In 2015, the Albert-Eden Local Board set aside \$25,000 for the community to develop their own vision and plan for Sandringham to enrich their community and enhance the area.

A group of residents came together to form the Sandringham Project in Community Empowerment (SPiCE) group which was tasked with spearheading the process. The group's first project was focused on the Sandringham Reserve, and its playground, which was due to be renewed by mid-2016.

SPiCE used a range of creative techniques to engage with the community, including holding a Flower Carpet Festival and surveying the people who attended, asking local school children to draw pictures and tell stories about their hopes and needs, and displaying options for feedback and voting on nearby shop hoardings.

Local people were asked about their desires for the local park in the village centre, and these results were used to brief artists whose designs were voted on. The winning design included a pebble-mat for the entrance to the park, made by pupils at the local school with the artist's help.

With the support of the local board, the Arts, Community and Events department and the Parks team worked alongside SPiCE to make the community's vision for the new reserve and playground come alive.

On 11 September 2016, the transformed Sandringham Reserve was officially reopened. The new and improved playground provides for a wider age range, with children between the ages of 1-12 able to enjoy it. By using an Empowered Community Approach, the completed reserve includes features that were important to locals, such as a new performance stage, picnic areas, improved landscaping and lighting, a drinking fountain, adventure play areas for children, a vibrant community art mosaic and other features that reflect the diversity of Sandringham. Consequently, the new playground is well-used by locals and visitors.

Aligns with Actions 1, 2, 3 and 5



“Auckland’s voluntary and community groups and non-government organisations are subject-matter experts on many issues and are important partners to council. Our support of the voluntary and community sector is crucial to progressing community and social development.” Thriving Communities, 2014

Action 6: Provide capacity and capability-building support

There are over 188 activities involving capability and capacity building in the Arts Community and Events (ACE) work programme for 2017/2018. Examples of these activities include:

- The Young Enterprise Scheme: a year-long programme where students turn ideas into actual businesses, compete with real products and services and experience profit and loss
- Landowner Assistance Programme: assistance programme to support private landowners to care for and protect lava rock forests on their land

A regional community development grants programme was set up to support the implementation of the Thriving Communities plan. The priorities for receiving a grant directly relate to capacity and capability-building support. A few examples include:

- Community capacity building initiatives
- Increasing community collaboration
- Increasing diverse community participation

Action 7: Investigate asset transfers and other options for communities

As the majority of council owned buildings are located on reserve land, it is usually not possible to carry out asset transfers. While it is possible to transfer improvements on the land, the land itself cannot be transferred. The Community Occupancy Guidelines set out rules and criteria for subsidised leasing, long-term leasing and right of renewal and places the focus on achieving community outcomes through our leasing programme.

An on-going council project has been working on developing a more standardised model for managing rural halls, with direct community involvement. Two rural-halls advisor positions have been created with the task of supporting communities to manage these facilities.

Community Policy have been leading a project to develop a Facility Partnerships Policy for Auckland Council. The projects purpose is to develop policy that will improve the council’s approach to selection, establishment and management of facility partnerships.



Action 8: Improve our funding processes

The Community Grants Policy (CGP) came into effect in July 2015, streamlining over 70 different legacy grant schemes. The policy aims to create a transparent, financially responsible approach, focusing grants on achieving outcomes.

At a local board level, two main schemes are offered, Quick Response Local Grants (up to \$2000) and Local Grants (over \$2000). The Quick Response grants were introduced to enable a quicker and easier application process and more efficient turnaround time. These grants will also decrease the cost on applicants in complying with the programme criteria and administrative costs. Provision for match funding has been discussed under Action 3.

At a regional level, 6 grants programmes are available, aligned to the following areas: arts, events, recreation, community development, heritage and environment.

A recent progress review has found that in general the CGP is working well and policy objectives are being met. Customer satisfaction has increased and there has also been greater understanding among applicants of the eligibility, requirements and process for grant funding applications.

Action 9: Develop a Community Facilities Network Plan that includes key voluntary and community sector facilities

The Community Facilities Network Plan (noted under Action 4) covers a range of community facilities including:

- arts and culture facilities
- community centres
- libraries
- pools and leisure facilities
- venues for hire (community or rural halls).

This includes both council owned and operated facilities as well as council supported facilities that are governed, managed and/or owned by community organisations.

The plan also acknowledges the important role other non-council facilities play in the community including marae, schools and church halls. In determining what provision council needs to make we consider the role of these other providers and the opportunities to partner to deliver better outcomes.





In 2016 the Kaipātiki Local Board set aside funds to provide training for committees and staff of community organisations, to strengthen their governance and management. Community Empowerment staff worked with the community and local board to provide a programme of training workshops, covering areas as HR, Health and Safety, conflict resolution and marketing. These workshops were well received by the community, and the local board extended the funding for 2017-2018. This provided an opportunity to check with the community organisation as to their priorities: what training and resources they wanted and how to develop them.

While the workshops were well received, communities felt they needed further support in anticipating, preparing for and responding to a range of situations that could emerge within their daily work.

In response, the community, supported by Community Empowerment staff, established a multi-faceted programme to strengthen their capacity, share skills and strengths, and build connectedness and social capital. The programme includes:

- an online platform – community managers can access up to date information and support as they need it
- key speakers – to inspire and inform
- participating in and attending events - sharing experiences and learning across communities, nationally and internationally.

Workshops will still have a place within the overall programme. Where possible they will provide opportunities for local groups to share their expertise and experience: communities already have a wide range of skills, strengths and knowledge – the challenge can be to find ways to share these and learn from each other.

Aligns with Action 6



Enable social innovation and social enterprise

“Business as usual’ is not addressing our tough social, environmental, economic and cultural challenges. Social innovation and the growing number of social enterprises can help address some of these and are important tools in social and economic development.”

Thriving Communities, 2014

Action 10: Promote social innovation and social enterprise

Currently, Social Enterprise Auckland and the Akina Foundation are key bodies for the development and promotion of social enterprise in Auckland and New Zealand. Auckland Council are part of a working group with both groups (see Action 12 commentary for further detail).

Social innovation and social enterprise are also a key focus for The Southern Initiative (TSI), which has enabled the development of a number of social enterprises, such as Fale Kofi, a coffee kiosk at Ōtāhuhu Station (see snapshot overleaf for details) and UpSouth, a crowd empowerment platform for young people to express their creativity, share ideas and earn money from providing input.

Action 11: Support Auckland’s social entrepreneurs

The Community Grants Policy enables individuals and groups to apply for grants specifically for social innovation or enterprise.

Council procurement strategy encourages innovative approaches to making the procurement process affordable, such as partnering with social enterprises.

The Community Empowerment Unit also support social entrepreneurs e.g. by sponsoring learning and networking events.

Action 12: Provide capacity- and capability-building support for social enterprise

The council is involved with two working groups related to social enterprise.

- The Social Outcomes and Smart Procurement Working Group was set up to share information across the council about upcoming smart procurement activity across the council group and to identify opportunities for delivery of social / economic / environmental / cultural outcomes.
- The Social Enterprise Network includes internal and external representatives, working to establish objectives in the social enterprise area to support the creation of an approach/strategy to support social enterprises in the future.



Fale Kofi

Social Enterprise in Ōtāhuhu



The new Ōtāhuhu Train Station opened in October 2016. As the build approached completion, Auckland Transport considered trialling the lease of a small coffee area with a social enterprise, rather than going immediately to competitive tender.

Fale Kofi, operated by local Pasifika social enterprise *Affirming Works*, opened in early 2017 on a six-month trial to test and prototype a social enterprise alternative to the usual coffee franchises. *Fale Kofi* is underpinned by a determination to showcase good environmental practice, provide healthy food options, and reflect Auckland's unique point of difference as the largest Pacific hub in the world.

Fale Kofi is the result of collaboration between The Southern Initiative (TSI) and two South Auckland Māori and Pasifika local enterprises working with Auckland Transport and championed by the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board. TSI provided \$25,000 in start-up capital for the venture as well as business planning, product development, marketing and communications support. *Fale Kofi* employs one full-time and one part-time staff member each day. The kiosk is staffed by local tertiary students who also work as mentors through *Affirming Works*.

The kiosk was designed and built by *Roots Creative Entrepreneurs*, who tapped into the ideas and energy of local students who took part in its construction. The *Fale Kofi* kiosk has a Māori and Pasifika aesthetic and used recycled and upcycled materials in its construction.

The pilot period recently concluded and *Affirming Works*, with TSI support, tendered for and won the three-year lease at the station, proving that a social enterprise can successfully compete in open, competitive tendering processes. TSI and Auckland Transport continue to support *Fale Kofi* to grow to the next level of delivery and viability.

This is a story of many mutually reinforcing elements – an initial opportunity and willingness to test a different approach from Auckland Transport, investment and ongoing support from TSI and the energy of local Māori and Pasifika entrepreneurs.

Aligns with Actions 10, 11, and 12



Maximise positive socio-economic impacts

“Auckland faces significant socio-economic challenges. To create the world’s most liveable city, we must act with urgency to build a strong, inclusive and equitable society that ensures opportunity for all, particularly those most in need.” Thriving Communities, 2014

Action 13: Improve socio-economic impacts through procurement

The council procurement strategy, last updated in 2017, states that opportunities for social, economic, environmental and cultural interests and outcomes are to be actively considered. The council's Sustainable Procurement Framework was approved in December 2017. The framework requires the council's procurement to meet organisational objectives while having the least negative and most positive impact on economic, environmental, social and cultural wellbeing. The objective of the framework is that sustainable procurement becomes 'business as usual' and that all procurement activities enable significant and sustainable positive impact on wellbeing.



Economic well-being is the state of the economy in terms of employment, efficiency and productivity. It also includes resilience to impacts of change.



Environmental well-being is the state of the surrounding natural environment in terms of air, land, water, habitats and natural heritage.



Social well-being is the state of the community in terms of health, safety, accessibility, equity, affordability and liveability.



Cultural well-being is the state of our identity in terms of heritage, ethnicity, recreation and access to cultural events.

Figure 3: Sustainable Procurement Framework

Action 14: Continue to be an advocate

Auckland Council continues to play a significant role in advocating to central government on behalf of Aucklanders and local government on a wide range of issues that impact on the lives and living standards of Aucklanders. The council has been instrumental in drawing attention to the issue of homelessness in Auckland, co-launching the Housing First Auckland pilot, which aims to get 400 people off the streets.



The council regularly makes submissions to central government on legislation or national policy. Recent examples include submissions on the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the Child Poverty Reduction Bill.

Action 15: Increase work-experience opportunities

In 2014, Auckland Council launched the Career Pathways programme. The programme consists of three distinct streams - cadet, intern and graduate-catering for the different skills and qualification levels of youth. There has been a concerted effort to recruit Māori and Pacific Island youth, with the recruitment process involving engagement with iwi and community networks and incorporating te reo Māori in advertising/marketing.



Action 16: Role-model working conditions that promote staff well-being and are family-friendly

Auckland Council has introduced a number of measures, supports and policies under this action. These include a flexible working policy – providing the means to apply for a variation in working hours and location, the living wage (detailed under Action 17 below) and a dedicated Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team.

The council has also recently developed a Diversity and Inclusion Framework that has a range of internal facing initiatives to encourage an inclusive work environment for council staff.



Within this space, six council units have received Rainbow Tick certification¹ and three more are currently working through the certification process. Workplaces are awarded a Rainbow Tick if they can demonstrate that they understand, value and welcome sexual and gender diversity.

Action 17: Investigate the living wage

The 2017/18 Annual Budget included the introduction of a Living Wage for Auckland Council. Phased implementation of the Living Wage began in September 2017 and is due to be completed by September 2019. The minimum wage of \$18.00 will be increased each year, until it reaches \$21.00.



¹ These are: People & Capability, Libraries & Information, Arts, Community & Events, Communication and Engagement and Transformation.

Three Kings Building

Deconstruction: Recovery and Salvage



Auckland Council's Waste Solutions team, together with the Puketāpapa Local Board and The Southern Initiative, has achieved positive social and environmental outcomes from the demolition of a council-owned building in Three Kings.

As part of the wider demolition project, social enterprises and community groups were invited to tender for a contract to divert salvaged building materials for reuse or recycling. *TROW Group*, a Pasifika and Māori civil construction company based in Ōtāhuhu, won the contract for salvaging and disseminating materials, and partnered with Earth Action Trust.

Keen to support local people into training, the local board put forward \$5,000 to provide employees with personal protection equipment, first aid training, site safe licencing and drug testing. *TROW Group* approached the local WINZ office requesting clients for the project.

The value of this project extends well beyond the initial \$45,000 committed by council and the local board, and includes the following outcomes:

- The men recruited for this project received training and employment. This has enabled them to go on to secure further employment at living wage rates, and both now have permanent accommodation.
- The materials salvaged from the building have been successfully re-purposed elsewhere, including kitchen facilities and insulation at Te Puea Marae, materials for use in schools in Māngere and Te Atatu, wall cladding and timber framing for Pacific churches in South Auckland, and recycling by *Tat-Upcycle*, a community social enterprise in Waitakere.
- The saving in landfill space and costs, with three tonnes of waste diverted from landfill.
- The lead contractors are now looking at opportunities for re-purposing materials at similar sites.

The success and attention given to this project has ignited interest elsewhere in council, and other contractors are seeing the opportunity that deconstruction and re-purposing can offer.

Aligns with Actions 13, 15 and 17



Work in a holistic and integrated way

“Community feedback was very strong on this issue. We are committed to a holistic approach to working with communities, that mirrors how communities function, and which is seamless and integrated over the full range of council activities.” Thriving Communities, 2014

Action 18: Promote and enable multi-purpose social infrastructure

The Community Facilities Network Plan directs council to focus investment on integrated and multi-purpose community facilities. The aim is to provide convenient opportunities for the community to participate in a range of activities. Recent examples of multi-purpose infrastructure include Toia, a combined library, pool and leisure centre in Otahuhu and Te Oro, a music and arts centre in Glen Innes, which is located adjacent to the library. New multi-purpose facilities are currently in development in Westgate, Takinini and Flatbush.

The Community Services division of council has developed a co-located community facilities operational framework. The purpose is to create a collaborative and place-based approach to service delivery within co-located council facilities to maximise the benefits of co-location and deliver a more integrated experience for customers and communities. This new way of working is being trialled in Otara and other pilots across the region are underway.

Action 19: Implement a whole-of-system approach

The Engaging and Enabling Communities workstream is identifying what the council needs to do internally and externally to improve council engagement with communities. This work aligns with one of the six pillars of the Organisational Strategy to 'engage and enable our communities.'

The Community Empowerment Unit are beginning to embed the Empowered Communities Approach (ECA) and are leading the Enabling Council programme. This work includes exploring barriers and enablers to council being a more enabling council with a view to identifying improvements we can make to our systems, processes and the way we work.

Action 20: Improve council engagement with communities

Citizen Value and Engagement (CVE) are working on a variety of initiatives to improve council engagement with communities. This includes:

- a new Engagement Performance Framework that provides guidance and direction on council's approach to engagement
- an engagement calendar to ensure we are coordinated in our approach (to help avoid engagement fatigue or duplication)
- a staff engagement hub – an intranet-based resource to provide consistent step-by-step guidance to staff undertaking engagement
- an engagement network to share and promote good practice



- Engagement Awards to recognise and reward examples of good engagement practice across the council family

A recent example of improved engagement practice was the approach to the 2016 elections. Democracy Services has a long-term focus on voter participation, aiming to reduce barriers to participation, support a candidate pool that reflects Auckland's communities and ensure electors understand what the council does and how it works. The 2016 elections programme strategy, which featured the 'love bus,' reached out to communities who traditionally participate in lower numbers. The 2016 election turnout increased from 35.5% to 38.5% in 2013, bucking the overall downward trend of voter participation nationally and internationally.



Te Kākano

Better services for Tamariki and whanau Māori



In 2016, Community and Social Policy (CSP) carried out research to identify how whānau and tamariki Māori were using council services and how these might be improved to better meet their needs.

Following the research, a framework was developed which aims to guide the council's service design practice using a kaupapa Māori approach. In partnership with Service Strategy and Integration (SS&I) the Te Kākano framework is being tested through five pilots, across Auckland. Staff, mana whenua and mataawaka informed the selection of the pilots.

SS&I and CSP worked closely with mana whenua and mataawaka to ensure that whānau voices

were central to the pilot design. Māori codesign specialists and kaupapa Māori evaluators were contracted to ensure the design process:

- encourage whānau to participate
- respect tikanga and kawa at hui and wananga
- used matauranga Māori methods, including:
 - Whakawhanaungatanga: investing time getting to know and trust each other to encourage deeper engagement and openness from participants
 - Nga Hinengaro: co-creation and ideation
 - Nga Puawaitanga: sharing final ideas
- enabled all design team members to feel comfortable using matauranga Māori design

Mana whenua and mataawaka already active in the sector welcomed this new approach from council and its focus on genuine engagement from a Te Ao Māori perspective.

Staff involved in front-line service delivery gained a deeper understanding of what is important to whanau and tamariki Māori to grow participation and engagement in council services

Stakeholders in the community were brought together around a common kaupapa and supported to contribute to the outcomes identified by whānau.

The pilots are now shifting into service delivery, with ongoing support to be provided by the council. An independent evaluation will be undertaken by matauranga Māori specialists through to 2020.

Aligns with action 18 and 20



Support staff to be community-centric

“To be able to drive forward the actions in the focus areas, put the principles into practise and deliver great results for both council and communities, our organisational culture must shift to being relationship-focused with a ‘can do’ attitude.” Thriving Communities, 2014

Action 21: Work through the transformation projects



To support the realisation of the Organisational Strategy (included above), four transformation focus areas have been created. Each area has its own specific work programmes and initiatives to support the council to adopt more community-centric ways of working. An example for each area is listed below:

Engaging and enabling communities

Te Toa Takitini

- A series of cross-council group work streams that will lift economic, social and cultural well-being, improve our effectiveness for Māori and maximise post-Treaty settlement opportunities.

Customer friendly services

Consenting made easy

- Make the consenting process easier, faster and more efficient for customers.

Making our size work

Non-general rates revenue

- Investigate and develop revenue streams to decrease the general rates burden

High performance culture

Digital HR and future workforce

- Digital tools and a workforce design to ensure our workforce is set up to deliver our three-year strategy.



Action 22: Increase learning and development opportunities

Tupu is the name of the Learning Management System (LMS) that has been rolled out across Auckland Council to help staff take charge of their learning, growth, and career development. It was launched in July 2017 and offers courses that support staff to become more community-centric. These include courses on te reo Māori, tikanga, and cultural competency.

A three-year development programme called Kura Kāwana has been running since 2017 to support elected members as governors and decision-makers. To date members have attended a range of Kura Kāwana sessions including integrity and conflict of interest, Obligations and Opportunities: Māori, Te Tiriti/the Treaty and Auckland Council, workshop for chairs, workshop for deputy chairs and Getting to Grips with Governance.

Action 23: Support collaborative and empowering practices

As well as the Community Empowerment Unit, the Organisational Strategy speaks to this action with Step 1: Engage and Enable our Communities, and Step 4: Value and empower our people.

An Engagement Performance Framework is also being developed by Citizen Value and Engagement, which will allow us to measure how departments are doing across a raft of engagement indicators.

Action 24: Foster employee volunteering

The Council has a policy that encourages staff to take one day a year as paid Community Day leave to support volunteering in the community. Since the adoption of Thriving Communities, Community Day leave has been promoted on the intranet, and through Chief Executive update emails. The table below demonstrates a marked improvement in uptake of the Community Day opportunity since 2013 (although this fell slightly in 2015).

Year	From	To	Number of Employees who took Community Day Leave
2017/2018	1/07/2017	13/12/2017 (Today)	609 <i>Please note this figure is only for 5 months as the year completes in June</i>
2016/2017	1/07/2016	30/06/2017	1312 (22%) Total staff numbers: 6091
2015/2016	1/07/2015	30/06/2016	1205 (20%) Total staff numbers: 6102
2014/2015	1/07/2014	30/06/2015	1318 (22%) Total staff numbers: 5998
2013/2014	1/07/2013	30/06/2014	716



Kotahi Profile

Community Day Promotion



Kotahi is the name of the Auckland Council intranet. It is used to profile organisational news and events and is often used to advertise the Community Day opportunities.

In May 2017, the Design Review Unit from Auckland Design Office were featured online braving the wet weather and embarking on a team Community Day at Long Bay Regional Park.

"Using your Community Day as a team event can be a lot of fun" says Anita Sanghera, Business Co-ordinator for Auckland Design Office.

The park rangers needed a helping hand to move 3500 potted native trees and shrubs from their yard to new planting areas ready for a mass community planting event on Sunday 14th May.

The article explains that the rangers gave great instructions about where to plant each tree species, so Council staff were instantly upskilled with new knowledge. The day was described as a 'festival of mud', where the team members shared laughs, fresh air and a hearty BBQ together.

The rangers were very pleased with the team effort and Stephanie McLeod one of the rangers said: "I wanted to pass on a huge thank you to your team for their help on Friday at Long Bay Regional Park. It was wonderful to have them here. Getting around 3500 plants laid out is a big task, everyone worked really hard and we couldn't have done it without you all!"

In September 2017, Stephen Town also featured the Executive Leadership Team's Community Day at the Auckland City Mission in his update email to all staff.

Each of these features contains links to ideas and contacts to follow up with about a range of voluntary opportunities available.

Aligns with Action 24

7. Internal stakeholder feedback

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 18 managers across Auckland Council, and its associated council-controlled organisations. The interviews were designed to assess the strategic role and relevance of Thriving Communities and explore opportunities for the plan in the future. Questions were structured around the following key themes:

- Familiarity with Thriving Communities
- Use of Thriving Communities
- Importance of Thriving Communities
- Issues
- Suggested improvements

The second part of the engagement involved workshops with frontline staff in key delivery areas to assess delivery to date and current familiarity with the plan. Following a presentation, staff completed a questionnaire covering the same themes as the manager interviews and participated in a facilitated group discussion, expanding on their responses to the questionnaire.

This section presents the findings from this engagement. It summarises feedback on what is working well and what could be areas for improvement.

Key take-outs:

- The intent of Thriving Communities is highly valued – the action plan is anchored in local needs and community practices and aspirations.
- Thriving Communities has been a key starting point for subsequent work such as the Empowered Communities Approach (ECA).
- While important work has been carried out which aligns with the actions in the plan, this hasn't necessarily resulted directly from the plan.
- Commitment to community-led ways of working needs to be further embedded, this requires evidence of the benefits and understanding of the resourcing implications.
- There is a need to increase awareness of the plan and make it a simpler and more accessible document
- The plan's linkages to other key strategic plans and organisational initiatives needs to be clearer.
- Content needs to be refreshed to reflect relevant and emerging community issues.
- The plan requires clear measures and an evaluation framework to underpin delivery.

7.1 What's working well?

Recognition of the value of the plan and impact in specific areas

Across the interviews and staff workshops there was general agreement on the importance of Thriving Communities. Managers view the plan as a key guide for council community engagement. Some recognised the link between the plan and other strategies/approaches and view Thriving Communities as the foundation document in this space.

'Really important document for those with eye on this kind of thing...a guiding document.' Manager

'The Empowered Communities Approach, it was about the realisation of the Thriving Communities Action Plan.' Manager

Clear framework for creating an enabling council

In regard to its practical use, the plan is seen as providing a useful framework for creating an enabling council. The plan is a blueprint for staff across the council, including local boards and CCOs, to enable and empower local communities.

'It describes an enabling council...as a framework I think it works really well.' Manager

'[The plan sets] alignment and direction.' Staff member

'A framework to help the rest of the organisation to come to working in this way.' Manager

Noticeable impact on certain groups

Some of those interviewed spoke of the tangible impact the plan has had on certain areas of the council. The influence was particularly noted on frontline staff, as well as various council activities, such as the Southern Initiative.

Staff who were using the plan, referred to particular areas that were referenced or integrated into their work.

'It's important to note how much traction it has...amongst people working in this space.' Manager

'[Thriving Communities] led to strategic brokers, current local board programme, etc.' Manager

'Make reference to it when talking about ECA.'

Council is working in a more community-centric way

A stocktake of council activity since the launch of the plan highlighted a range of work, completed or in progress, which addresses the plan's action points. Examples of achievements include the launch of the Community Facilities Network Plan, Community Grants Policy and the increasing importance placed on social and cultural outcomes in the procurement process.

7.2 What could be improved?

Awareness of the plan could be increased

Familiarity with Thriving Communities varies significantly across the council. While some were aware of the plan, they felt they were lacking a comprehensive understanding of its role and importance relative to their particular workstream.

'Exposure to plan? Very little. Have not read it or come across it. Staff in the department know about it but not used in their daily work.' Manager

'Why don't I know about the Thriving Communities Action Plan? How do we become aware of these plans that we could easily miss?' Manager

Some of those unfamiliar with the plan felt this was because they were new to their role or to the council generally.

'I have only been here 7 months – not something I have come across in my work space.' Manager

'I have only been in the role for a little while. I did not have this on my radar.' Staff member

Who is driving the plan?

Managers were unclear who or what group had responsibility for Thriving Communities at the council. They were not aware of anyone 'driving' the plan through the organisation and who was taking ownership for it.

'[Challenges] ownership.'

'What else is driving work in this community space? I don't know what is being done or who the people are.'

Community-centric work is not always directly influenced by the plan

Interviews and workshops with council staff indicated that much of this work has not necessarily been directly influenced by the plan, but rather reflects a general shift in commitment by the council to community-led approaches.

'It is embedded in all the work we do – not sure if this is the action plan per se.' Staff member

Lack of understanding of how the plan fits in with other council plans and strategies

There is a lack of clarity over how the plan relates to other subsequent council initiatives. Interviews indicated confusion between Thriving Communities and Empowered Communities Approach (ECA), with some assuming that ECA had 'replaced' Thriving Communities.

'If we could see some connect across the initiatives/actions and also some shared objectives. They do sit very much as quite separate action plans.' Manager

'I was under the impression that ECA is the 'implementation' of Thriving Communities so didn't reference it anymore.' Staff member

Frontline staff indicated that they struggle with the number, length and complexity of strategic and policy documents. It is hard to keep track of the plans or know when a specific plan is replaced or how they link to another.

'Council has so many plans and strategies. Sometimes it feels like a flavour of the month approach.' Staff member

Commitment to community-led ways of working needs to be further embedded

While community-facing staff and units are familiar with the plan and actively using it, other groups require further support in embedding these practices.

Managers felt that community-facing staff tended to understand the approach and respond well, while staff and departments that do not often engage directly with the community require better support.

Of the staff questioned, over one third were not using the plan, with another 9 'slightly' incorporating it into their work. Reasons given for this included a lack of awareness of the plan or perceived lack of alignment with their work area.

'Currently not well profiled or connected to strategies and plans in use.'

'I am sure this plan is very important, but it hasn't translated into the work I do.'

Clarifying the reasoning behind the plan

Interviews and workshops revealed a tension around the intent of community-led approaches, with some questioning if it was to achieve better community outcomes or to increase fiscal savings.

'From a community organisation point of view, Thriving Communities felt like an opportunity for the council to invest less in community groups.' Staff member

A need for a stronger evidence base

While the plan and its content may have been influenced by a large evidence base, this is not made clear in the document. Much of the content is not explicitly supported with references, which can have an impact on confidence in Thriving Communities.

'I couldn't use this document in my submissions to central government as I can't see the evidence base that supports it.' Manager

A high level of trust and investment in the right skills and training is needed

Some managers perceived there to be an inherent risk in taking a community-led approach. They discussed the need to have a high level of trust in their staff who also needed to be flexible and adapt to new approaches.

To support local communities to be empowered to lead would require highly skilled facilitators and staff with strong interpersonal skills.

While managers recognised the plan as delivering cost-savings down the line, there was some agreement that the approach was resource-heavy, and that initially there would need to be significant investment in staff and training.

Content needs to be updated to reflect current issues and context

There was consensus amongst staff and managers that new issues have emerged in Auckland, since Thriving Communities was written, that need to be addressed in any future update to the plan.

a) Diversity

It was felt that the diversity of Auckland is not well represented in Thriving Communities. In particular, it was suggested that there should be more content specific to Māori and Pasifika, with corresponding outcomes.

'Doesn't reflect adequately the diversity of Auckland through immigration.' Manager

'More Māori outcome specifics.' Staff member

Some managers felt that the plan could go further in understanding the needs of diverse communities. Communities shouldn't be categorised solely based on ethnicity, as there can be a number of differences within an ethnic group, for example new Pacific migrants have differing needs from those who have been in New Zealand for a few generations.

b) Housing and homelessness

The housing issue has become acute in Auckland, an issue that encompasses not only the supply of affordable housing, but also the quality of existing housing and strategies for better supporting our homeless population. There is now work underway on a Homelessness Strategic Action Plan and a Mayor's Housing Taskforce.

Staff suggested that a strategic action plan about communities should acknowledge these social issues and how they create barriers to other social outcomes and make links to other council work to address this.

c) Environment

While the plan is strong on places in terms of the people who live in them, it makes no reference to place as a tangible area. The need for a community action plan to also recognise the contribution to a community made by a healthy, well cared for environment should be included as a central element of Thriving Communities.

'It's strong on place as community, but it's not strong on place as landscape and a thing to be cared for, katiakitanga.' Manager

Plan needs to be refined and simplified

Both managers and staff discussed the need to refine the actions in the plan, with some requesting that they are removed altogether.

'The actions are good, but the detail is way too prescriptive...high level is better.'
Manager

'Needs to be simplified down, too many actions.' Staff member

'Remove the actions.' Staff member

The plan requires clear measures and an evaluation system

Both managers and staff felt that the current evaluation system for the plan could be improved. In some instances, there was confusion as to what the outcomes were and how to measure success against outcomes.

'Improve monitoring and evaluation.' Manager

'Develop and monitor more specific outcomes.' Staff member

Staff wanted actions to be supported with practical examples, so they could better understand what they could/should be doing.

'[It could be improved if] it goes into examples, gets quite specific.'

8 Recommended improvements

Based on analysis of the progress review and stakeholder feedback, we have identified four key problem or opportunity statements and four improvement areas to address these.

This provides the overarching intervention logic for the recommended improvements.

8.1 Key problem/opportunity statements

1. Lack of leadership and awareness of the Thriving Communities Action Plan

There is a lack of leadership at the right level to drive delivery of the Thriving Communities Action Plan. There is also lack of awareness of the plan and understanding of how it aligns to other strategies and organisational initiatives. As a result, uptake and delivery are inconsistent across the council family.

2. We have an opportunity to focus on improving outcomes for those most in need

Auckland's context is changing, our population is increasing and becoming more diverse; and there is growing inequity in parts of the region.

The refreshed Auckland Plan directs us to ensure all Aucklanders feel they belong and have opportunities to achieve their potential. There is an opportunity to update the Thriving Communities Action Plan to give greater effect to this by focusing our collective efforts on improving outcomes for those communities in most need.

3. Community-led ways of working are not fully embedded across council

Commitment to and application of community-led and enabling ways of working that underpin the Thriving Communities Action Plan are not consistently applied across the council family. There is more we could be doing to improve communities' experiences of working with us that will lead to better community outcomes.

We are also not making the most of sharing and applying our learnings from our successes and good/emerging practice.

4. We are not always clear on the impact we are making

Council is doing some good work but we are not always clear on what difference we are making and how to effectively measure and evaluate this. Understanding this is important to ensure we are working on the right things where we can have the most impact; and to underpin the case for ongoing investment.

8.1 Recommended improvements

The following tables outline four areas of recommended improvements to address the key problem statements, using a simple intervention logic.

Improvement 1: Build leadership for the plan and raise awareness of it

If we:

Build leadership for the plan, and better communicate, promote and socialise it.

Then by doing the following:

- **Create leadership champions to help drive delivery of the plan**

To ensure cross-council delivery of Thriving Communities, leadership champions are required to help drive it through the organisation. Ideally this would be at both the political/governance and executive/senior management level.

- **Improve oversight and drive delivery of plan**

Staff need to better coordinate and drive delivery of the plan, with clear monitoring and reporting requirements.

- **Better communicate and promote the plan**

- *Socialise the plan across the organisation*

Through regular communications, sharing examples of best practice and incorporating an introduction to the document at all new staff inductions.

To ensure staff are clear on the role, intent and content of the plan, information sessions could be provided across the council. Joint sessions could be held with other teams (e.g. Community Empowerment Unit) to demonstrate the importance of a community-led approach, clarify the links between Thriving Communities, Empowered Communities Approach and Enabling Council and provide case studies/good practice in this area.

- *Make the plan simpler and more accessible*

Update the plan to make the document more accessible for a greater range of people, taking into account their knowledge levels of the subject matter as well as the time they have available.

Structuring the report to support both a quick overview (for example by providing summary tables, introductions to each section and headings that outline the main point of each section) and deeper dives (through detailed content and links to other key documents).

So that we will achieve

- Increased awareness of the plan and its relevance
- Wider uptake and buy-in to the plan across the council family
- Better coordination and delivery of the plan's actions

Improvement 2: Focus delivery on improving outcomes for those most in need

If we:

Target delivery of actions and interventions to achieving Auckland Plan outcomes, with a focus on meeting our treaty obligations to Māori and on those most in need.

Then by doing the following:

- **Update Thriving Communities Plan to give effect to Auckland Plan outcomes**

Develop and prioritize actions and interventions that give effect to the outcomes and priorities of the new Auckland Plan – particularly to the Belonging and Participation outcome area.

- This could include, for instance, an intervention programme to increase inclusion and belonging tailored to specific population groups (*emerging from the Investing in Aucklanders project*).
- An updated plan should also include:
 - Logic intervention/theory of change for key actions and programmes
 - Reference key issues such as housing and diversity
 - Local communities' views on the issues that are most relevant to them
 - Engagement with Māori and Pasifika to ensure the plan reflects their needs

- **Develop place-based interventions that take a community-centric approach to improving outcomes in areas of most need.**

This status update indicates that place-based, community-centric approaches such as The Southern Initiative could be a successful model to deliver improved outcomes for other communities of need. The merits of replicating or scaling this approach could be explored in other areas of high need in the region (such as parts of west Auckland).

So that we will achieve

- Improved outcomes for Māori and Pasifika communities and those most in need
- Greater impact in areas of highest need.
- Applied learning from our current successes/good practice

Improvement 3: Further embed community-led ways of working

If we:

Further embed community-led ways of working across the council family.

Then by doing the following:

- **Support and deliver the Enabling Council programme**

The Community Empowerment Unit are already leading work to look at how council can be more enabling. This includes investigating barriers to the council working in more enabling ways and identifying solutions to reduce these.

This work could include addressing concerns expressed by some staff over the resourcing implications and other potential risks of working in more enabling ways.

- **Showcase good and emerging practice and evidence of the benefits**

There are opportunities for council to better showcase good practise and help others across the council learn from what is being achieved. This could include providing more evidence on benefits, role modelling community-centric ways of working and creating opportunities to upscale, replicate or extended good practise elsewhere in the region.

- **Show links to other strategic plans and initiatives**

Clarifying the connections between Thriving Communities and other strategic plans and initiatives such as the Organisation Strategy and the Empowered Communities Approach will support staff to better understand and implement the enabling council approach and priorities.

So that we will achieve:

- Better experiences for our communities working with us leading to increased trust.
- Improved outcomes for communities.
- Applied learning from our current successes/good practice
- A more enabling council with greater uptake of community-led approaches

Improvement 4: Improve evaluation to measure the impact we are making

If we:

Improve evaluation of the Thriving Communities Action Plan.

Then by doing the following:

- **Develop an evaluation framework**

To support effective delivery of the plan, an evaluation framework needs to be developed to guide how we measure impact. This needs to be underpinned by an intervention logic/ theory of change which shows the link between what we do (actions/investment) and the intended outcomes (in the Auckland Plan and other council strategies and initiatives).

This could include working with the Enabling Council programme to develop theory of change and evaluation tools that assist council staff to plan and measure the community benefits and outcomes of projects (pending business case).

- **Underpin plan with clear evidence base**

There is a need to clearly articulate the research underpinning the principles and actions of the plan. As part of the plan's update it will be beneficial to add to this evidence base, taking data collected by other agencies and initiatives that clearly demonstrate Thriving Communities in action or support its central tenets. This would also provide an opportunity to incorporate latest thinking around community development practice.

- **Establish regular monitoring process**

The evaluation plan needs to sit with the unit allocated responsibility for the plan. A regular monitoring process should be developed to ensure greater accountability for meeting the Action Plan across the council.

So that we will achieve:

- Wider uptake and delivery of the plan across the council family
- Clear accountability for actions
- Better understanding of the impact we are making
- Applied learning that can be replicated, scaled up/out to other areas of Auckland

9 Summary and conclusion

Since the launch of The Thriving Communities Action Plan in 2014, the council has shown a commitment to community-led ways of working, delivering activities, policies and programmes across the plan's 24 action points.

Overall, Auckland Council is making good progress and has already completed seven discrete actions. Successes include the introduction of a living wage and the adoption of the Community Facilities Network Plan.

Despite an evident shift in the council's approach to engaging with communities, this has not necessarily been a direct result of the plan, and there are areas of council that remain unaware of Thriving Communities and its role in shaping a community-led approach. The lack of clear leadership and oversight of the plan, has affected uptake and delivery.

There is a lack of consensus around where the plan sits within wider council strategy, with some overwhelmed by the number of strategies and initiatives at the council. There is confusion between Thriving Communities and Empowered Communities Approach (ECA), with many of the impression that ECA had replaced the plan. Any updates to the document need to ensure it aligns more closely with other council plans and initiatives such as the refreshed Auckland Plan and ECA. Collaboration with the units responsible for these plans, for example through shared staff training, may help in improving understanding of how the plans and initiatives work together.

Commitment and understanding of community-led ways of working varies across the council. There is need to support staff to better understand the thinking behind the plan and the evidence base that underpins the theory. Managers and team leaders also require a clearer picture of resourcing requirements involved in working towards the plan, and support in meeting these needs.

With three years since the launch of Thriving Communities and significant changes in the Auckland context, some of the content also needs updating. There was general consensus that the plan does not address some pressing issues such as housing and increasing diversity. Any updates to the plan need to involve active reengagement with local communities to establish the issues that are relevant in 2018. It will be important to actively recognise the role played by communities in the initial consultation on the plan, highlighting where council have acted on their input and emphasising that the community remains the ones in the driving seat for any future updates. Undertaking this work in the light of the Auckland Plan refresh provides a good opportunity to ensure close alignment between the two plans and that communities' priorities can be reflected in the action plan.

A refreshed document will need to be accessible to a greater range of people. This could be achieved by refining the list of actions as well as structuring the report to provide multiple entry points for readers, enabling both a quick overview and a deeper dive.

For the council to effectively work towards the action plan, an evaluation system needs to be developed. Currently, the plan does not detail what successful outcomes look like or provide clear guidance on how or what units should be doing in terms of monitoring and evaluation. There needs to be clear indicators for measuring success, with practical examples to aid understanding of expectations of each unit. A regular monitoring process should be developed to ensure greater accountability for meeting the action points across the council.

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