

# Summary of Early Engagement

## Review of Public Safety and Public Amenities Bylaws 2024/25



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### 1. Introduction

Matamata-Piako District Council (Council) currently has nine bylaws that sit under a Consolidated Bylaw and two standalone bylaws. The purpose of these bylaws is to enhance the wellbeing of its communities and to protect and preserve assets for the present and into the future. Council is required to review each bylaw five years after it was first made and every ten years thereafter.

Council has a planned programme of bylaw reviews to achieve legislative compliance and to ensure that the bylaws remain fit for purpose for both Council and the community.

The Public Amenities and Public Safety Bylaws have been reviewed, and Council is seeking formal feedback from the community during March/April 2025 as per the Special Consultative Procedure of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA).

Extensive early engagement with the community has been undertaken to inform the review of these bylaws. This engagement has included a community survey, hui with mana whenua, discussions with Council and community leaders, feedback from Council staff who manage public spaces and facilities, and drop in events held in Morrinsville, Matamata and Te Aroha.

The purpose of this engagement was to understand the issues people experience in their neighbourhoods and public spaces, identify areas where the bylaws could be improved, and ensure the rules are practical, fair, and reflective of community and Council needs.

This document provides a summary of the feedback received during early engagement and outlines key changes made to the draft bylaws in response. By incorporating this input, the revised bylaws aim to enhance the safety, accessibility, and enjoyment of public spaces across the Matamata-Piako district (district).

Council looks forward to further engagement and feedback from the community during formal consultation to further enhance and finalise the draft bylaws for adoption. It is anticipated that following consultation, the new bylaws will come into force from 1 July 2025.

## 2. Early Engagement Approach

To ensure the Public Amenities and Public Safety Bylaws reflect community needs, Council undertook early engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. This engagement aimed to gather insights on current issues, identify potential improvements, and shape the draft bylaws prior to formal consultation and adoption of the new bylaws.

### Who We Engaged With

Council sought input from:

- Mana whenua – through hui and discussions with Te Manawhenua Forum mō Matamata-Piako to understand cultural considerations.
- Community leaders – including through youth groups, and targeted focus groups.
- Facility managers and Council staff – to capture operational challenges and practical considerations in managing public spaces.
- Key stakeholders – including businesses, and those affected by public space regulations.
- The wider public – via surveys, drop in days held in Morrinsville, Matamata and Te Aroha, and online engagement to understand everyday experiences in neighbourhoods and public spaces.

### Engagement Methods

A range of methods was used to encourage broad participation:

- Community survey – to collect general feedback on the issues that are of importance to our residents.
- Workshops and hui – targeted discussions with mana whenua, Council staff and facility managers, youth, and community leaders.
- Community events – such as drop in days, including attending the Kiwanis One Day Fun Day in Morrinsville, providing informal opportunities for engagement.
- Online and newspaper engagement – utilising social media and newspaper advertising to reach a wider audience.

## 3. Key Issues

Through this engagement, several common themes emerged, including:

- The need for a clearer understanding of what bylaws are, how they are enforced and what they contain.
- Concerns about safety and accessibility in public spaces.
- Reports of nuisance issues in communities and neighbourhoods with a sense of frustration that these issues are repeated and little can be done about it.

A detailed description of the feedback received from the community survey, in person events and correspondence is detailed below. These topics represent the most common issues raised through early engagement. While some issues can be addressed in this bylaw review, others fall outside its scope, however can be addressed through future bylaw reviews and

other Council work streams to inform operational priorities and improve the service that Council provides.

### Public Safety Concerns

Many respondents highlighted safety concerns in public spaces such as loitering, disorderly behaviour, and illegal behaviour such as the sale of drugs, particularly at night. Some called for greater enforcement of existing rules, increased Police presence/enforcement and Council provision/support of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras for crime prevention.

### Environmental and Cultural Considerations

Feedback from mana whenua and environmental groups emphasised the need to incorporate tikanga Māori principles and sustainability measures into the bylaws.

### Nuisance and Safety Complaints

Concerns about recurring nuisances in the community were frequently raised, with many expressing frustration that these issues persist even after being reported. Some of the most common concerns are noted below:

- Dog control is an issue of concern for the community. Issues raised included problems with roaming dogs, off-leash behaviour, excessive barking, and aggressive or dangerous dogs. While this feedback falls outside the scope of the current bylaw review, it will be carefully considered during the upcoming review of the Dog Control Bylaw and Policy on Dogs in 2025/26.
- The community raised concerns about smoke nuisance from outdoor fires, including the impact on air quality, health, and general amenity/enjoyment. Many indicated a lack of awareness about what types of fires are permitted, how complaints are managed, and the enforcement actions that can be taken. Submitters wanted stricter controls over fires and suggestions were made to produce guidance for the community to reduce smoke nuisance.
- There were significant concerns raised about the safety of mobility scooter users, particularly in busy areas of Morrinsville. There are frequent reports of near-misses between mobility scooters and pedestrians. The feedback suggested that education and enforcement as well as a speed restriction is needed to prevent accidents and enhance safety.
- Street racing, including motorbike use in public spaces, remains a significant concern for many communities due to safety risks, noise disturbances, and the disruption of neighbourhoods and public amenities. Vehicle use in Public Amenities regularly causes damage to Council's parks and reserves and cemeteries, with 54 complaints of vehicles in public reserves over the last three years have been received.
- There was a request by some respondents for management and regulation of domestic cats. The concerns received relate to environmental impact, nuisances, and public health.
- There were concerns about the appearance of towns, particularly with vacant shopfronts and spaces being used as residences. Many people expressed the importance of supporting the local economy and finding ways to revitalise these areas, not only to boost business but also to improve the overall look and feel of our town centres.

### Monitoring and Enforcement

The community raised concerns about the adequacy of monitoring and enforcement of the Council's current bylaws. The feedback received was that Council should not have bylaws if they are not going to be enforced.

There needs to be a better understanding of the role and ability of Council to enforce the rules contained in the bylaws.

### Requirement for Education

A common theme was the need to improve public awareness of bylaws - what they are, why they exist, what they regulate, and how to report a potential breach.

It was noted that education is required on what the rules are so that people don't inadvertently breach Council's bylaws, e.g. promotion of the 'no skate zones' and alcohol ban areas.

## **4. What we're proposing to change**

As a result of early engagement, Council has produced two draft bylaws for community feedback.

Council has amended the name of the Public Safety Bylaw to *Community Safety Bylaw* to reflect a broader focus of fostering safer, more inclusive communities. It is proposed that the Public Amenities Bylaw is now a Cemeteries Bylaw. This allows more focussed rules to benefit the maintenance and continued amenity of our cemeteries. Other relevant public amenity issues have been included in the re-named Community Safety Bylaw.

Several key changes have been made to the draft bylaws, including:

- In response to concerns about a lack of enforcement, Council is refocusing on core responsibilities, ensuring that only issues directly within its jurisdiction are addressed in the bylaws, whilst ensuring that other matters are managed by relevant partner agencies. For example, Council has removed the Food Hygiene provisions due to this being replaced by the Food Act 2014 and references to illegal activities have been removed, as such activities are prohibited by central government legislation and the New Zealand Police are primarily responsible for enforcement.
- Bylaw wording has been strengthened in key areas where the community have voiced concerns including smoke nuisance and animal nuisance.
- The bylaws have been streamlined with explanatory notes to assist in understanding and reflect early engagement received.
- Cemetery regulations have been updated providing clearer guidance on memorials, safe burial practices, and maintenance responsibilities.
- A clause has been included in the draft Community Safety Bylaw to allow the removal of individuals displaying inappropriate or disruptive behaviour at Council facilities like libraries and swimming pools. This responds to feedback from staff about increasing anti-social behaviour and public concerns about ensuring these spaces remain safe and welcoming community assets.
- During the review of the Public Safety Bylaw, it has been identified that there was an error with the Te Aroha map which shows where Mobile Shops can trade from. A revised map has been generated to reflect the approach in other areas – e.g. placing some restrictions in the main streets etc.

Additionally, some suggestions were considered but not included due to legislative constraints or practicality. For example, while there has been community interest in expanding CCTV coverage, Council has carefully considered the request and determined that public surveillance is not a key activity of Council. Additionally, due to funding constraints, Council is currently unable to allocate resources for this initiative.

Other issues such as regulation and management of domestic cats are not being progressed at this time due to a lack of empowering legislation that would allow Council to implement more effective controls. Additionally, the necessary resources to manage this issue are not currently available. Council continues to monitor the situation and remains open to exploring future opportunities for addressing cat management should the legislative landscape and resources allow.

Other issues raised, including that of dog control, and traffic safety will be considered in future bylaw reviews and all relevant feedback has been passed onto our operation teams to enhance Council's service provision to the community.

## 5. Next Steps

With the draft bylaws now updated based on early engagement, the next steps in the review process are:

1. **Formal consultation** – The community has an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft bylaws through a formal submission process.
2. **Public hearings** – Those who submit feedback may choose to present their views directly to Councillors.
3. **Final revisions** – Council will consider all formal submissions before making any final changes to the bylaws.
4. **Adoption and implementation** – Once the bylaws are adopted, they will come into effect, with information provided so the community is aware of the rules.

## 6. Conclusion

Bylaws are an effective way of setting clear rules to improve the amenity and safety of Matamata-Piako. By establishing legally binding rules and providing a framework for enforcement, the draft bylaws ensure that safety standards are consistently maintained and respected across the community. Bylaws also allow for flexible, tailored solutions to address local concerns and issues, whilst balancing individual freedoms with the collective good.

Pursuant to Section 78 of the LGA, Council must consider community views as part of its decision-making process. Community input is essential in shaping bylaws, ensuring they are relevant and effective. The formal consultation process provides an opportunity for further feedback, assisting Councillors to determine whether the draft bylaw meets community needs or requires further changes prior to adoption.

Feedback received during early engagement has been invaluable in shaping the updated bylaws. The feedback received has helped Council identify key issues, refine the draft bylaws, and ensure they are both practical and enforceable.

Council acknowledges and appreciates the contributions of all individuals and groups who participated in this process. Continued community involvement will be essential as the bylaws progress through the formal consultation process and final adoption.