



Candidate Briefing Document

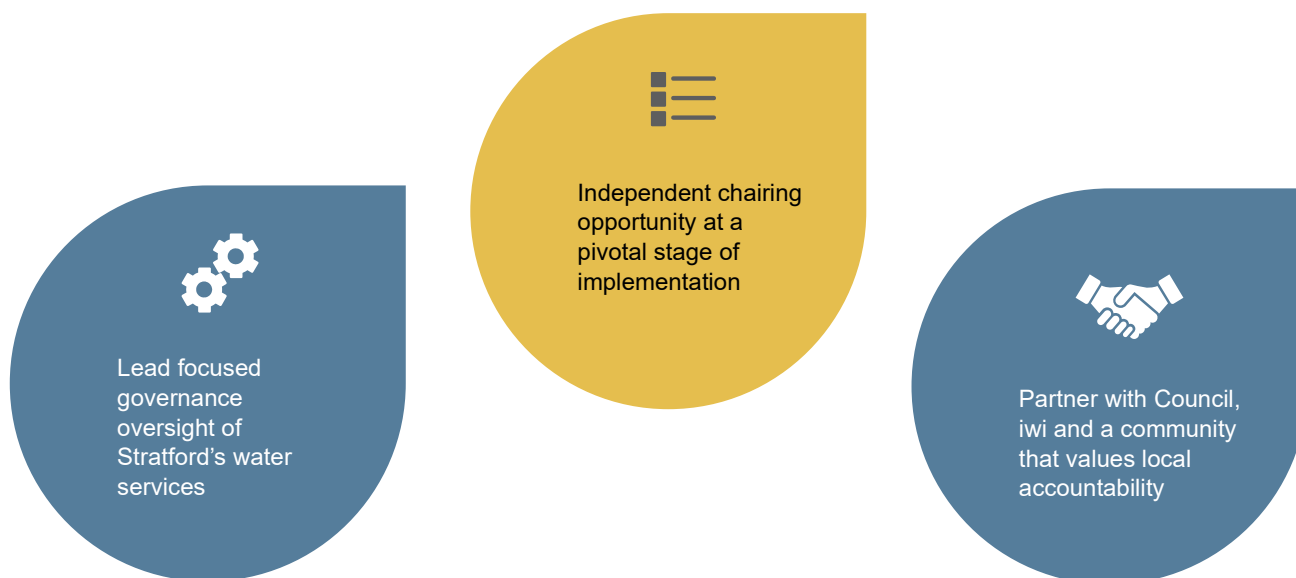
Water Services Committee Independent Chairperson

SEPTEMBER 2026



TE KAUNIHERA Ā ROHE O
WHAKAAHURANGI
STRATFORD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

1. The role



2. The opportunity

Stratford District Council (Council) is seeking an experienced, independent governance leader to chair our Water Services Committee (Committee).

The Committee oversees, advises, and supports the governance and delivery of water supply, wastewater, and stormwater (three waters) services in accordance with Council's [Water Services Delivery Plan](#).

As Independent Chair, you will lead a focused Committee comprising Elected Members and Mana Whenua representatives. You will shape an effective governance work programme and provide robust oversight across strategy, financial sustainability, asset stewardship, regulation, risk, assurance, performance, and delivery as Council establishes the Stratford Waters Internal Business Unit (SWIBU).

This is a significant opportunity to support a locally accountable and financially sustainable water services model for the Stratford district that safeguards public health, protects the environment, and maintains reliable services for current and future communities.

3. The organisation

Council is responsible for local services, community facilities, and infrastructure across the Stratford district. Council has selected an in-house, standalone business unit as the future delivery model for three waters services. Under the SWIBU model, Council retains ownership and control of our three waters assets.

4. The district

The Stratford district sits in central Taranaki and includes Stratford township, smaller settlements, and rural communities.

Our local context creates a distinctive set of responsibilities.

01

A relatively small rating base and a strong need to balance affordability with long-term investment.

02

Dispersed communities and infrastructure requiring reliable operations and resilient service continuity.

03

Ongoing renewal compliance and capital delivery requirements across the three waters asset portfolio.

04

Environmental responsibilities and the need to manage discharge, catchments, and climate related pressures.

5. Regulatory and reform context

Under the Government's [Local Water Done Well](#) framework, Council have the option to retain ownership and control of Stratford district's three waters assets while demonstrating financially sustainable delivery against a backdrop of stronger regulatory performance and transparency requirements.

To meet the requirements of the [Local Government \(Water Services Preliminary Arrangements\) Act 2024](#), Council adopted a Water Services Delivery Plan in August 2025, which was approved by the Department of Internal Affairs for implementation in October 2025.

The SWIBU is intended to provide a clear operating focus for three waters services within Council. The statutory environment includes water quality and environmental regulation, economic regulation, information disclosure requirements, financial separation, infrastructure resilience, and long term investment planning.

As Independent Chair, you will need to remain alert to evolving statutory and regulatory settings and ensure the Committee receives clear assurance about our readiness, compliance and performance.

6. Governance

The Committee has been established to oversee, advise, and support the governance and delivery of three waters services under the Water Services Delivery Plan. It is responsible for helping ensure that three waters services are delivered sustainably, efficiently, and in compliance with regulatory requirements.

7. Indicative areas of oversight

- Implementation and ongoing delivery of the Water Services Delivery Plan.
- Strategic alignment between the Water Services Strategy, Long Term Plan, asset management plans, and other information disclosures.
- Financial separation and sustainability, budgets, funding, financing, and organisational performance.
- Regulatory compliance, risk, assurance, resilience, and continuity of service.
- Capital programme and renewal delivery, including benefits, dependencies, and emerging pressures.
- Levels of service, customer outcomes, and transparent reporting to Council and the community.
- Constructive relationships with Elected Members, iwi, management, regulators, and other partners.

8. Role of the Independent Chair

The Independent Chair will lead the Committee with objectivity, sound judgement, and a strong public interest focus.

To support well-informed governance without displacing the operational responsibilities of the Chief Executive and Council Officers, we expect the Independent Chair to:

- Set an effective work programme and meeting agenda with Council officers.
- Chair inclusive, disciplined and decision-focused meetings.
- Ensure members receive clear, timely and useful information to make good decisions.
- Test assumptions and draw out strategic, financial, technical, and community implications.
- Maintain appropriate separation between governance and management.
- Promote robust risk, compliance, and performance oversight.
- Build trust across the Committee and enable meaningful contribution from all members.
- Represent the Committee's advice and recommendations clearly to Council.
- Identify emerging issues and ensure timely escalation.
- Model integrity, independence, transparency and careful management of conflicts of interest.
- Provide regular reporting to Council at the frequency and forum required by the District Mayor.

9. Skills and experience

You will bring proven chairing or senior governance capability, sound judgement, and the confidence to operate in a politically sensitive, high-scrutiny environment.

You will be comfortable working through transition and ambiguity, and able to balance affordability, resilience, public health, environmental performance, regulatory expectations, and community outcomes.

The successful candidate will bring a balanced combination of governance expertise, strategic leadership, sector knowledge and oversight capability. They will have proven governance and chairing experience, the ability to provide effective financial, risk, regulatory and performance oversight, and experience leading robust, evidence based discussions and decision making. Candidates will demonstrate integrity, independence and professionalism, with the ability to build constructive relationships and effectively manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. Knowledge of water services, infrastructure, utilities, asset management or related sectors, together with an understanding of the Stratford district and its communities, would be highly regarded.

9.1 Candidates of interest will also:

- Bring strategic thinking, independence of thought, and a commitment to public accountability and transparency.
- Have strong commercial and financial literacy, including confidence assessing investment, funding, debt, affordability, and risk.
- Understand infrastructure or regulated services and long term asset stewardship.
- Demonstrate political acumen and effective stakeholder engagement in a local government or public sector setting.
- Be able to interpret complex technical advice and turn it into clear governance questions and decisions.
- Build cohesion, enable free and frank discussion, and maintain an appropriate governance–management boundary.
- Demonstrate respect for tīkanga, Tiriti o Waitangi considerations and partnership with iwi, including recognition of water as a tāonga.
- Bring integrity, courage, diplomacy and a collaborative working style with officers.

10. Independent Chair skills matrix

Competency	What success looks like	Priority
Independence	The candidate should be independent of Council management and free from any actual, potential, or perceived conflict that would compromise the role.	Essential
Governance and chairing experience	Demonstrated experience chairing a board, committee, advisory group, governance forum, or comparable decision-making body.	Essential
Three waters or utility expertise	Strong understanding of drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, infrastructure, asset management, or comparable utility service delivery.	Essential
Regulatory and compliance oversight	Understanding of regulated service environments, including public health, environmental compliance, health and safety, risk, audit, and assurance.	Essential
Financial and commercial acumen	Ability to understand financial sustainability, ring-fenced financial reporting, long-term investment planning, funding, affordability, and debt settings.	Essential
Local government understanding	Understanding of local government decision-making, democratic accountability, public sector transparency, and the distinction between governance and management.	Essential
Strategic leadership	Ability to guide strategic discussion, test advice constructively, focus on long-term outcomes, and support clear recommendations to Council.	Essential
Risk and assurance focus	Ability to identify key governance risks, seek appropriate assurance, and ensure risks are tracked through to resolution.	Essential
Relationship capability	Ability to work constructively with elected members, mana whenua representatives, senior management, regulators, auditors, and sector partners.	Essential
Commitment to mana whenua engagement	Demonstrated respect for mana whenua relationships, Te Tiriti principles, and cultural values associated with water.	Essential
Integrity and public trust	Strong professional reputation, sound judgement, discretion, and commitment to transparent and accountable decision-making.	Essential
Availability and commitment	Capacity to prepare for and attend Committee meetings, participate in induction, and provide continuity during the SWIBU establishment period.	Essential
Local understanding	Shows affinity with Stratford and appreciation of the district's communities, affordability constraints, infrastructure needs, and environmental setting.	Desirable
Concurrent reforms	Appreciation of the implications of Simplifying Local Government, Resource Management reforms, and General Elections on SWIBU establishment.	Desirable
Regulated suppliers	Experience working with infrastructure providers subject to economic and/or quality regulation.	Desirable

11. Key questions for candidates to consider

1. How would you establish effective oversight during implementation of a new delivery model?
2. How do you maintain constructive challenge while preserving the governance–management boundary?
3. What information would you expect to see in a water services performance dashboard?
4. How would you help the Committee navigate tensions between affordability, compliance, resilience, and long term investment?
5. How have you built trust among members with different perspectives or technical backgrounds?
6. What does effective partnership with iwi look like in infrastructure governance?

12. Appointment information

Information	Explanation
Term	Three years or until the end of the current triennium, whichever occurs first, to ensure consistency with the Council term.
Time commitment	Committee meetings, pre-agenda and additional engagement as required.
Location	Stratford District Council
Conflicts	Candidates must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts and relevant interests.
Pre-appointment checks	May include reference, conflict, eligibility and other due-diligence checks.

13. Selection process

Candidates should expect assessment against the capabilities in this briefing and may be asked to discuss their governance experience, independence, approach to chairing, understanding of water services challenges, and ability to contribute in a local government environment.

14. Reference material

- [Council Website - Local Water Done Well](#)
- [Water Services Delivery Plan](#)
- [Infrastructure Strategy 2024–2054](#)
- [Long Term Plan 2024–2034](#)
- [Water Services Committee Terms of Reference](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Standing Orders](#)
- [Local Governance Statement](#)
- [Delegations Register](#)