



ATTACHMENTS

**Ordinary Council Meeting
Under Separate Cover
Tuesday, 6 May 2025**

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9.3 Local Water Done Well - Selection of Preferred Option for Consultation

Attachment 2 Draft Local Water Done Well TDC Consultation Document 4

[WORKING DRAFT]

Have your say – Local Water Done Well

What does the future of water services look like for our district?

Consultation Document

Have your say, from DD MMMM to DD MMMM 2025

This is your guide to helping our Council make an important decision with long-term implications for our community.

This guide explains what the Government's Local Water Done Well reforms require all councils in Aotearoa New Zealand to do, and it sets out **the options that are available to our district.**

No matter what we do and which option we choose, changes are coming and you can be part of them.

Tell us what you think.

Go online and fill out our feedback form, or, if you're reading a printed version of this guide, you can fill out the handy tear-out feedback form on the last page.

You can find the online feedback form, along with the information that's in this booklet plus supporting documents, at **LINK**.

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1 May 2025

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Snapshot

Local Water Done Well is a government initiative to help ensure that New Zealanders have safe, reliable, and resilient water networks.

What does this mean for our district? We will be required to make changes to how we manage drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater. But we have choices about how we make these changes, and you have a chance to help shape those choices.

We've looked closely at the options the Government has provided to all councils, and we believe there are three broad options available to us that will work for our communities today and into the future.

Option 1 – Keeping water services in-house and overseen by our Council, but with some changes to help us meet new government requirements.

Option 2 – Setting up our own separate water organisation, to be responsible for the day-to-day operation of water services but 100% owned by the Council.

Option 3 – Joining with neighbouring councils to set up a new water organisation to manage our water services across three or four districts, based on what communities need and want.

Regardless of which option is chosen, water services will continue to be delivered to our community and water services and assets will continue to be owned by the Council or a group of councils.

We're asking you to tell us which option you think will best serve our community in the long run.

This is your chance to help influence real change – tell us what you think.

Want to find out more?

This consultation booklet has the key information you need, but you can find more information, including technical reports and council reports, on our Council's Local Water Done Well webpage – [LINK](#)

- **What is Local Water Done Well?** [Water Services Policy and Legislation - dia.govt.nz](#)
- **How did the Council arrive at its preferred option?** [LINKS]
- **What is financial sustainability?** [Financial principles for water service providers - dia.govt.nz](#)
- **How would a water services organisation borrow?** [Financing water services delivery through establishing new water council-controlled organisations - dia.govt.nz](#)

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Foreword from the Mayor

To come from Council/Mayor

[SIGNATURE]

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How to have your say

Have your say on the best option for our district

Please read through this consultation document carefully. We'll also be holding information sessions where you can ask questions: keep an eye on LINK for more information.

Give us your feedback

Online form: LINK

Paper: DETAILS

Timeline and next steps

- Feedback is needed by DD MMMM 2025.
- We will summarise submissions and draw out themes for our elected councillors to consider when they make their decisions, which is expected to happen in MMMM 2025.
- By 3 September 2025, the Council needs to provide a Water Services Delivery Plan to the Government. This Plan must identify the Council's preferred model for delivering water services and should also include a plan for implementing this preferred approach.
- 2026 onward, the Council will implement its preferred approach.

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In a nutshell

We have some big decisions to make as a community, about how water services are delivered. It's not just about the water we drink, what we do with our wastewater, or where stormwater goes, it's also about keeping things affordable and protecting public health and the environment.

What is Local Water Done Well?

Local Water Done Well is the Government's plan to address long-standing problems it sees with water services. This plan keeps water assets locally owned and recognises the importance of local decision making, so that communities and councils have the flexibility to choose the best way to deliver their water services.

The Government is putting a strong emphasis on keeping water services financially separate from other local services, and on economic regulation of water service providers to ensure they're efficient and charging fair prices. It is also strongly emphasising environmental and water-quality requirements.

The Government has a strong emphasis on meeting economic, environmental and water quality requirements. Some things will not change for our district, regardless of the way we move forward:

- Water services and assets will continue to be owned by the Council, as the Local Water Done Well legislation prevents them being privatised.
- Our drinking water will be safe.
- The environment will be protected.
- Our communities' needs will be met.
- Work to adapt to climate change will continue.

What will change

To make sure our water services are strong and sustainable for the future, the Government has introduced new rules and strengthened some existing ones. No matter which option we choose for delivering water services, we must make sure we can:

- Meet legal requirements to keep drinking water safe and protect the environment.
- Manage our water services efficiently and effectively.
- Invest in maintaining and upgrading important infrastructure like pipes, pumps, and treatment plants, so they stay in good condition and can handle risks like natural disasters and climate change.

The Government will also be keeping an eye on prices and investment through a process called

"economic regulation". This is designed to protect customers by making sure that prices are fair and that enough money is invested to provide safe, reliable water services.

If councils choose to continue delivering water services themselves (instead of joining a new water organisation), there are extra requirements to make things more transparent. Councils must:

- Keep money for water services separate from other council funds (this is called "**ring-fencing**"), meaning money collected for water can only be used for water.
- Prepare separate plans and public reports on how water services are managed and funded.

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We need to show the Government how we will deliver these changes

Like all councils across the country, we must prepare a **Water Services Delivery Plan** and submit it to the Government by **3 September 2025**.

The plan must set out:

- how we are currently delivering our water services
- how our preferred option will deliver water services in a financially sustainable way
- how we will meet future economic, health, and environmental regulations
- what we will need to do to meet regulatory requirements and address future growth
- where we will invest to meet service and regulatory requirements
- how we will finance these investments.

We also need to guarantee that the funds we allocate to our water services will be ring-fenced, as explained above. Depending on which option we choose, we can borrow more to invest in the infrastructure we need.

As we develop our Water Services Delivery Plan, we will also make sure we:

- Meet community expectations for water services
- Honour our Treaty of Waitangi commitments
- Continue providing the other council services our communities rely on.

You can find out more about the Government's Local Water Done Well programme on the Department of Internal Affairs website:

www.dia.govt.nz/Water-Services-Policy-and-Legislation

What the changes will mean for you

If the Council currently provides your water services:

- Your water services will continue to be safe and reliable.
- After the changes, you will have a better understanding of what it costs to provide water services as there will be specific reports on this from either the Council or the water organisation, if one is set up.
- Prices might need to increase over time, but you will have more information and independent checks on the quality and cost of your water services.

If you have a private supply:

- There will be no immediate changes to your arrangements.
- However, you will still have a stake in the choice of options, and your feedback on the options is still important, as you may need help from the water services provider (whether it's the Council or a new water organisation) if there are any big problems in supplying you with safe drinking water.

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Our water services

Infographic

Water services delivery includes services for the “three waters” – water supply, wastewater, and stormwater. It includes the networks of pipes and other infrastructure that allow water to be treated, transported, and disposed of.



Water supply,
to provide safe, reliable
and sustainable water
supply to the district.



Wastewater,
to provide services to collect, treat, and
dispose of wastewater in a safe and
sustainable way that protects public health
and doesn't compromise ecosystems.



Stormwater,
to protect people and property from the
effects of flooding and safeguard public
health and the environment from the
adverse effects of stormwater run-off.

[EXAMPLE– suggest including stats on scale of networks and forecast investment levels for Timaru]

In 2025, the average cost of water services for connected properties is around \$1,500 a year.

Based on the Council's Long-term Plan, this is expected to reach about \$1,900 a year in 2034 as we invest to meet our needs.

How are we doing, and what lies ahead?

We expect to be able to meet the new financial sustainability test for our water services, but like many councils across the country, we face some longer-term challenges in meeting the new requirements: **I have drafted some sample text with TDC's unique challenges – suggest TDC build on these**

- **We need to keep renewing our water infrastructure**, as some of this will be coming to the end of its life in the next 15 to 30 years. Some of our treatment plants will need to have their consents renewed over the next 10 to 30 years, and new standards may mean we need to invest more. This could mean we need to make some bigger investments in the next few decades, and these will add up. We are currently expecting to invest nearly \$1 billion over the next 30 years.
- **Climate change is putting pressure on our stormwater and wastewater networks** – they need to be resilient against the effects of climate change such as sea-level rise and more frequent and severe weather events.
- **Tougher requirements for water services need to be met to protect health and the environment** – this includes our responsibility to help community suppliers if they have significant problems, and to report more on how we are performing.
- **We have large industrial and commercial users** – these users consume roughly 50% of our water supply, and we need to think about how we continue to support these users.
- **We must also make sure that water continues to be affordable for our communities.**

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As a council we must also make sure we meet our Treaty commitments, and that changes to water services don't mean we stop providing other services such as parks, roads, and rubbish.

Can we meet the challenges ahead? [@TDC – to consider how Downlands is presented here]

We know that we can meet the Government's new requirements today, but the work we have done tells us we can expect costs to increase as we renew our infrastructure and meet other future challenges. Moving to a joint water services organisation would give us efficiencies, both through economies of scale and through having an organisation focussed just on water. Those efficiencies would mean a greater ability to invest in our water services in the future.

To create a joint water organisation, we could join up with some of our neighbours with whom we have some shared interests, as well as those interests that are unique to our district, like our commercial users. If we join a new water organisation, we will need to be sure that it meets the different needs of every district.

Importantly, water assets, and the debt that goes with them, would transfer to the new water organisation that we would own a part of. We also need to make sure that shifting responsibilities and revenue for water won't affect the other services we deliver.

Things to think about

All options would meet the new requirements

Any option would mean changes in the way we operate, to meet the new requirements from the Government.

The differences between the options come down to differences in how much direct control our Council will have over water services, and whether we will have access to efficiencies through economies of scale, a dedicated focus on water services, and alternative ways of financing water services.

A water organisation would not face higher borrowing costs than councils

Water services require big investments, which most councils fund through a combination of borrowing and rates.

As a council we can borrow relatively cheaply and affordably, through a special organisation

known as the Local Government Funding Agency (LGFA). New water organisations would be able to access the LGFA too, which would keep borrowing costs similar to ours. However, there are some differences in how a council borrows and how a water organisation would borrow.

- Councils have borrowing limits, based on rules set by the Local Government Funding Agency. The limits are expressed in terms of the ratio of a council's borrowing compared to its revenue. Our debt-to-revenue ratio under the LGFA rules is 280%, but our own rules also mean we keep debt below 250% to give us a buffer for a rainy day.
- Water organisations aren't like councils – they're more like utility companies (electricity lines companies for example) in that they would borrow in a different way. Most investment would be funded by debt rather than a combination of debt and water rates (which is how councils fund their investments). This means investment is paid

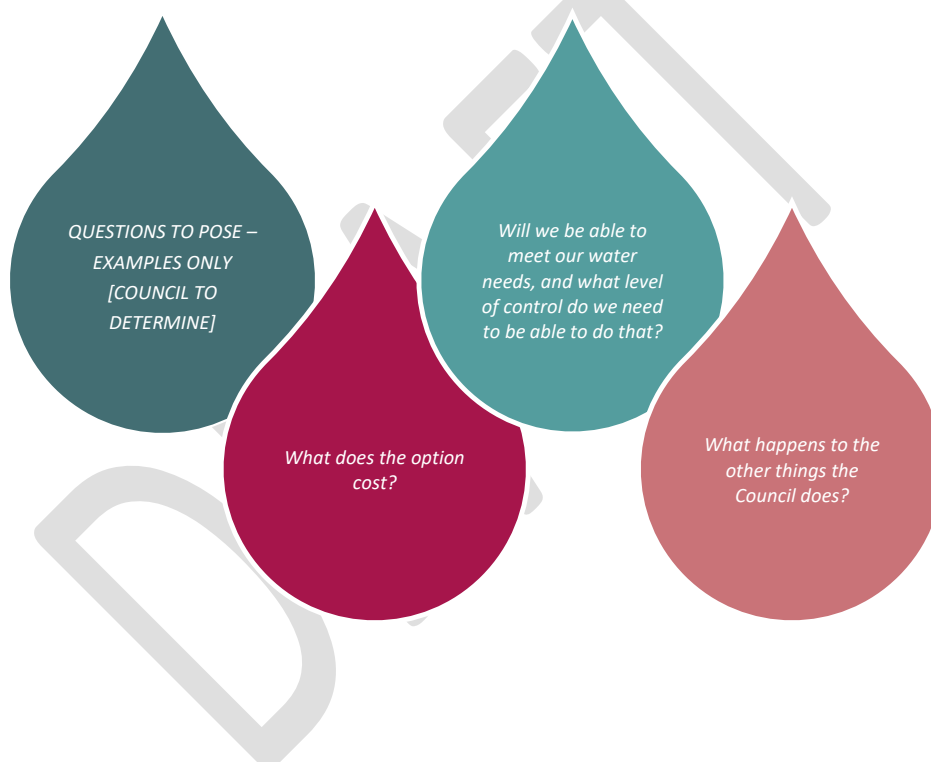
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back over a longer period, and by those who benefit from it.

- A water organisation would be able to borrow to much greater levels than councils, while still being financially healthy and sustainable.

Guidance on this from the Local Government Funding Agency and the Department of Internal Affairs can be found here - [Financing water services delivery through establishing new water council-controlled organisations - dia.govt.nz](https://www.dia.govt.nz/financing-water-services-delivery-through-establishing-new-water-council-controlled-organisations)

As you consider the options, there are some key important questions to think about:



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Your options for water service delivery

The Government has provided councils across the country with five options for delivering water services in their districts. None of the options would result in privatising water services. Councils have been evaluating the options to work out which is best for their communities.

Over some months we have been looking closely at the options available to us, including discussing the options with our neighbouring councils and getting some expert advice. We think there are three viable options, all of which are expected to meet the Government's requirements.

Option 1: Keeping water services in-house and overseen by our Council	Option 2: Establishing our own separate water organisation	Option 3: Joining with neighbouring councils to set up a new water services organisation
Water services would continue to be delivered through the Council, but with some changes to meet the Government's new requirements. We would probably set up an internal water services unit within the Council to help us meet these requirements.	This new water organisation would be separate from our Council, but we would own 100% of it and appoint its directors. The new organisation would be fully responsible for all day-to-day operations, maintenance, planning for future water needs, and repaying any water-related debt.	The new joint organisation would own, operate, and maintain water services for all the shareholding councils. We would own part of this organisation. We would also give it direction through a special "Statement of Expectations", which the councils would develop jointly, and which the organisation would need to give effect to. There are two potential combinations:
\$1,900 per year	\$1,860 per year	<div> 3a. Waimate, Mackenzie, and Timaru districts. 3b. Waimate, Mackenzie, Timaru, and Waitaki districts </div> <div> \$1,670 per year \$1,640 per year </div>

We think Option 3 would best support our community

Option 3 is our preferred option because it provides us with long-term benefits. We think it would enable more investment. We also think joining with others would create efficiencies that would help to drive down prices.

There is potential for a different mix of councils to join in this water organisation, and we have outlined the two options that we think are more likely to happen. . If we do continue with this option, who we work with will also depend on the outcomes of their consultation..

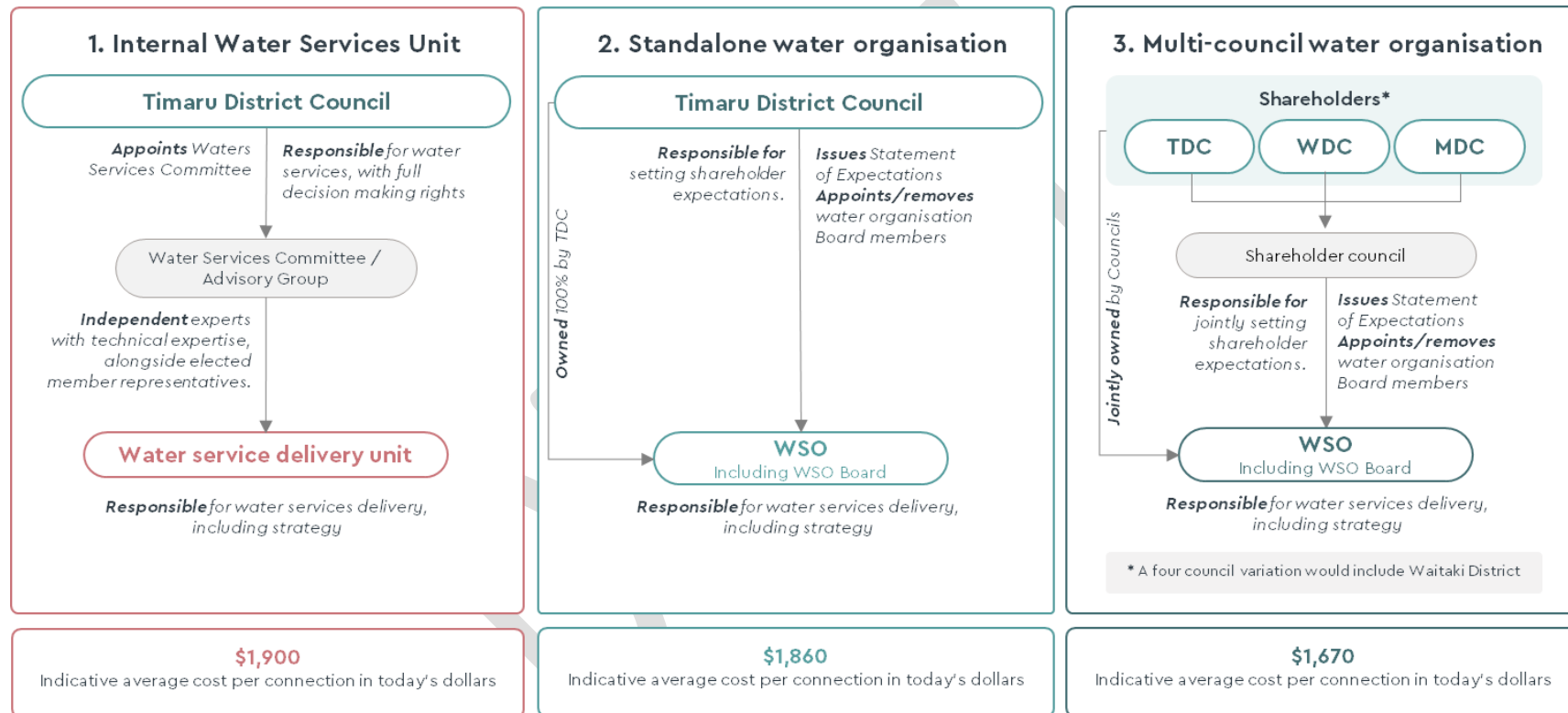
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Other options considered

We also considered the option of establishing a consumer trust organisation, either partly owned by the Council and partly by a trust, or wholly owned by a trust. We decided these options weren't right for us as we would probably have to borrow money from banks, which would be more expensive than borrowing through the Local Government Funding Agency. Under these options, we would also have less control over critical decisions affecting water services compared with the other options.

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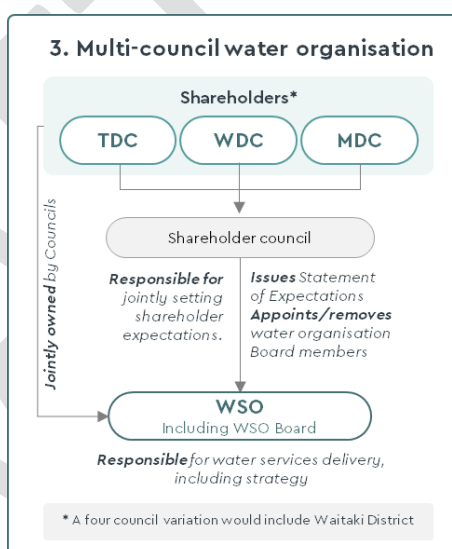
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Our preferred option:**Option 3. Joining with neighbouring councils to set up a new water services organisation**

\$1,500 2025	\$1,670 2034
<p><i>This is what ratepayers could expect to pay on average for water (drinking water, stormwater, wastewater) under the proposed option.¹</i></p>	
<p>Our preferred option would see our Council and nearby councils form a new water services organisation. This organisation would handle water services across all participating areas and take on each council's water-related assets and debt.</p> <p>A professional board of directors, appointed by the councils, would run the organisation day to day. While we and the other shareholding councils could guide the board and continue to make some key decisions, we wouldn't control every aspect of the organisation's work. Over time, we expect this new organisation would bill customers directly for its services, but in the meantime we expect that councils would continue to collect water revenues through rates bills.</p>	

***How would our district have a say in a joint water organisation?***

If we do decide to join up with others, we will still get to make decisions about how the arrangement could work. There are ways for us to monitor and direct the organisation to make sure that your water services are being delivered well and that our district's needs are being met. This would include:

- Appointing the board of directors, jointly with the other councils, so we can make sure the board has the skills and experience we want.
- Jointly issuing a Statement of Expectations, to set priorities for the organisation and specify how progress against them would be measured. The Statement would guide the organisation's decisions and actions, and the organisation would need to give effect to the Statement and report against it.

¹ This is an indicative average cost in today's dollars, and has been calculated by excluding commercial supply and trade waste revenues to make it more representative of costs to a typical residential and rural ratepayer. There will be individual differences between communities.

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- Requiring regular reporting from the water organisation on how it's performing, including through an annual report on progress, service standards, and financial performance.
- Negotiating a number of additional protections to include in the organisation's constitution, such as consulting with our community.

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Key advantages	Key disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower prices: This option would probably be cheaper than if we continued to deliver water services on our own – potentially reducing the costs to customers by around \$230 a year by 2034. • Specialist oversight: A professional, expert board can make informed decisions and respond quickly to changing needs. • Greater capacity: A larger combined organisation can hire more specialised staff and manage assets and new projects more effectively. • Delivering our investment plans: The organisation would probably adopt the Council's current investment plans, which have been independently reviewed. These plans may need further investment over the next 10-30 years. • Long-term savings: By combining resources (such as maintenance services) across multiple councils, having a bigger investment need, the organisation can drive down costs over time. • Efficient borrowing: The organisation can borrow at similar rates to councils but takes a different borrowing approach that makes it easier to invest in infrastructure and maintain quality standards affordably. • Better financial flexibility for the Council: With water debt removed from its books, the Council can redirect its financial capacity to other priorities as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less local control: We would share decision-making and control with other councils. The decision-making may feel distant to residents in smaller communities. • Transition challenges: Establishing the new water organisation is a big task, and coordinating the transition of water services, staff and debt could be complicated. We would also need to manage any impact on other council activities (like planning or customer service). • Stranded costs: Some costs that are currently shared with water services may not be able to be transferred to the organisation meaning the Council could be left with some ongoing obligations. • Risk of the council being less effective: There is a risk that the transfer of waters staff and assets could weaken the Council's ability to function effectively.

Who would we partner with?

If we decide to move forward with a new water services organisation, we'd join forces with one or more of our neighbouring councils. Two groupings are currently on the table:

- **A four-council option**, together with [Waimate, Mackenzie, Timaru] and Waitaki districts.
- **A three-council option**, together with [Waimate, Mackenzie and Timaru] districts.

Whichever option we proceed with, it will need to be a balanced arrangement that serves our district's interests. Whether it's a four-council or three-council combination, or even a two-council option, our goal is to tap into the shared expertise and economies of scale that a joint organisation can provide, while still reflecting each area's local priorities.

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We can't confirm which councils we would partner with as they need to make their decisions too, but we'd work alongside them to establish clear governance arrangements and a unified plan for delivering water services – so that all participating communities benefit in the long run. We encourage you to have a look at their consultation materials when you consider which option you prefer. You can read their materials here:

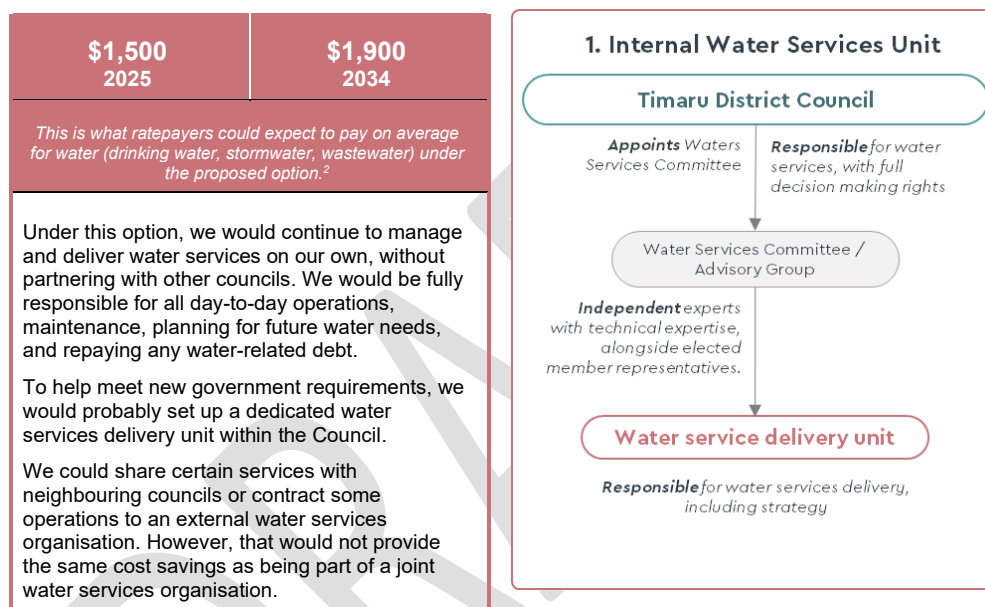
- [LINKS to other councils' documents](#)

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Alternative option:

Option 1. Keeping water services in-house and overseen by the Council



Advantages and disadvantages of keeping water services in-house

Key advantages	Key disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local decision-making: Our Council, which is familiar with local conditions, would decide on services and investments. Seamless integration: Water services can be easily coordinated with our other responsibilities (such as district planning and transport). Community accountability: Communication with our community would continue to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher prices: This option would probably be more expensive than if we joined a water services organisation – potentially costing customers an extra \$230 a year more. Longer-term challenges need to be funded: We would need to fund major water infrastructure investment over the next 15 to 30 years, and those costs are likely to become more expensive over time. This could require substantial borrowing and limit our ability to

² This is an indicative average cost in today's dollars, and has been calculated by excluding commercial supply and trade waste revenues to make it more representative of costs to a typical residential and rural ratepayer. There will be individual differences between communities.

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straightforward, with us engaging directly with residents on water issues.

- **Familiar structure:** Day-to-day operations would continue largely as they are now, which can help minimise transition costs and confusion.

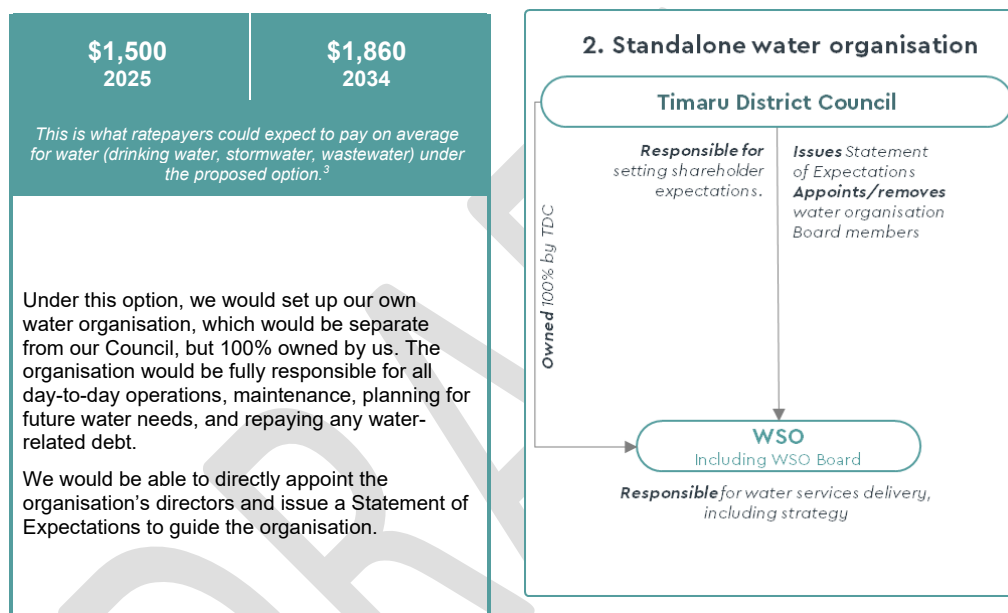
invest in other important areas like roads, parks, and playgrounds.

- **Increasing requirements:** We would need to meet tougher government regulations on our own, and this could lead to higher rates or more borrowing.
- **Limited opportunity for efficiencies:** We wouldn't benefit from economies of scale that might come from partnering with other councils, potentially increasing our long-term operating costs.
- **Competition for staff and contractors**

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Alternative option:

Option 2. Setting up our own separate water organisation



Advantages and disadvantages of setting up our own water organisation – these are very similar to Option 1.

Key advantages	Key disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local decision-making: The water organisation would be focussed solely on our district. Simple integration: The organisation would be able to easily coordinate with our Council and share services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slightly higher prices: This option would probably be more expensive than if we joined a water services organisation – potentially increasing prices by around \$190 a year. Limited opportunity for efficiencies: We wouldn't benefit from economies of scale that might come from partnering with other

³ This is an indicative average cost in today's dollars, and has been calculated by excluding commercial supply and trade waste revenues to make it more representative of costs to a typical residential and rural ratepayer. There will be individual differences between communities.

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- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accountability to Timaru only: Reporting and accountability would be to the Council and to you as customers, through a combination of mechanisms.• Easing of the Council's debt burden: Water-related debt would move to the water organisation. However, the same community would be responsible for this borrowing. | <p>councils, potentially increasing our long-term operating costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competition for staff and contractors: The organisation would need to compete with other larger water organisations for staff and contractors with expertise in water services. |
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Tell us what you think!

What is your preferred option?

Please tick the box next to the option that you prefer.

Option 1: Keeping water services in-house and overseen by our Council

TICK BOX

Option 2: Establishing our own separate water organisation

TICK BOX

Option 3: Joining with neighbouring councils to set up a new water services organisation

TICK BOX

Tell us what's important to you

We'd like to know which factors were the most important for you when you chose your preferred option. Please rank the following factors by putting a number, 1 to 4, in the box next to each factor, with 1 being the most important and 4 the least important.



- **Affordability** – ensuring that water services are delivered safely and sustainably, while managing prices to consumers.
- **Community influence** – your ability to shape water services decisions.
- **Cultural input** – hapū and iwi input into water decisions.
- **Access to finance** - more access to financing for water services and other Council activities

BOXES TO PUT IN RANKING NUMBERS

Any other comments?

Insert text here

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Common terms used in Local Water Done Well

Term	Explanation
Borrowing	Obtaining loans to pay for infrastructure upgrades or new facilities, with repayment spread over time. Because water infrastructure (such as pipelines and treatment plants) is very expensive but long-lived, it is often funded through debt that is paid back over decades out of rates or user charges. New Zealand councils typically borrow through the Local Government Funding Agency (LGFA) , which gives councils access to loans at lower interest rates. Responsible borrowing allows current and future users to share the costs of big projects, a principle often called " intergenerational equity ".
Drinking water / potable water	Water that is safe to drink. Potable water has been treated or is naturally clean enough to meet drinking water standards. Our Council uses the term "potable water supply" to refer to the reticulated (piped) drinking water delivered to homes and businesses after treatment. Ensuring water is potable means treating the water to remove or kill harmful microbes and contaminants.
Drinking Water Standards	<p>The official standards that set safe limits for drinking water across New Zealand. Issued by Taumata Arowai under the Water Services Act 2021, these standards specify the maximum allowable levels of contaminants (like bacteria, nitrates, and heavy metals) in drinking water. All registered drinking water suppliers must ensure the water they provide meets these standards. The official standards also specify how suppliers can show they are meeting the standards.</p> <p>If water fails to meet a standard, suppliers must take action and notify the regulator and the public (for example, issuing a boil water notice).</p>
Economic regulation	<p>Oversight of the economic performance of water service providers to ensure they are efficient, financially prudent, and charging fair prices. Because water services are natural monopolies (consumers can't choose another provider), an economic regulator steps in to protect consumers from unfair charges and poor service. New Zealand is setting up an economic regulation system for water that's modelled on the system used for electricity lines and gas pipelines.</p> <p>This will be administered by the Commerce Commission. Economic regulation will probably include controls or monitoring of water pricing, requirements for transparent accounting, and service quality measures. The goal is to make sure water providers invest adequately in infrastructure and operate efficiently, delivering safe and reliable services at the lowest feasible cost to ratepayers.</p>
Financial sustainability	This means ensuring the water system can cover its costs now and in the future. A financially sustainable water service has enough income (from rates or user charges) to pay for day-to-day operations, for maintenance, and for replacing or upgrading long-term assets.
Ring-fencing	<p>A financial practice where funds are reserved for a specific purpose and cannot be used for other purposes. With water services, "ring-fencing" means that revenue from water rates or charges must be used only for water-related costs and investments.</p> <p>Under the new economic regulation system for water, the Commerce Commission will monitor compliance with ring-fencing rules to guarantee that there is transparency and reinvestment in water infrastructure.</p>

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Price harmonisation / non-harmonisation	Price harmonisation means all customers served by a water services organisation would pay roughly the same rate for water services, regardless of which district they live in. Non-harmonisation means prices are different in each area, often reflecting the local cost of providing services.
Stormwater	<p>Stormwater is rainfall run-off that is channelled through drains and pipes to prevent flooding. Stormwater picks up contaminants from roofs, roads, and land (like sediment, heavy metals, and oils) and often flows, untreated, into streams, rivers, or the ocean. Managing stormwater is part of the water services that councils provide.</p> <p>Good stormwater management includes networks of drains, culverts, and detention basins, as well as green infrastructure (like swales or wetlands) to slow and filter run-off. Unlike wastewater, stormwater is not usually treated, but stormwater systems must comply with environmental regulations to minimise pollution.</p>
Taumata Arowai	<p>A dedicated water services regulator, established by the Water Services Act 2021. Taumata Arowai took over the job of regulating drinking water from the Ministry of Health in late 2021, after some serious water safety failures (like the 2016 Havelock North outbreak). It sets and enforces the Drinking Water Standards and rules to ensure suppliers provide safe drinking water.</p> <p>Taumata Arowai also oversees environmental performance standards for wastewater and stormwater. In practice, this regulator monitors compliance (through audits and reporting), can issue directions or fines for breaches, and provides guidance to water suppliers.</p>
Wastewater	<p>Also known as sewage, this is used water that goes down drains from homes and businesses (from toilets, sinks, showers, and so on). Wastewater contains organic waste, microbes, and chemicals that must be treated before it is released back into the environment.</p> <p>Under Local Water Done Well, a single national standard for wastewater environmental performance is being introduced, so that all discharges would meet a consistent high standard across New Zealand.</p>