

Annual Plan to set core work

Councillors will soon begin the first of several workshops to draft an Annual Plan and budget for 2026-27.

The draft plan will outline Council's activities and projects for the 12 months from July and focus on essential work like drinking water, wastewater treatment and roading.

Mayor Liz McMillan said Council would be busy in the new financial year delivering those core services, and other projects.

"The second bridge is now under way and we'll have to confirm our contribution to that project, and Council is also introducing a new food and greenwaste kerbside collection in September.

"We know that other important work will need to be done too, and we'll hear more details in these coming workshops."

Charges for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater have already been signalled as part of the Water Services Delivery Plan that Council was required to prepare and submit to Government last year as part of the Local Water Done Well programme.

Under that delivery plan, the combined water charges for those in serviced urban areas would rise from \$1490 this year to around \$1670 for 2026-27.



Council is planning to spend about \$26 million on water projects, to ensure it complies with new national rules – this includes \$3.7m on water meters, \$4m on water main renewals, \$5.4m on irrigation for the Ocean Farm wastewater facility and \$3.7m for wastewater pipe renewals.

Mayor McMillan said the Long Term Plan had forecast an average 11 per cent rates increase for 2026-27, but Councillors would be looking to trim that where they could, without running down levels of service the community expected.

"Our challenges are that Council is not immune to the same cost of living increases as the person who lives down the street and has a mortgage, uses electricity and pays insurance. We will focus on the core work, like water services, roads, and rubbish, because this maintains a solid platform for families and businesses, and we will make savings where we can or consider deferring work."

The Draft Annual Plan workshops are planned for Tuesday 3 February and Tuesday 10 February and these are open to the public.

Final stage of demolition due to start

Pipework insulation that contained asbestos was discovered underground at the former Polytech site on Cameron Street, delaying the final stage of demolition of the old classroom block.

Group Manager of Business Support Helen

Barnes said the additional asbestos find was discovered within the immediate vicinity of the old block.

"This pipework enters the old boiler room and appears to branch off to feed the heating system at Balmoral Hall. Asbestos removalists will begin removal in the first week of February.

"Finds like this are not unusual when sites are being redeveloped and we have to deal with past contamination in a responsible way."

The former Polytech site is being levelled for use as a carpark and available for the public's use from the beginning of April.

Mayor Liz McMillan

Annual Plan work underway

It's hard to believe the first month of the year has passed by already.

Council work is now underway with annual plan workshops, during which we are reviewing the budget for the upcoming financial year. We also have workshops on local government reforms and bylaws, alongside our regular council meetings.

Our annual plan workshops are a chance for Councillors to ask questions on the proposed budget, and balance out money we spend on our services with the level of service we provide.

We require rates that help Council deliver the services our community expects, but we must also keep in mind what ratepayers can realistically be

expected to pay.

I would like to extend my congratulations to our two local King's honours recipients. Both Don Geddes and Andy Macfarlane have each contributed many years of dedicated service in their respective fields, and our district is better off as the result of their efforts.

Outstanding contributions can often go unrecognised, which is why I am looking forward to celebrating with our local business community at the ANZ Business of the Year Awards next month. This event provides an important opportunity to acknowledge the incredible businesses operating within our district.

Later this year Council will also be



holding its own Community Honours Awards, to recognise those who have made outstanding local contributions to the district. A new category will be for environmental champions and this will celebrate and recognise landowners and community members who have shown a big commitment to conservation, restoration and environmental initiatives.

With school going back over the next week, it surely must be time for some warmer, sunny weather. My thoughts go out to everyone who has been affected by the severe weather events, particularly those in the North Island.

SHORT AND SWEET



CEMETERY GATES

The entrance gates at the Mt Somers cemetery have been given a makeover, with a new black powder coating. The gates were originally forged by the Christchurch Foundry and believed to have come from the original Mt Somers cemetery, which opened in 1883.

ANNUAL GRANTS

Are you involved in a group or project that could benefit from a funding boost from Council? We're gearing up for the annual grants round and will be accepting applications from 1 March. There are nine categories, from events to trail maintenance, as well as funds from Creative Communities and Sport New Zealand Travel Fund. Find all the information and application forms at ashburtondc.govt.nz/grants.

OLDER DRIVERS

Ashburton's older drivers are being encouraged to sign up for a free refresher course aimed at helping them stay driving for longer. The Staying Safe course is supported by Council and being run by Age Concern at the Ashburton Senior Centre on Friday 20 February, from 10am-2pm. To enrol, call Age Concern on 308 6817 or email ageconcernashburton@xtra.co.nz.

METHVEN FUND

The Methven Community Board has money in the bank for community initiatives and projects, and is inviting applications for its Methven Discretionary Grant. The board has about \$30,000 annually to give. Applications for the next round close on 16 February, and will be decided by the board at its meeting on 9 March. Applications for the final round will close on 4 May and be decided by the board on 25 May. Go to ashburtondc.govt.nz/grants for more info and application forms.

Board backs Line Rd as refuse facility site

The Methven Community Board supports using the Line Road recycling facility as the most appropriate site for a future Methven Refuse Transfer Station.

This followed an independent assessment of potential sites in October 2025 by Tonkin and Taylor.

Group Manager of Infrastructure Neil McCann said that selecting the most suitable site location has been under consideration for several years.

"That's why we commissioned an independent assessment which now shows clearly that the Line Road site has several advantages, including lower contamination risk and remediation cost, favourable geotechnical conditions and better access to existing services."

The report also showed Line Road posed fewer transport-related constraints, and a more straightforward planning and consenting process.

"The site's current use as a recycling centre, and its location in a business zoned area, makes it the most straight-forward option, and the future site will include the neighbouring paddock which is owned by Council."



Funding for the Methven Refuse Transfer Station development will now be considered in the next Long Term Plan 2027-37.

The Methven Community Board held its first meeting of 2026 this week and agreed to trial livestreaming future meetings. The next community board meeting is 9am on Monday 9 March and will be available on Council's Facebook page.

New aerators for Methven wastewater

The Methven Wastewater Treatment Plant will have six ageing aerators replaced, and a new inlet screen before winter this year.

Group Manager of Infrastructure Neil McCann said that the aerators are scheduled to be replaced as they reach the end of their operational life.

"The current units will be swapped out for two modern aerodisc directional aerators, to improve the plant's efficiency and reliability into the future."

The contract for the aerator replacement has been awarded to Aeris Global Limited, the same company that installed seven directional aerators at Ashburton's Wilkins

Road wastewater treatment plant in 2024.

The inlet screen contract has been awarded to a partnership between ARC Projects and Brown Brothers.

"The new inlet screen will remove large, non-biodegradable solids and debris from incoming sewage.

"It will protect our pumps and substantially reduce our solid waste handling and maintenance costs.

"The equipment reduces water content, which brings our tonnage to landfill down considerably."

The total cost of all the wastewater treatment plant works was budgeted for \$460,000 in the 2024-34 Long Term Plan.

WAITANGI DAY RUBBISH & RECYCLING

There is **no change** to kerbside rubbish and recycling collections on Waitangi Day on Friday 6 February and Friday's collection will take place as usual, with residents to have their wheelie bins out by 7.30am. Remember to use your windstrap, whether it's windy or not.

The **Ashburton Resource Recovery Park** will be open on Waitangi Day from 8am-6pm, and open its usual weekend hours (Saturday 9am-6pm and Sunday 9am-5pm).

COUNCIL OFFICE

2 Baring Square East
Mon, Tue, Wed & Fri 8.30am-5pm
Thursday 9am-5pm

ASHBURTON LIBRARY

2 Baring Square East, Ashburton 7700
Mon & Fri 8.30am-6pm, Tue-Thu 8.30am-8pm
Sat & Sun 10am-4pm

EA NETWORKS CENTRE

20 River Terrace
Mon - Fri 5.45am-9pm (pools 8pm Mon & Tue, 7pm Wed-Fri; gym 8pm). Sat & Sun 7am-7pm (pools 6pm, gym 6pm)

ROADING NOTICES

Thompsons Track - Closed between Winchmore Lauriston Road and Pole Road, and Braemar Lauriston Road at Thompsons Track intersection until 31 March, so Fulton Hogan can do heavy road maintenance on behalf of Council. Detours in place. Resident access remains.

Thompsons Track - Closed between Blands Road and Dip Road until 27 January while ACL carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place. Resident access remains.

Mayfield Valetta Road - Closed between Anama Valetta Road and Tinwald Westerfield Mayfield Road until 28 February, so Fulton Hogan can do heavy road maintenance on behalf of Council. Detours in place. Resident access remains.

Winters Road - Closed between Hamptons Road and Buckleys Road from until 3 February while Tarbotton Land & Civil install a stock underpass under Winters Road.

Ealing Montalto Road - Closed between Shepherds Bush Road and Ruapuna School Road until 27 February while Grant Hood Contracting carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place.

Ealing Montalto Road - Closed between Baxters Road and Lakes Road until 6 March while Grant Hood Contracting carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place.

Fairfield Road - Closed between Company Road and Singletree Road until 31 March, while Fulton Hogan carries out heavy road maintenance for Council.

Elizabeth Avenue (Rakaia) - Closed from Burrowes Road to Tancred Street until 27 February, while Rooney Earthmoving installs water pipes for Council. Access for residents remains.

Spaxton Street - Closed in parts (including Lilley Place and Macphail Place) until 27 February while Rooney Earthmoving installs water mains for Council.

Tancred Street - Closed in places between Cass Street and Chalmers Avenue until 5 February while Tru-Line Civil installs new wastewater pipes.

Albert Street - One-way closures are in place on Albert Street until 16 February, while ACL installs services for a private development. No entry from Albert Street to Trevors Road, no entry from Trevors Road to Albert Street.

SH1 at Longbeach Road intersection (NZTA) - Road reconstruction until 18 March. Expect speed restrictions and delays of up to 10 minutes. This reconstruction work is weather dependent and may be rescheduled at short notice.

SH77 Methven - Pavement and surfacing repairs in multiple locations until 2 February. Expect short delays.

SH1 Rakaia to Chertsey - Pavement and surfacing repairs in multiple locations until 2 February. Speed restrictions in place, expect delays of up to 20 minutes.

TRIENNIAL MEETINGS FOR RESERVE & HALL BOARDS

- 24 February - **Ealing Reserve Board** - 7pm, Ealing hall.