

POLICY: **SIGNIFICANCE**

GROUP RESPONSIBLE: Customer and Financial Services

DATE APPROVED: 26/6/03

DATE AMENDED: 28/6/06, 30/6/09

FILE NO: 8/0/1/7, 18/1/4/1, 240/10/7, 140/15/4/3

POLICY DETAIL:

Objective

This policy sets out the Southland District Council's approach to determining the significance of Council's proposals and decisions. This policy is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2002. In particular there is a requirement under Section 97 of the Act that certain decisions can only be taken if the decision is explicitly provided for in the Council's Long Term Council Community Plan and included in a statement of proposal under Section 84 of the Act.

Background

The Local Government Act 2002 requires the Southland District Council to adopt a significance policy setting out:

- The Council's general approach to determining the significance of proposals and decisions in relation to issues, assets, or other matters.
- Any thresholds, criteria, or procedures that are to be used by the Council in assessing the extent to which issues, proposals, decisions, or other matters are significant.
- Any assets considered by the Council to be strategic assets.

Policy guidelines on Council's general approach to determining significance

For the Council, a significant decision is one that has a high degree of importance in terms of:

- The district's current and future social, economic, environmental or cultural wellbeing.
- Its likely impact on the people who are interested in or affected by the decision.
- The capacity of the Council, including the cost to implement the decision.

It is Council's decision on what 'a high degree of importance' means in each instance. The three factors above are set out in the legislation. The legislation also sets a high level of importance for a decision to be deemed to be significant. The Council's Long Term Council Community Plan sets out how the Council will work with the community to achieve social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing, and significant issues, proposals, decisions or other matters will be included in the Long Term Council Community Plan wherever possible. Where this is not practical, significant issues will be included wherever possible in the Council's Annual Plan produced in the years between the Long Term Council Community Plan. Significant decisions will only be made outside the above process where there are compelling reasons to do so.

Policy guidelines on thresholds, criteria and procedures for determining which proposals and decisions are significant

The Council will use the following criteria and thresholds as guidelines to help it decide if specific proposals and decisions are significant.

	Significant
Impact on Council's direction	Major and long term
Change in Council's current level of service	Major and long term
Level of Public Impact and/or Interest	Major and district and/or community wide
Financial Impact	>10% of Annual expenditure

It is the Council who decides whether or not a specific proposal or decision is significant. A decision is significant if, in the Council's judgement, one or more of the criteria fall in the above significant column. The Council will evaluate the significance of each proposal or decision it makes.

Council recognises that consultation is an important process in the way that it carries out its responsibilities and will follow its consultation policy to decide on an appropriate form of consultation for each proposal according to its significance.

Strategic assets owned by the Council

A strategic asset is any asset that Council needs to retain in order to achieve a current or future outcome important to the continued wellbeing of the community.

Council is required pursuant to Section 90(2) of the Local Government Act 2002 to list all strategic assets as defined in Part 5 of the Act. The strategic assets set out below are not exhaustive but include those that are considered significant in ensuring the Council's capacity to achieve or promote any important outcome. The Council has identified its strategic assets as:

- Roothing/bridge network as a whole.
- Individual water treatment plants and reticulation networks.
- Individual wastewater treatment plants and reticulation networks.
- Individual stormwater reticulation networks.
- Individual District Reserves (Parks/Reserves).
- Stewart Island Electricity Supply Authority.
- Te Anau airport at Manapouri.
- Community housing as a whole.

It is important to note that Council manages a number of strategic assets as a whole. This is because the asset class as a whole delivers the service. Strategic decisions, therefore only concern the whole asset class and not the individual components, unless that component substantially affects the ability of Council to deliver the service. It is the principle of the provision of the services, not the individual roads, pipes, tanks, or power poles that makes these asset groups strategic.

The Council cannot transfer ownership or control of a strategic asset, or construct, replace or abandon a strategic asset unless it has first consulted with the community and included the proposal in the Long Term Council Community Plan.

Council recognises that there are some assets that, although do not fit the legal definition of strategic asset, are of high community importance and interest. Council will appropriately consult the communities on issues relating to these assets.