RANGITĪKEI DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ORDER PAPER

POLICY/PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Date:	**Thursday, 5 November 2026**
Time:	**9:30 am**
Venue:	**Council Chamber** **Rangitīkei District Council** **46 High Street** **Marton**

Chair:	Cr Jeff Wong
Deputy Chair:	Cr Piki Te Ora Hiroa
Membership:	Cr Diana Baird Cr Alan Buckendahl Cr Sandra Field Cr John Hainsworth HWTM Andy Watson Cr Dave Wilson

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Notice is hereby given that a Policy/Planning Committee Meeting of the Rangitīkei District Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Rangitīkei District Council, 46 High Street, Marton on Thursday, 5 November 2026 at 9:30 am.

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AGENDA

1 Welcome / Prayer

2 Apologies

3 Public Forum

4 Conflict of Interest Declarations

Members are reminded of their obligation to declare any conflicts of interest they might have in respect of items on this agenda.

5 Confirmation of Order of Business

That, taking into account the explanation provided why the item is not on the meeting agenda and why the discussion of the item cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting, enter item number be dealt as a late item at this meeting.

6 Confirmation of Minutes

6.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Author: **Petra Fleming, Governance Advisor**

1. Reason for Report

1.1 The minutes from **Policy/Planning Committee Meeting held on 3 September 2026 are attached.**

Attachments

1. Policy/Planning Committee Meeting - 3 September 2026

Recommendation

That the minutes of Policy/Planning Committee Meeting held on 3 September 2026 **[as amended/without amendment]** be taken as read and verified as an accurate and correct record of the meeting, and that the electronic signature of the Chair of this Committee be added to the official minutes document as a formal record.

MINUTES

RANGITĪKEI DISTRICT COUNCIL
Making this place home.

ITEM 6.1

UNCONFIRMED: POLICY/PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: **Thursday, 12 March 2026**

Time: **Following Council Workshop**

Venue: **Council Chamber**
Rangitīkei District Council
46 High Street
Marton

Present	Cr Piki Te Ora Hiroa
	Cr Jeff Wong
	Cr Dave Wilson
	Cr Alan Buckendahl
	Cr John Hainsworth
	Cr Sandra Field
	Cr Paul Sharland
	Cr Graeme O'Fee
	Cr Diana Baird
	HWTM Andy Watson
In attendance	Mrs Carol Gordon, Chief Executive
	Ms Katrina Gray, Group Manager – Strategy, Community and Democracy
	Mr Aaron Thorton, Manager – Animal Control
	Ms Tiffany Gower, Strategy Manager
	Mr Jarrod Calkin, Economic Lead
	Ms Kezia Spence, Governance Advisor

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Unconfirmed

1 Welcome / Prayer

The Chair opened the meeting at 1.00pm.

2 Apologies

There were no apologies received.

3 Public Forum

There was no public forum.

4 Conflict of Interest Declarations

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

5 Confirmation of Order of Business

There was no change to the order of business.

6 Reports for Decision

6.1 Review of Council's Control of Dogs Bylaw and Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy

Officers responded to questions that the shared animal control service with Manawatū District Council (MDC) highlighted only minor differences between the two councils' approaches, with no significant operational issues.

Resolved minute number 26/PPL/001

That the report 'Review of Council's Control of Dogs Bylaw and Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy' is received.

Cr P Hiroa/HWTM A Watson. Carried

Resolved minute number 26/PPL/002

That the Policy/Planning Committee expresses its appreciation to those people who provided responses to the pre-engagement survey on the operation of the Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy and Control of Dogs Bylaw.

Cr P Hiroa/Cr J Hainsworth. Carried

Resolved minute number 26/PPL/003

That the Policy/Planning Committee makes a determination under section 155 of the Local Government Act 2002 that a bylaw for the control of dogs is the most appropriate way of addressing the problems of managing dogs in the Rangitīkei District and to give effect to the requirements of

Unconfirmed

the Dog Control Act 1996, noting that section 10(6) of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires the Council to make a bylaw to enforce its Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy.

Cr D Wilson/Cr P Hiroa. Carried

Resolved minute number 26/PPL/004

That the Policy/Planning Committee direct officers to make amendments to the Control of Dogs Bylaw and the Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy, and that a draft Bylaw and Policy along with consultation material are brought back to the Committee for its consideration at a later date.

Cr D Wilson/Cr J Hainsworth. Carried

Resolved minute number 26/PPL/005

That the Policy/Planning Committee recommends to Council that it extends the date for the review of the Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy from 26 May 2026 to 26 November 2026 to allow consultation on proposed amendments to the Policy to be undertaken.

Cr J Wong/HWTM A Watson. Carried

The meeting closed at 1.25pm

The minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the Policy/Planning Committee held on 5 November 2026.

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Chairperson

Unconfirmed

ITEM 7.1

7 Reports for Information

7.1 Hearing of Submissions on the Control of Dog Bylaw and Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy

Author: **Kezia Spence, Policy Analyst**

Authoriser: **Tiffany Gower, Strategy Manager**

1. Reason for Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details for the hearing for the Policy/Planning Committee (the Committee).

2. Context

2.1 The Committee received the review of Council's Control of Dogs Bylaw (Bylaw) and Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy (Policy) on the 12 March 2026. It determined under section 155 of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) that a bylaw for the control of dogs is the most appropriate way of addressing the problems of managing dogs in the district and to give effect to the requirements of the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act).

2.2 The Committee directed officers to make amendments to the Control of Dogs Bylaw and the Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy, and that a draft Bylaw and Policy along with consultation material be brought back to the Committee for its consideration at a later date.

2.3 Council received, considered and approved the draft Bylaw and Policy for consultation on the 3 September 2026.

2.4 Consultation ran from Monday, 14 September to Friday, 16 October. Fifty-four (54) submissions were received during the consultation period with two (2) submitters requesting to speak at the hearing. The submission for the hearing is attached.

2.5 The remaining submissions will be made available as part of the deliberations report which will come to the Committee on the 19 November Policy/Planning Committee meeting.

2.6 The oral hearing schedule is as follows:

Submitter name	Organisation	Time
Caleb Lewis	N/A	9.35am
Dr Alison Vaughan	SPCA	9.45am

3. Discussion and Options Considered

3.1 There are no options associated with the hearing report. Options for the Bylaw and Policy will be presented in the deliberations report at the next Policy/Planning Committee meeting.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with the hearing. This will be considered within the deliberations report.

5. Impact on Strategic Risks

5.1 There are no strategic risks associated with the hearing. This will be considered within the deliberations report.

6. Strategic Alignment

6.1 Strategic alignment of the Bylaw and Policy will be described in the deliberations report.

7. Mana Whenua Implications

7.1 There are no mana whenua implications associated with the hearing.

8. Climate Change Impacts and Consideration

8.1 There are no climate change implications associated with the hearing.

9. Statutory Implications

9.1 Council is required under the Dog Control Act 1996 to have a Policy in respect of dogs in its district. The Council must make any necessary Bylaws in order to give effect to the Policy. Any Bylaw authorised by the Act must be made in accordance with the LGA.

10. Decision Making Process

10.1 This hearing forms part of the decision-making process. After this hearing, the Policy/Planning Committee will consider the topics raised during the oral submissions along with the written submissions during deliberations, scheduled for the 19 November 2026.

10.2 Following deliberations, the Bylaw and Policy will be taken to Council for adoption with any recommended changes from the Committee.

Attachments:

1. **Draft Control of Dog Bylaw and Draft Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy - Hearing Submission** ⇩

Recommendation

That the report Hearing of Submissions on the Control of Dog Bylaw and Draft Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy be received.

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#17

Control of Dog Bylaw and Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy

Submitted by: Anonymous user

Submitted time: 26 Sep 2026, 11:58:13

Ingoa/Name:

Caleb Lewis

Is your feedback on behalf of an organisation?

No

Kāinga noho/Address:

[redacted]

Waea/Phone:

[redacted]

Would you like to speak to your submission:

Yes, I would like to my submission.

How did you hear about this consultation?

- **Facebook**

Do you currently own a dog?

Yes

Do you regularly use a designated dog exercise area?

- **Wilson Park, Marton**

Submission by the

Royal New Zealand Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc.

on the

Rangitīkei District Council Control of Dogs Bylaw and Draft Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy

16 October 2026

Executive Summary

- SPCA broadly supports the proposed updates to the Bylaw and Policy, including the clearer definition of "under control" and the inclusion of minimum standards for the accommodation and care of dogs. We provide several recommendations to further support animal welfare, responsible dog ownership and evidence-based decision-making.
- SPCA recommends that Council amend section 15 of the Bylaw to acknowledge the national dog tethering regulations, which prohibit harmful prolonged tethering and the tethering of vulnerable dogs.
- SPCA recommends that Council require the desexing of dogs repeatedly found roaming or otherwise not kept under control, using a clear and proportionate threshold.
- SPCA recommends that Council provide a discretionary pathway to review menacing classifications made under section 33A where owners demonstrate sustained responsible dog ownership.
- SPCA encourages Council to retain suitable off-leash exercise opportunities or provide an appropriate alternative where existing off-leash access is removed.
- SPCA supports Council's policy not to rehome dogs formally classified as dangerous but recommends that decisions about dogs considered menacing or to have "undesirable traits" are based on an individual assessment of the dog.
- SPCA recommends that decisions about dog risk and classification are based on consistent, evidence-based assessment of the individual dog, including the likelihood and potential consequences of a future incident.
- SPCA encourages Council to consider the welfare impacts of menacing classification and the high rates of error in visual identification when developing criteria for classifying dogs based on appearance.
- SPCA supports minimum standards for dog accommodation but encourages Council to address the underlying behavioural and welfare causes of nuisance barking rather than relying primarily on kennel setback distances.

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Introduction

The following submission is made on behalf of The Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (trading as SPCA).

SPCA is the preeminent animal welfare and advocacy organisation in New Zealand. The Society has been in existence for over 150 years with a supporter base representing more than 100,000 New Zealanders across the nation.

The organisation includes 27 Animal Welfare Centres across New Zealand and approximately 60 inspectors appointed under the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

SPCA welcomes the opportunity to submit on the consultation for the Rangitīkei District Council Control of Dog Bylaw and Draft Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy.

Submission

Question 1: Are there any dog-related issues that we have missed in the review of this Bylaw and Policy?

Add reference to new dog tethering regulations under Section 15 – confinement of dogs

SPCA recommends that section 15 explicitly acknowledge regulations 15A and 15B of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.[1] These regulations prohibit tethering where prolonged tethering causes specified signs of suffering and prohibit the tethering of vulnerable dogs, including young puppies and female dogs who are in oestrus, pregnant or nursing, except in limited circumstances.

[1] https://www.legislation.govt.nz/secondary-legislation/pco-drafted/2025/193/en/latest/#LMS1468876

Desex dogs repeatedly found roaming

We note that multiple submitters on the pre-engagement survey noted concerns about roaming dogs. SPCA recommends that Council use the power available under section 20(1)(k) of the Dog Control Act 1996 to require the desexing of dogs who have not been kept under control on repeated occasions. We suggest that the Bylaw adopt a clear and proportionate threshold, such as two substantiated incidents within a 12-month period, with particular regard to repeated roaming or escape from the owner's property.

The requirement should be applied on the basis of documented and substantiated incidents. Council should retain discretion to consider the nature, seriousness and circumstances of the incidents; the risks created by the dog's behaviour; steps taken by the owner to prevent recurrence; and whether desexing would be appropriate for the individual dog.

The Bylaw could provide an exemption where a veterinarian advises that desexing would pose an unacceptable risk to the dog's health or welfare. Council may also consider access to subsidised desexing where cost would otherwise prevent compliance.

Requiring desexing in these circumstances is a targeted intervention focused on dogs already identified through animal-control incidents. It can prevent unintended litters, reduce the contribution of roaming dogs to dog overpopulation and, where roaming is sexually motivated, may help reduce the motivation to roam. Several councils already use this legislative power, including Auckland Council, which applies the requirement where a dog has not been kept under control on more than one occasion, and Rotorua Lakes Council, which applies it following two or more relevant breaches within 12 months.

Provide a pathway to review menacing classifications made under section 33A

Council may classify a dog as menacing under section 33A where it considers that the dog poses a threat because of observed or reported behaviour or characteristics typically associated with its breed or type. Although an owner may object to the initial classification within 14 days, the

Act does not set out a later review pathway where the dog's risk and the owner's management practices have subsequently changed.

SPCA recommends that Council adopt a discretionary review pathway similar to that provided in clause 17 of Auckland Council's Dog Management Bylaw 2019. Auckland allows the owner of a dog classified as menacing under section 33A to request a review after 12 months where the owner provides a behavioural assessment report, has received no infringements relating to the dog during the preceding 12 months, and holds a responsible dog ownership licence. Removal of the classification remains at Council's discretion.

A review pathway would not guarantee that a classification is removed. It would provide a transparent process for considering whether the dog continues to pose a threat and whether the classification and associated controls remain necessary and proportionate. It would also incentivise owners to comply with controls, obtain appropriate behavioural advice and demonstrate sustained responsible ownership.

Question 2: Are there any public places where you think dog exercise and recreation areas that should be different?

We are concerned that the proposed changes remove off-leash access without creation of alternative off-leash areas.

There is a legitimate need for safe, appropriate designated off-leash areas to provide alternatives to those areas where the presence of off-leash dogs is potentially detrimental to wildlife, farmed animals and other users of public lands.

We note that the proposed changes to dog access remove an off-leash dog exercise area (Taihape Domain changing from off-leash to on-leash access), without adding any additional off leash exercise areas. On-leash exercise is not a substitute for off-leash exercise. Dogs walk faster than people and providing off-leash time allows them to work off excess energy. Research suggests that off-leash dog exercise areas can benefit owners' and dogs' physical and social health, as well as community connectedness (Cutt et al., 2007; Eldering & Martin, 2017; Toohey

et al., 2013). Canine obesity is now considered to be a significant health and welfare concern in companion dogs worldwide (Kipperman & German, 2018). Dogs walked less often and for a shorter time are more likely to be obese; this can shorten their life and put them at risk of health complications such as diabetes and heart disease (German et al., 2017).

Dogs who are not provided an appropriate outlet for their energy can develop behavioural and welfare problems, including nuisance barking, destructive behaviour and reduced opportunities to express normal behaviour (Instone & Sweeney, 2014). Exercise is an easy, inexpensive, welfare-friendly tool to assist with nuisance barking (Righetti, 2005). Thus, provision of off-leash exercise opportunities is a key component of the Council's obligations to prevent or abate nuisances.

Legally, all dog owners must meet the physical, health and behavioural needs of their animals, and providing sufficient exercise is a part of this requirement. Some dog owners may be reluctant to exercise their dogs if they have less flexibility about where they can do this within their local area. Provision of alternative designated dog exercise areas to compensate for those removed, is likely to improve compliance with the introduced restrictions and allow dog owners to meet their physical, health and behavioural needs.

Where changes are proposed to reduce opportunities for off-leash exercise, we encourage the Council to clearly outline the evidence supporting the change, including the nature and frequency of any incidents, complaints, or demonstrated risks that cannot be effectively managed through less restrictive measures.

Off-leash exercise provides important welfare benefits for many dogs, including opportunities for physical exercise, exploration, play and species-typical behaviour. Where safe and appropriate, these opportunities should be retained. If there are specific safety or conflict issues, we encourage the Council to explain these in the consultation material so submitters can provide informed feedback on whether the proposed restriction is justified and proportionate.

Question 3: Do you have any feedback or general comments on the proposed Control of Dog Bylaw and Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy?

SPCA supports the proposed clarification of the definition of "under control".

Clear and practical expectations help dog owners understand their responsibilities and support consistent enforcement. Dogs who are effectively controlled are also less likely to be involved in traffic accidents, conflict with other animals, or other situations that may result in injury.

SPCA supports Council's policy not to rehome dogs formally classified as dangerous but recommends that Council remove the blanket prohibition on rehoming dogs considered to be menacing or to have "undesirable traits".

Section 6.12.4 of the policy states that: "*Council will not rehome any dog which in the opinion of Council Dog Control Officers is menacing, dangerous or has undesirable traits*." These terms encompass materially different circumstances and should not be treated as equivalent.

SPCA recognises the significant public-safety concerns associated with dogs formally classified as dangerous under the Dog Control Act 1996 and does not oppose Council's decision not to rehome these dogs.

A dog classified as menacing may have been classified because of observed or reported behaviour under section 33A of the Dog Control Act 1996, or because of its perceived breed or type under section 33C. A classification based on appearance does not establish that the individual dog presents an unacceptable behavioural risk or is unsuitable for rehoming. Classification should therefore be treated as relevant information, rather than an automatic bar to rehoming.

The phrase "undesirable traits" is subjective and insufficiently defined. It could capture common, context-dependent or treatable behaviours that do not make a dog unsuitable for adoption. Behaviour observed in a pound may also be influenced by confinement, stress, fear,

pain or an unfamiliar environment and may not reflect how the dog would behave in an appropriate home.

Decisions should instead be based on a holistic assessment of the individual dog, including behavioural history, the circumstances of any incidents, observations by carers and veterinary staff, and the suitability of the prospective home.

Council should not rehome a dog where the available evidence indicates that the dog presents an unacceptable and unmanageable risk of serious harm. However, that conclusion should be based on the individual dog and documented evidence, rather than classification status, appearance, breed or broadly defined "undesirable traits" alone.

SPCA recommends councils assess risk based on the behaviour of the individual dog, using standardised methods to assess severity of injury and risk posed by the individual dog.

The Dog Control Act 1996 currently lacks clear, consistent guidance for councils on how to classify dogs as 'menacing' or 'dangerous' based on their behaviour. This absence of national standards can result in inconsistent decisions across Territorial Authorities, which may undermine both public safety and animal welfare.

SPCA recommends that Council use standardised methods to assess both the severity of a biting incident and the risk posed by the individual dog, rather than relying on subjective or inconsistent interpretations.

Well established tools, such as the Ian Dunbar Dog Bite Scale, provide an objective framework for categorising bites according to wound depth and pattern.[2] This provides important information not only about the severity of the injury, but also about the degree of bite inhibition displayed by the dog during the incident. Bite inhibition is highly relevant to future risk. Where

[2] Ian Dunbar Bite Scale (2017) https://apdt.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ian-dunbar-dog-bite-scale.pdf

a dog has displayed markedly deficient bite inhibition, there is a risk that any future bite could result in severe or life-changing injury. The scale can therefore help inform the likely consequences if another incident occurs, the prognosis for behavioural intervention, and the urgency and level of management required.

The likelihood of another incident should be assessed separately, taking account of the context and predictability of the incident, the dog's behavioural history, the presence of identifiable triggers, the circumstances and vulnerability of the person or animal bitten, and the owner's ability and willingness to implement effective controls.

A consistent, evidence-based, behaviour-focused approach would:

- Promote fairness and clarity by ensuring that similar incidents are treated with equivalent seriousness
- Improve public safety through more accurate identification of dogs who present a high risk of causing serious harm, while also identifying opportunities for early intervention through proportionate measures to reduce future risk
- Support animal welfare by reducing arbitrary or disproportionate restrictions on dogs who pose little or no threat.

SPCA encourages councils to consider impacts of menacing classification, and the high rates of error in visual identification of cross breeds, when determining their criteria for classifying dogs as 'menacing' based solely on appearance.

SPCA understands that councils are required to comply with the Dog Control Act 1996, which currently requires classification of dogs listed in Schedule 4 (as assessed based on visual assessment of the dog's physical characteristics) as "menacing". SPCA strongly opposes breed specific legislation, such as New Zealand's Dog Control Act 1996, as evidence shows that targeting specific dog breeds or types is subjective, does not reduce the risk of dog bites, and places additional obligations on responsible owners.

The Act does not contain a definition of what constitutes an "American Pit Bull Terrier type" and thus it is left up to each Territorial Authority to determine how they establish reasonable grounds for believing a dog is wholly or predominantly one of the impacted dog breeds or types. SPCA cautions that research has clearly and repeatedly shown that visual assessment of the breed make up of mixed breed dogs is highly inaccurate, even when conducted by experts such as shelter workers, veterinarians and dog control officers (Hoffman et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2015; Voith et al., 2013).

Classification as menacing has serious consequences for a dog's welfare and can impact responsible dog owners in terms of their access to housing, services and pet insurance costs. We encourage Council to be mindful of these impacts when considering their guidelines for classifying dogs based on their visual appearance.

SPCA supports the inclusion of minimum standards for dog accommodation but considers changes to minimum distance between kennel and boundary unlikely to address nuisance behaviours.

We are unsure of evidence to support the specific increase from 1 metre to 1.8 metres between kennel and boundary.

SPCA supports transparent and proportionate processes for responding to persistent nuisance. Where barking is involved, Council guidance should encourage owners to identify and address contributing factors such as insufficient exercise, isolation, fear, frustration, environmental triggers or unmet behavioural needs. SPCA does not support the use of automatically activated anti-bark collars, anti-bark muzzles or other aversive devices.

Conclusion

SPCA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Rangitīkei District Council Control of Dog Bylaw and Draft Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy. Our organisation is happy to discuss this matter if further information is required.

References

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8 Meeting Closed