Statement of significant accounting policies

Reporting entity

Northland Regional Council is a local authority governed by the Local Government Act 2002 and the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 and is domiciled and operates in New Zealand.

The council's group comprises the council and its subsidiaries, namely:

- Marsden Maritime Holdings Limited (NZ) Ltd (53.61% owned);
- Northland Inc. Limited (100% owned);

All Northland Regional Council subsidiaries and associates are incorporated, domiciled and operates in New Zealand.

The primary objective of Northland Regional Council is to provide goods or services and perform regulatory functions for the community benefit rather than making a financial return. Accordingly, Northland Regional Council has designated itself and the group as Public Benefit Entities (PBE) for financial reporting purposes.

Reporting period

The prospective financial statements are for Northland Regional Council and are prepared for the ten year period ending 30 June 2031

Judgements and estimates

The preparation of prospective financial statements in conformity with PBE Standards, which are based on International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and with the Local Government (Financial Reporting and Prudence) Regulations 2014 requires judgements, estimates and assumptions concerning the future that affect the application of policies and reporting amounts of assets and liabilities and income and expenses. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations or future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

Where material, information on the major assumptions is provided in the significant forecasting assumptions section of this annual plan or will be provided in the relevant notes to the prospective financial statements.

Basis of preparation

The prospective financial statements of Northland Regional Council have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002: Part 6, Section 98 and Part 3 of Schedule 10, which includes the requirement to comply with New Zealand's generally accepted accounting practice (NZ GAAP).

These prospective financial statements have been prepared in accordance with NZ GAAP. They comply with NZ PBE (Tier1), IPSAS and other applicable Financial Reporting Standards, as appropriate for public benefit entities.

In the interests of transparency, we provide three sets of financial information:

1. the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) regulated statements of financial position, comprehensive revenue and expense and the like;
2. a Funding Impact Statement (FIS); and
3. Long Term Plan disclosure statement as required by Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Financial Reporting and Prudence) Regulations 2014. This is under the heading Financial Prudence.

Key differences between these three sets of information are that the GAAP regulated financial statements – as the name suggests – must adhere to GAAP requirements.

The FIS is intended to make the sources and applications of council funds more transparent to its stakeholders than might be the case if only the usual GAAP financial statements were provided. The FIS is prescribed by the Local Government (Financial Reporting and Prudence) Regulations 2014 and is required by the Local Government Act 2002.

The long-term plan disclosure statement is to disclose the council's planned financial performance in relation to various benchmarks to enable the assessment of whether the council is prudently managing its revenues, expenses, assets, liabilities, and general financial dealings.

Statement of compliance

The prospective financial statements of the council and group have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Local Government (Financial Reporting and Prudence) Regulations 2014, which include the requirement to comply with generally accepted accounting practice in New Zealand (NZ GAAP).

The prospective financial statements comply with PBE accounting standards.

Functional and presentation currency

The prospective financial statements are presented in New Zealand dollars which is the functional currency of Northland Regional Council and all values are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars ($000).

Standards issued and not yet effective and not early adopted

Financial instruments

PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments was issued in March 2019. This standard replaces PBE IPSAS 29, and supersedes PBE IFRS 9 Financial Statements, which was an interim standard. It is effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2022.

The council plans to apply this standard in preparing its 30 June 2023 financial statements. Although the council has not yet assessed the effects of these new standard, it does not expect any significant changes as the requirements are similar to PBE IPSAS 29.

Summary of significant accounting policies

The accounting policies set out below have been applied consistently to all periods presented in these prospective financial statements.

Revenue

Revenue is measured at fair value.

Rates revenue

Rates are set annually by a resolution of council and relate to a financial year. All ratepayers are invoiced within the financial year to which the rates have been set. Rates revenue is recognised and brought to account when the rates are payable based on the council's best estimate of what is expected to be collected. Rate penalties arising from late payment are recognised as revenue when rates become overdue. Rates remissions are recognised as a reduction of rates revenue when the council has received an application that satisfies its rates remission policy. These transactions are classified as non-exchange transactions.

Fees and charges

Fees and charges are recognised by reference to the stage of completion of the transaction at balance date, based on the actual service provided as a percentage of the total services provided. The majority of this type of revenue is exchange transactions.

Grants and subsidies

Grants and subsidies are recognised as revenue when the primary conditions of entitlement have been met. These are non-exchange revenue transactions. Where a transfer is subject to conditions that, if unfulfilled, require the return of transferred resources, council recognises a liability until the condition is fulfilled.

Sales of goods

Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when a product is sold to a customer.

Interest

Interest income is recognised using the effective interest method.

Other revenue–Dividends

Dividends are recognised when the right to receive payment has been established. Dividend income is budgeted at the cash amount received, being net of taxation imputation credits.

Rental revenue

Rental revenue from investment property is recognised in the surplus or deficit on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease.

Funds collected for other organisations

Funds are collected for other organisations, including central government. Any funds held at balance date are included in current liabilities. Amounts collected on behalf of third parties are not recognised as revenue, except for the commissions or fees earned.

Vested assets

Where a physical asset is acquired for nil or nominal consideration, the fair value of the asset received is recognised as revenue. Assets vested in the council are recognised as revenue when the control over the asset is obtained.

Infringement fees and fines

Infringement fees and fines are recognised when the infringement notice is issued.

Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when goods and services have been received.

Borrowing costs

Borrowing costs are recognised as an expense in the period in which they are incurred.

Personnel costs

Personnel costs includes salaries, wages, leave and other employee-earned compensation. Employer contributions to KiwiSaver and the National Provident Fund; Pension National Scheme, and Lump Sum National scheme are accounted for as defined contribution plans and are recognised in the surplus or deficit as incurred.

Grant expenditure

Non-discretionary grants are those grants that are awarded when the grant application meets specified criteria and are recognised as expenditure when an application that meets the specified criteria for the grant has been received.

Discretionary grants are those grants where the council has no obligation to award the grant on receipt of the grant application and are recognised as expenditure when the grant conditions have been satisfied.

Leases

Operating leases

An operating lease is a lease that does not transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of an asset.Lease payments under an operating lease are recognised as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term. All the leases of the council and group are operating leases.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash in hand and deposits held at call with banks.

Current Receivables

Short-term receivables and other receivables are recorded at their face value, less any provision for impairment.

A receivable is considered to be uncollectible when there is evidence that the amount due will not be fully collected. The amount that is uncollectible is the difference between the amount due and the present value of the amount expected to be collected.

Prepayments comprise significant items of expenditure having a benefit to more than one accounting period and are written off over the period to which they relate.

Inventories

Inventories such (as stores and materials) held for distribution or for use in the provision of goods and services that are not supplied on a commercial basis are measured at the lower of cost, or cost adjusted when applicable, for any loss of service potential.

Inventories held for use in the provision of goods and services on a commercial basis are measured at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

Other financial assets

Financial assets (other than shares in subsidiaries) are initially recognised at fair value plus transaction costs unless they are carried at fair value through surplus or deficit in which case the transaction costs are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Financial assets at fair value through surplus or deficit

Financial assets are initially recognised at fair value through surplus or deficit include financial assets held for trading. A financial asset is classified in this category if acquired principally for the purpose of selling in the short term or is part of a portfolio of identified financial instruments that are managed together and for which there is evidence of short term profit taking. Derivatives are also categorised as held for trading unless they are designated in a hedge accounting relationship for which hedge accounting is applied.

Financial assets acquired principally for the purpose of selling in the short term or part of a portfolio classified as held for trading are classified as a current asset unless council intends to hold the funds beyond 12 months.

After initial recognition, financial assets in this category are measured at their fair values. Gains or losses on re-measurement are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Council's external managed funds are classified in this category as they are evaluated and reported on a quarterly basis against the corresponding statement of investment policy and objectives. They are included in non-current assets unless management intends to dispose of the investment within 12 months of the balance date.

Loans and receivables

Loans and receivables are non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market. They are included in current assets, except for maturities greater than 12 months after the balance date, which are included in non-current assets.

After initial recognition, they are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less impairment. Gains or losses when the asset is impaired or derecognised are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

At year-end the assets are assessed for indicators of impairment. Impairment is established when there is evidence that the Council will not be able to collect amounts due according to the original terms of the receivable. Significant financial difficulties of the debtor, probability that the debtor will enter into bankruptcy, receivership or liquidation and default into bankruptcy, receivership or liquidation and default in payments are indicators that the asset is impaired.

If assets are impaired, the amount not expected to be collected is recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense

Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense are those that are designated into the category at initial recognition or are not classified in any of the other categories above. They are included in non-current assets unless management intends to dispose of the investment within 12 months of the balance date.

This category includes:

- Investments that are intended to be held long term but which may be realised before maturity;
- and Shareholdings that are held for strategic purposes.

After initial recognition, these investments are measured at their fair value, with gains and losses recognised directly in other comprehensive revenue and expense except for impairment losses, which are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

On de-recognition, the cumulative gain or loss previously recognised in other comprehensive revenue and expense is reclassified from equity to the surplus or deficit.

If impairment evidence exists, the cumulative loss recognised in other comprehensive revenue and expense is transferred to the surplus or deficit.

Impairment losses on shares recognised in the surplus or deficit are not reversed through the surplus or deficit.

If in a subsequent period the fair value of the listed bonds increases and the increase can be objectively related to an event occurring after the impairment loss was recognised, the impairment loss is reversed in the surplus or deficit.

Assets held for sale

Assets held for sale are classified as held for sale if their carrying amount will be recovered principally through a sale transaction, not through continuing use. They are measured at the lower of their carrying amount and fair value less costs to sell.

Any impairment losses for write-downs are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Any increases in fair value (less costs to sell) are recognised up to the level of any impairment losses that have been previously recognised.

Assets held for sale (including those that are part of a disposal group) are not depreciated or amortised while they are classified as held for sale.

Investment property classified as assets held for sale are recognised at fair value. Any gains/losses on investment property held for sale are recognised in surplus/deficit.

Investment property

Properties leased to third parties under operating leases are classified as investment property unless the property is held to meet service delivery objectives rather than to earn rentals or for capital appreciation.

Investment property is measured initially at its cost, including transaction costs.

After initial recognition, all investment property is measured at fair value at balance date. Fair Value is the price at which a property could be exchanged by knowledgeable and willing parties in an arm's length transaction. Fair Value is determined annually by the valuation undertaken by independent valuers that hold recognised and relevant professional qualifications and who have recent experience in the location and category of the investment properties being valued. Values for investment properties valued under PBE IPSAS 16 have been assessed primarily on a market related basis where sufficient data is available. For commercial properties, rentals, investment return rates and land improvement levels have been related directly to a wide range of Northland sales evidence while for rural blocks direct sales analysis has been used.

Gains or losses arising from a change in the fair value of investment property are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment consist of:

Operational assets – these include land, buildings, plant and equipment, vehicles and vessels.

Infrastructure assets – infrastructure assets are the assets that comprise the Awanui River flood management system and other river management schemes as they are developed, including stop-banks and floodgates.

Buildings and infrastructure assets are measured at fair value less accumulated depreciation. Forest land subject to the Emission Trading Scheme is the land under the forestry asset and is valued at historical cost. All other land is measured at fair value.

All other asset classes are measured at cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment losses.

Revaluation

Owner occupied freehold land and buildings and infrastructure assets are re-valued with sufficient regularity to ensure that their carrying value does not differ materially form fair value and at least every three years.

Net revaluation results

Net revaluation results are credited or debited to other comprehensive revenue and expense and are accumulated to an asset revaluation reserve in equity for that class of asset. Where this would result in a debit balance in the asset revaluation reserve, this balance is not recognised in other comprehensive revenue and expense but is recognised in the surplus or deficit. Any subsequent increase on revaluation that reverses a previous decrease in value recognised in the surplus or deficit will be first recognised in the surplus or deficit up to the amount previously expensed, and then recognised in other comprehensive revenue and expense.

Additions

The cost of an item of property, plant and equipment is recognised as an asset when it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the council, the cost of the item can be measured reliably and the cost of the item exceeds $2000. Capital projects in progress are recognised at cost less impairment and are not depreciated.

In most instances, an item of property, plant and equipment is recognised at its cost. Where an asset is acquired at no cost, or for nominal cost, it is recognised at fair value as at the date of acquisition.

Costs incurred subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised only when it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the council and group and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. The costs of day to day servicing of property, plant and equipment are recognised in the surplus or deficit as they are incurred.

Disposals

Gains and losses on disposals are determined by comparing the disposal proceeds with the carrying amount of the asset. Gains and losses on disposals are reported in the surplus or deficit. When re-valued assets are sold, the amounts included in asset revaluation reserves in respect of those assets are transferred to accumulated funds.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on a straight-line basis on all property, plant and equipment other than land at rates that will write off the cost (or valuation) of the assets to their estimated residual values over their useful lives. The useful lives and associated depreciation and amortisation rates of major classes of assets have been estimated as follows:

Asset class		
Buildings	5-100 years	1-20%
Plant, equipment, vehicles and vessels	2-100 years	1-50%
Infrastructure assets	20-190 years	0.5-5%

The residual value and useful life of an asset is reviewed, and adjusted if applicable, at each financial year end.

Infrastructural assets components include gates, pipes, outlets and stop banks. Depreciation is not provided for on stop-bank or rock revetment components of the infrastructure assets. An asset management plan has been prepared for these schemes.

Impairment of property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment that have a finite useful life are reviewed for indicators of impairment at each balance date. When there is an indicator of impairment the asset's recoverable amount is estimated an impairment loss is recognised for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount. The recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value, less costs to sell and its value in use.

If an asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount, the asset is impaired and the carrying amount is written down to the recoverable amount. For revalued assets, the impairment loss is recognised against the revaluation reserve for that class of asset. Where that results in a debit balance in the revaluation reserve, the balance is recognised in the surplus or deficit. For assets not carried at a revalued amount the total impairment is recognised in the surplus or deficit.

The reversal of an impairment loss is recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Value in use for non cash generating assets

Non cash generating assets are those assets that are not held with the primary objective of generating a commercial return.

For non cash generating assets, value in use is determined using an approach based on either a depreciated replacement cost approach, restoration cost approach, or a service units approach. The most appropriate approach used to measure value in use depends on the nature of the impairment and availability of information.

Value in use for cash generating assets

Cash generating assets are those assets that are held with the primary objective of generating a commercial return. The value in use for cash-generating assets and cash-generating units is the present value of expected future cash flows.

Intangible assets

Software acquisition and development

Acquired computer software licenses are capitalised on the basis of the costs incurred to acquire and bring to use the specific software.

Costs that are directly associated with the development of software for internal use are recognised as an intangible asset. Direct costs include the software development employee costs and an appropriate portion of relevant overheads.

Staff training costs are recognised in the surplus or deficit when incurred.

Costs associated with maintaining computer software are recognised as an expense, when incurred.

Costs associated with development and maintenance of the councils website are recognised as an expense when incurred.

Carbon Credits

Compensation units received at no cost from the crown are recognised at fair value at the date of receipt. The credits are recognised when they have been received and are recognised in the surplus.

New Zealand Units are re-valued annually and the net revaluation result is credited or debited to the surplus or deficit.

Gains and losses on disposal are determined by comparing the disposal proceeds with the carrying amount of the NZU. Gains and losses on disposals are reported in the surplus or deficit.

If at the end of any financial year there has been some deforestation (such as harvesting) that is yet to be replanted, a contingent liability will be disclosed until such time as replanting has occurred. Council's Forest Management Plan prescribes that replanting will always take place subsequent to any harvest.

Easements

Easements are recognised at cost, being the costs directly attributable to bringing the asset to its intended use. Easements have an indefinite useful life and are not amortised, but are instead tested for impairment annually. The cost of an easement is capitalised as part of the asset to which they relate.

Amortisation

Intangible assets that have an indefinite useful life, or are not yet available for use are not subject to amortisation and are tested annually for impairment

The carrying value of an intangible asset with a finite life is amortised on a straight line basis over its useful life. Amortisation begins when the asset is available for use and ceases at the date that the asset is derecognised. The amortisation charge for each period is recognised in the surplus or deficit

The useful lives and associated amortisation rates for major classes of intangible assets have been estimated as follows:

Intangible asset class		
Computer software	3-5 years	20-33%

Forestry assets

Forestry assets are independently re-valued, annually, at fair value less estimated point of sale costs.

Gains or losses arising on initial recognition of forestry assets at fair value less estimated point of sale costs, and from a change in fair value less estimated point of sale costs, are recognised in the surplus or deficit.

Forestry maintenance costs are recognised in the surplus or deficit when incurred.

Investments in subsidiary (excluding CCOs) and joint venture company

The investment in subsidiaries is carried at cost in the council's parent entity financial statements

For jointly controlled assets the council recognises in its financial statements its share of jointly controlled assets, the liabilities and expenses it incurs, its shares of liabilities and expenses incurred jointly, and revenue from the sale or use of its share of the output of the joint venture.

Investments in council-controlled organisations

An associate is an entity over which the council has significant influence and that is neither a subsidiary nor an interest in a joint venture. The investment in an associate is initially recognised at cost and the carrying amount in the group financial statements is increased or decreased to recognise the group's share of the surplus or deficit of the associate after the date of acquisition. Distributions received from an associate reduce the carrying amount of the investment.

The investment in the associate is carried at cost in the council's parent entity financial statement.

Payables and deferred revenue

Creditors and other payables are recorded at their face value.

Employee entitlements

Short-term employee entitlements

Employee benefits that are expected to be settled within 12 months of balance date are measured at nominal values based on accrued entitlements at current rates of pay.

These include salaries and wages accrued up to balance date, annual leave earned to, but not yet taken at balance date, retiring and long service leave entitlements expected to be settled within 12 months, and sick leave.

Council recognises a liability for sick leave to the extent that absences in the coming year are anticipated to be taken. The amount is calculated based on the unused sick leave entitlement that can be carried forward at balance date, to the extent that council anticipates it will be used by staff to cover those future absences.

Council recognises a liability and an expense for bonuses where contractually obliged, or where there is a past practise that has created a constructive obligation and a reliable estimate of the obligation can be made.

Long-term employee entitlements

Employee benefits that are due to be settled beyond 12 months after the end of the year in which the employee provides the related service, such as retirement have been calculated on an actuarial basis. The calculations are based on the present value of the estimated future cash flows.

Presentation of employee entitlements

Retirement gratuities for employees up to the age of 60 are classified as a non-current liability. All other employee entitlements are classified as a current liability.

Borrowings

Borrowings on normal commercial terms are initially recognised at their fair value plus any transaction costs.

Borrowing costs are recognised as an expense in the period in which they are incurred.

After initial recognition, borrowings are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Borrowings are classified as current liabilities unless the council or group has an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after balance date.

Equity

Equity is the community's interest in the Council and is measured as the difference between total assets and total liabilities. Equity is disaggregated and classified into a number of reserves.

- Accumulated funds
- Reserves:
  - Asset revaluation reserve
  - Fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense
  - reserve Hedging Reserve
  - Special reserves.

Reserves are a component of equity generally representing a particular use to which various parts of equity have been assigned. Reserves may be legally restricted or created by the council.

The asset revaluation reserve relates to the revaluation of property, plant and equipment to fair value.

The fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense reserve comprises the cumulative net change in fair value of assets classified as fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense.

Hedging reserve comprises the effective portion of the cumulative net change in fair value of derivatives designated as cash flow hedges.

Special reserves include reserves established by the council (and may be altered at the discretion of council) to isolate funds put aside for a specific purpose, and other reserves restricted by law and reflect targeted rates that must be applied to the specific activities for which the rates were collected.

Goods and services tax (GST)

All items in the financial statements are stated exclusive of GST, except for receivables, and creditors and other payables, which are stated on a GST inclusive basis. GST not recoverable as input tax is recognised as part of the related asset or expense.

The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) is included as part of receivables or payables in the Statement of Financial Position.

The net GST paid to, or received from the IRD, including the GST relating to investing and financing activities, is classified as an operating cash flow in the Statement of Cash Flows.

Commitments and contingencies are disclosed exclusive of GST.

Comparative figures

The comparative figures are the 2020/21 Annual Plan and the 2019/20 audited Annual Report. The comparative figures for the opening balances are based on the Annual Report 2019/20 and these are adjusted based on actual events to provide a more accurate opening position. The budget figures have been prepared in accordance with NZ GAAP, using accounting policies that are consistent with those adopted in preparing these financial statements.

Cost allocation

Northland Regional Council has derived the cost of service for each significant activity of the council using the cost allocation system outlined below.

Direct costs are those costs directly attributable to a significant activity. Indirect costs are those costs, which cannot be identified in an economically feasible manner, with a specific significant activity.

Indirect costs are charged to significant operating activities using appropriate cost drivers such as actual usage and staff numbers.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

In preparing these prospective financial statements, estimates and assumptions have been made concerning the future. These estimates and assumptions may differ from the subsequent actual results. Estimates and assumptions are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations or future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

The estimation of the useful lives of assets has been predominantly based on historical experience. Useful lives are reviewed on an annual basis and adjustments are made when considered necessary.

Critical judgements in applying accounting policies

Management has exercised the following critical judgements in applying accounting policies for the ten year period ending 30 June 2031.

The council's investment in Regional Software Holdings Limited has been treated as an associate as it is considered that council holds significant influence over the financial and operating policies of Regional Software Holdings Limited due to the fact that council's CEO is on the board of directors of Regional Software Holdings Limited.

Prospective financial statements disclosures

The council publishes both parent entity and group financial statements for historical reporting purposes but does not publish group prospective financial statements. The council is required to disclose the reasons for not presenting group prospective financial statements.

The council has not prepared group prospective financial statements because:

- The primary focus of the annual plan is on the activities of the council (parent) and the consequent impact on rates.

- The financial impact of transactions with group entities is reflected with the annual plan for funding purposes.