



SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

**Tangata Whenua / Tauranga City
Council Committee meeting
Wednesday, 22 April 2026**

Date: Wednesday, 22 April 2026

Time: 9:30 am

**Location: Waimapu Marae, 76 Waimapu Pa Road,
Poike, Tauranga**

**Marty Grenfell
Chief Executive**

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10.4 Tangata Whenua - Tauranga City Council Committee - Chairperson's Report - April 2026

ATTACHMENTS

1. Tangata Whenua - Tauranga City Council Committee - Chairperson's Report - April 2026 - A20138779 [↓](#) 

**Tangata Whenua/Tauranga City Council Standing Committee Meeting
Waimapu Marae - 22 April 2026**

Chairperson's report

E ōku Rangatira. Ngā kārangaranga maha o ngā hapū, o te Kaunihera o Tauranga Moana, tēnei rā taku mihi ki a koutou i runga i ngā tini āhuatanga o te ao hurihuri. Nō reira tēnā koutou.

In one of my earlier reports to this Committee at this time last year last year I commented on the continued growth of the Māori economy at both a national and regional/local level. At both local and national levels the story is impressive. The rise of the Māori economy over the last decade at both levels is not merely a story of fiscal growth; it is a narrative of reclamation, resilience, and the strategic reassertion of mana motuhake. Since 2014 in particular, our region has witnessed a profound transformation where iwi, hapū, and Māori authorities have moved from the periphery of the colonial economic framework to become one of the region's most stable and visionary architects.

Alongside the narrative of a booming Māori economy however is the paradox of persistent socio-economic disadvantage for whānau Māori. This socio-economic disadvantage manifests itself amongst other places, in the justice system where I work. Towards the end of last year I was asked by a friend to contribute to a think piece about this paradox in the context of the justice sector and the role of justice sector agencies and iwi/hapū.

A couple of weeks ago I was reflecting on the kōrero members had at the end of our February Standing Committee meeting, and it made me think about this paradox in a local/regional context and the role of Council and, by association, this Committee. I've plagiarised some of my notes from that justice think piece, and adapted them to the Western Bay of Plenty and Tauranga Moana context for the purposes of this report.

A Decade of Explosive Growth

Ten years ago, the Māori economy in the Western Bay was often viewed through the narrow lens of primary production—forestry, fishing, and farming. Today, that perspective is obsolete. The growth has been nothing short of explosive. In the Tauranga and Western Bay sub-region, Māori employment has expanded by an average of 4.6% annually over the last decade, consistently outpacing the general population.

This expansion is underpinned by a massive leap in the Māori asset base. Nationally, Māori assets skyrocketed from \$69 billion in 2018 to \$126 billion by 2023. In the Bay of Plenty, this wealth is not sitting idle in bank accounts; it is being weaponised for regional development. The region now hosts 17% of all Māori business units in New Zealand, the second-highest concentration in the country. This isn't just about large iwi authorities; it is driven by a 49% increase in self-employed Māori and a 31% rise in Māori employers, showcasing a grassroots entrepreneurial spirit that is revitalising local commerce.

The shift from "passive" to "active" investment has been the hallmark of the last ten years. This period has seen the transition of land from traditional lease arrangements to direct Māori management. Initiatives like the Huakiwi investment, the Rangiora Business Park, the Ruakura

Inland Port (Waikato-Tainui) are great examples in long-term thinking, utilising Māori owned land and securing high-value returns that stay within the community rather than leaking out to offshore investors.

The Horizon of Opportunity

There's a general consensus that the future for the region's Māori economy lies in diversification and infrastructure. The next decade will be defined by the "Māori Brand"—a unique value proposition that blends high-quality products with authentic stories of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and whakapapa (ancestry).

The Rangiuru Business Park is a prime example of the scale of opportunity. This massive industrial hub is not just a collection of warehouses; it is a strategic Māori-led asset that will provide the backbone for regional logistics and manufacturing. Beyond physical assets, the "blue economy" and high-tech services offer the next frontier. As Māori businesses move into professional, scientific, and technical services—sectors that have already seen significant growth—they are creating a pathway for a highly skilled Māori workforce.

Furthermore, the rise of the "circular economy" aligns perfectly with Māori values. As the world demands more sustainable business practices, Māori enterprises are uniquely positioned to lead. Their inherent focus on long-term intergenerational health over short-term quarterly profits is becoming a competitive advantage in a global market obsessed with ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) standards.

Navigating Issues and Risks

However, this trajectory is not without its challenges. The primary risk to continued growth is the "productivity gap." While the asset base is growing, much of it remains locked in land-based sectors that are vulnerable to climate change and fluctuating global commodity prices. The recent impacts of extreme weather events on the horticultural sector, and global turmoil on supply chains including gas and oil, serve as a stark reminder of this vulnerability.

There is also the persistent challenge of capital access. Despite holding billions in land assets, many Māori land trusts struggle to secure commercial lending due to the complexities of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act, which prevents land from being used as traditional collateral. This "capital constraint" can stifle the ability of smaller Māori businesses to scale at the pace of their ambitions.

Furthermore, the "war for talent" is acute. To sustain 4.6% annual employment growth, the region needs a continuous pipeline of skilled Māori professionals. If the education system fails to keep pace with the needs of a diversifying Māori economy, the region risks a mismatch between the high-tech jobs of tomorrow and the available local workforce.

Lastly, there is the risk of political and regulatory uncertainty. Changes in government policy regarding Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and co-governance models can create a chilling effect on the long-term investment certainty that iwi authorities require to execute 50-year development plans.

A Way Forward ?

The last ten years have proven that when Māori thrive, the Western Bay of Plenty thrives. The Māori economy is no longer a "special interest" group; it is a major part of the regional economy's engine room. To ensure the next decade is as successful as the last, the focus must remain on moving up the value chain, investing heavily in rangatahi (youth) education, and fostering partnerships that respect the unique cultural capital Māori bring to the table. The growth we see today is the result of seeds planted generations ago. If we can navigate the risks of climate change and capital constraints, the Māori economy will do more than just grow—it will redefine what prosperity looks like for everyone in the Western Bay.

The paradox

As noted the paradox of a booming Māori economy alongside persistent socio-economic disadvantage is a complex challenge in the Western Bay of Plenty. While iwi assets have grown to **\$126 billion nationally** as of 2023, the "trickle-down" effect to individual whānau often faces systemic bottlenecks

The Gap: Why a Thriving Economy Isn't Solving Every Issue

The disconnect between macro-economic success and individual well-being often stems from structural and historical factors:

- **Asset Type vs. Cash Flow:** Much Māori wealth is locked in un-alienable land or long-term infrastructure like the Rangiuru Business Park. While these grow in value, they don't always provide immediate liquidity for whānau facing rising living costs.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Growth often occurs within a colonial framework that historically excluded Māori. Issues like lower homeownership rates (which dropped significantly for urban Māori since the 1980s) and systemic gaps in health and judicial outcomes persist despite corporate success.
- **Demographic Pressures:** With 41% of Māori under age 19, the region faces a high dependency ratio. The economy must grow at an extraordinary pace just to provide entry-level opportunities for this massive youth wave.
- **Access to Capital:** Smaller whānau-led businesses—the backbone of community employment—often struggle to secure bank loans because communal land cannot be used as collateral.

Opportunities for Local Government & Māori Collaboration

Councils in the Western Bay of Plenty (Tauranga City and Western Bay District) have unique levers to bridge this gap:

Strategic Infrastructure & Planning

- **Joint Ventures:** Councils can partner with iwi on "shovel-ready" projects, ensuring that procurement policies mandate a percentage of contracts go to local Māori-owned firms.
- **Land Use Innovation:** Working together to streamline planning for Papakainga housing (housing on ancestral land) directly addresses the homeownership and stability gap. [2]

Workforce & Skills Development

- **Targeted Apprenticeships:** Councils can fund or facilitate vocational pathways specifically for rangatahi (youth) in high-growth sectors like tech and scientific services.

