

## Community Summary Long Term Plan Ruapehu District Council

Arts, culture and creativity contributes to thriving communities. When arts, culture and creativity is supported, strong and visible communities are strong and visible.

Arts, culture and creativity is woven through all aspects of life. It has a key role to play in creating thriving and liveable towns and cities. The creative activation of public spaces supports the preservation of council assets, and promotes social cohesion and community connection. Sustainable creative career opportunities attract and retain workers and innovative businesses.

Arts culture and creativity supports community and individual wellbeing. In Waikato, those who report being highly engaged with arts, culture and creativity have 5% higher overall wellbeing as compared to those with little or no engagement.<sup>1</sup> Research has shown that recreational arts can support mental wellbeing. ‘Those who engaged in 100 or more hours/year of arts engagement (i.e. two or more hours/week) reported significantly better mental well-being than other levels of engagement.’<sup>2</sup>

Councils are currently seeking community feedback around their long term plans (LTPs). Long Term Plans outline Council’s activities and how they are managed, delivered and funded<sup>3</sup>. Under the Local Government Act, Councils must consult with their communities on the LTP (or 10 year plan) every 3 years.<sup>4</sup> A common theme across these consultations is the need to be strategic around prioritising investment.

It is important that investment in community wellbeing is prioritised and protected. The core role of council, as outlined in the legislation, is to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities. This is the required (or statutory) purpose of council.

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<sup>1</sup> Huber Social, ‘Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato’ (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.22, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>.

<sup>2</sup> Christina Davies, Matthew Knuiman & Michael Rosenberg, ‘The art of being mentally healthy: a study to quantify the relationship between recreational arts engagement and mental well-being in the general population, BMC Public Health, vol.16, <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-015-2672-7>.

<sup>3</sup> Waikato District Council

[https://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans/long-term-plan#:~:text=The%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20\(LTP,\(including%20proposed%20rate%20increases\).](https://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans/long-term-plan#:~:text=The%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20(LTP,(including%20proposed%20rate%20increases).)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

We have a role to play in supporting council in this work, by letting them know that we will support them to deliver these wellbeings. We can share with the council and with others in our community that we know and care about more than solely economic concerns. It is important that we share about the other things that we value in our lives.

This can be as simple as writing an email or letter to council about the things that you care about.

[Here is a link](#) to the council's resources for the Long Term Plan feedback process. It is important to know that you do not need to answer every question, or go into great detail. You can speak from your own experience, and share about what you really value and care about. Anything you can do to add your voice to the chorus is powerful. You can find the submission link here (docs are at the bottom of this link):

<https://www.ruapehudc.govt.nz/our-council/consultation-and-community-engagement/long-term-plan-2024-2034#toc-link-5>

We have pulled out some key moments where arts, culture, creativity and community are mentioned and italicised potential responses. You might want to mention some of these, and what you want to happen with regard to these. Feel very free to copy and paste from here, and make any edits or additions you would like.

### **Consultation closes on Sunday 12 May 2024**

In the opening of the consultation document, the mayor and councillors share:

*'Our vision for Ruapehu is a place we are proud to call home, where we celebrate our diverse communities - who are connected to their environment and each other.'*

You might want to let council know that you believe arts, culture and creativity are powerful tools to enhance pride, celebrate diverse communities and connect them to their environment and each other.

Ruapehu District Council **values** are:

- Kaitiakitanga - Guardianship
- Environmental stewardship
- **Manaakitanga - Care for others**
- **Whanaungatanga - Upholding relationships**

- **Rangatiratanga - Enabling others**
- Accountability

**Purpose**

We want communities to have a say in local decisions, take action together and aim to make communities better now and in the future by **focusing on wellbeing**, the economy, the environment, and **culture**.

**Outcomes**

We seek to create **resilient infrastructure, thriving communities**, prosperous businesses connected to their surroundings, **a healthy environment**, and a **diverse, engaged workforce** valuing people, teamwork, and continuous improvement.

Community	What	Outcome goals
	Our infrastructure assets and services are resilient and fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All Council owned-assets consistently meet required compliance standards.</li> <li>● All Council-owned assets are resilient and future-proof.</li> </ul>
	Our communities are thriving and enabled to pursue their aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Each community in the district is supported to develop and implement a local community plan.</li> <li>● Council encourages initiatives that promote social connection and self-determination.</li> <li>● Council’s public spaces are safe and accessible for all.</li> <li>● Council’s strategic partnerships contribute to the wellbeing of our district.</li> </ul>
	Our businesses are prosperous and connected to their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Ruapehu business community is growing and diversifying.</li> <li>● Stable employment opportunities across the district are increasing.</li> <li>● Council’s regulatory activity supports safe, healthy business and community</li> </ul>

		activity.
	Our natural and built environment is healthy, strong and safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council meets its natural and built environment targets as set by central government.</li> <li>● Council is an influential local voice at regional and national level on issues that affect our unique environment.</li> <li>● Council strategic objectives contribute to the environmental wellbeing of our district.</li> </ul>
<b>Organisation</b>	Diverse, positive and engaged workforce that values people, teamwork & continuous improvement whilst serving our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We give effect to our values in all we do.</li> <li>● We deliver meaningful solutions.</li> <li>● We work with other organisations to get best results for our district.</li> <li>● We communicate effectively.</li> </ul>

You may wish to comment on Council’s values and outcomes, particularly where there is mention of thriving communities, encouraging initiatives that promote social connection and self-determination and delivering meaningful solutions.

Council acknowledges that this LTP is challenging, particularly navigating the district through a period of financial austerity and policy uncertainty. Its focus remains on serving its community, advocating for their needs, and ensuring the region’s resilience and sustainability.

### **Building resilient, sustainable communities**

With the role and functions of local government evolving, Council has been on a journey to ensure it is well placed to serve and support its communities into the future. The outcomes it wants to achieve for Ruapehu communities have **wellbeing at their heart**.

Council recognises that Ruapehu communities look to Council to support their overall wellbeing, beyond the provision of our ‘traditional’ core services. Despite the progress that has been made over recent years, Council is also aware that not everybody is benefiting and there are some pockets of high deprivation and associated social issues in our community.

Council acknowledges that it cannot address these deep-seated and complex wellbeing issues on its own. Government, business, iwi, hapū, non-government organisations and the community themselves all have a role to play.

### **Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu and the Wellbeing Framework**

Ruapehu District Council developed the Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu portal in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development. The portal seeks to merge real-life experiences with hard statistical data to offer valuable perspectives on community wellbeing and obstacles, guiding the allocation of scarce resources to best effect.

The success of Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu led Council to develop a Wellbeing Framework to provide direction and focus for activities promoting community wellbeing.

### **The role of the Wellbeing Framework in the Long Term Plan**

The Wellbeing Framework informs the 2024/34 Long Term Plan, including Council's values, purpose, vision, and the environmental outcomes Council aims for. It guides its focus, service levels and performance indicators influenced by Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu.

### **Guiding pillars**

The Wellbeing Framework is guided in its implementation by Council commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and providing Strong Leadership, Advocacy and Financial Stewardship.

It may be useful to acknowledge Council's development and continued use of this framework to ensure it continues to recognise the importance of Te Tiriti within its district.

### **Ten key challenges of the next ten years**

Council has outlined ten key challenges over the next ten years of the LTP. We've highlighted some that you may wish to comment on (suggestions are provided in *italics*).

- 1. New uncertainties and costs** - Driven by greater funding and capability challenges and a change of government with new approaches to sector reform.

- 2. Services and affordability** - Infrastructure Strategy will focus on prioritising key services and essential projects for the next three years.

*Infrastructure is also about the people and services (soft infrastructure) and not only facilities, halls and venues. There should be a consideration of the users of hard infrastructure and supporting those that activate these spaces.*

- 3. Resolution of three waters** - Until the funding of three waters is resolved it will impact Council's ability to fund other infrastructure and activities as they communities need and want.
- 4. Capital works programme** - Uncertainty as to whether Council will be able to complete all the capital works it had planned to do. Delays could potentially result in increased costs or assets failing.
- 5. Funding pressures** - Grant and subsidy funding will likely be harder to get. Council's largest subsidy is the Funding Assistance Rate (FAR) from the NZ Transport Agency - Waka Kotahi for its road network. If this reduces and road investment does not increase there is a risk the level of service will drop.
- 6. Advocating for Ruapehu and rural issues** - Continued work is needed to advocate for communities on the issues confronting the Ruapehu District, the region and rural New Zealand.
- 7. Climate change** - Environment changes will impact Ruapehu's two largest economic activities being agriculture and tourism. Legislation such as the Emissions Trading Scheme has impacts on safety and security, places people live and play, livelihoods and economic wellbeing.

*Whilst the Emissions Trading Scheme may have an impact, so too can any natural disaster, in which case, it will be important for communities to come together to come up with creative solutions and for social cohesion.*

- 8. Maintaining township revitalisation** - Despite financial constraints, Council wants to keep investing in its towns, community projects and facilities to support the growth of resilient, sustainable communities

which can thrive into the future. Not having vibrant, attractive townships will impact on Council's ability to attract new residents and visitors who stimulate economic activity.

*Arts, culture and creativity plays an important role in creating vibrant townships that not only attract new residents and visitors, but also provides a sense of pride and place for current residents.*

Page 13 of LTP consultation document.

It is noted that Tātai Tāngata ki Raetihi - Town Revitalisation service hub is reliant on external funding to proceed. If funding does not eventuate, then this project will be put on hold.

**9. Leadership and governance** - We aim to protect the natural environment on which the economy and way-of-life are based, build townships that people are proud of, support social cohesion, provide leadership, and effectively manage community assets and services. Council will communicate effectively so that its communities understand what it is doing, why Council is doing it, and encourage engagement with Council.

**10. Easing the ratepayer burden** - We will work hard to identify and take advantage of any available funding opportunities that will help alleviate the pressure on ratepayers.

### **Required rate funding**

To maintain levels of service and keep on top of required infrastructure investment Council needs to collect \$31.3m in rates revenue for the up-coming 2024/25 rating year.

**9% is the proposed average rates increase\* for the first three years of the Long Term Plan** (\*except exotic forestry properties)

## **Plans for Community Facilities**

Community Facilities: \$4.5m - 15%

Provides administration of Council property including administration and library buildings, halls, community housing, parks & reserves, public toilets, swimming pools, cemeteries etc.

The strategic vision for the community and recreational facilities within the region emphasises fostering thriving local communities and enhancing the livability of the built environment.

This vision is being pursued through:

- Initiatives such as town centre revitalisations, aim to invigorate community spaces and promote local engagement
- Robust relationships and strategic partnerships with iwi, hapū, central and regional government, housing agencies and community organisations
- Partnerships for enhancing community wellbeing, which are a priority for the next three to five years
- The establishment of Māori wards in 2022, ensuring Māori representation and participation in council decision-making
- Extension of accessible walkways along the Whanganui, Makatuku, and Mangawhero Rivers is planned, which will enhance recreational opportunities and promote health and wellness

These initiatives underscore Council's commitment to its Wellbeing Framework, environmental stewardship and sustainable community development.

You may wish to comment on these initiatives and highlight which ones are important for you to see progressed.

## Council's plan for **Community Support, Leadership, Regulation, and Organisational Support**

These areas play a pivotal role in fulfilling the Council's responsibilities and enhancing the welfare of the Ruapehu communities.

They aim to foster a supportive, vibrant and regulated environment that ensures the wellbeing and growth of the Ruapehu communities through the provision of essential services and resources.



## **Community Support**

Includes: library services, visitor services, and Civil Defence Emergency Management services.

*Access to libraries are important for communities to connect, also events and workshops held within libraries facilitate community engagement and connection.*

## **Leadership**

The Leadership Activity is divided into two key areas:

- Governance - Council and Community Boards and
- Strategic Development - Economic and Community Development, Policy, Youth Development, and iwi and hapū relationships.

*There is an opportunity to use the Waikato Arts Navigator (Regional Arts Strategy) to provide strategic direction in the area of arts, culture and creativity.*

## **Regulation**

Council has a statutory obligation to provide regulatory services. The Regulation activity provides Animal Control, Building Services, Resource Management, and Environmental Health and Alcohol licensing and ensures compliance with Council bylaws.

*It is important that Council mechanisms such as bylaws, facilitate community and arts events to enable thriving communities.*

## **Organisational Support**

The Organisational Support activity ensures Council has the tools and facilities to undertake its role.

Overall, the Community Support, Leadership, Regulation, and Organisational Support functions are essential in creative cohesive, well regulated, and supportive environments that enable the delivery of Council's goals and Wellbeing Framework objectives.

Ruapehu District Council is also consulting on some **proposed financial changes**. Some of these are listed below.

## **Warm Your Whare 'opt in' Targeted Rate**

Removed from **Revenue and Financing Policy**

Council is removing the Warm Your Whare 'opt in' Targeted Rate from its Revenue and Financing Policy.

Council consulted on the inclusion of a Warm Your Whare 'opt in' targeted rate during the 2021-31 Long Term Plan.

At the time, Council was considering the possibility of using this rate to fund advances for ratepayer's insulation if they wished to join the Warm Your Home Whare Scheme.

As this rate was never levied (imposed), and the 'Warm Your Whare Scheme' is no longer available. Council will not levy this rate, so are removing it from its Revenue and Financing Policy.

*When or if the 'Warm Your Whare Scheme' becomes available, Council could be encouraged to revisit this initiative again or find other ways to support the wellbeing of their communities.*

### **Rates Remission - for financial hardship**

Proposal to introduce a remission for a second SUIP (Separately Used or Inhabitable part) to reduce UAC (Uniform Annual Charge - UAC) that properties may need to pay if they meet the criteria.

Council's Rates Remission Policy aims to provide ratepayers with some financial assistance, where they might otherwise have difficulty meeting their obligations to pay rates. It also addresses circumstances where the way Council has decided to rate (the rating system) results in anomalies.

**Option 1** - Maintain the status quo and do not provide a remission

**Option 2** - Introduce a remission for a second SUIP to reduce the level of fixed (UAC) rating charges that qualifying properties may need to pay. (Council's preferred option).

### **Rates Remission**

Proposal to extend Council's ability to provide rates remissions in certain circumstances.

Council is modifying its Rates Remission Policy to make it more flexible and allow it to offer rate relief to those ratepayers facing severe financial difficulties who meet the policy's requirements.

*Given that employment in the arts and creative sectors is mostly cyclical and/or inconsistent, it is difficult for people working in those sectors to*

*maintain a regular wage, and if they do, it is lower than average. Recognition of financial hardship is important in these circumstances (Option 2).*

### **Removal of 3% early rate payment discount**

Proposal for the dissolution of the policy on discounts for early payment of rates.

Council is proposing to remove the 3% early rate payment discount via the dissolution of the policy on discounts for early payment of rates as it is resulting in lost net revenue of around \$90,000 per annum.

**Option 1** - Maintain the 3% early rate payment discount

**Option 2** - Remove the 3% early rate payment discount (Council's preferred option).

Removal of the discount is fairer for ratepayers who are not in a financial position to pre-pay their rates at the beginning of the rating year and would result in a net revenue increase of around \$90,000 per annum.

*As above, given that employment in the arts and creative sectors is mostly cyclical and/or inconsistent, it is difficult for people working in those sectors to maintain a regular wage, and if they do, it is lower than average. Therefore pre-paying rates in advance would be unlikely (Option 2).*

### **Changes to Māori Freehold Land Remission Policy**

Proposal to offer increased rates remission support to the owners of Māori land.

Council is proposing to make changes to its Maori Freehold Land Rates Remission Policy which will become known as the Remission of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy.

The proposed changes to the policy will ensure it is up to date and compliant with the legislation for rating of Māori Freehold Land and the principles of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 and offer wider support to owners of Māori land to look after their whenua for current and future generations.

**Option 1** - Retain current Māori Freehold Land Remission Policy. Only make required legislative changes

**Option 2** - Make changes to Māori Freehold Land Remission Policy (Council's preferred option).

Proposed changes under Option 2 include:

- Ensure it is up to date and compliant with the legislation for rating of Māori Freehold Land and the principles of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993
- Consider applications for remissions on certain types of Māori land that is not in Māori freehold title
- Offer wider rate remission support to owners of Māori land to look after their whenua for current and future generations
- All remissions shift the rate requirements to other ratepayers, which would increase.
- Better aligns with Council's strategic priorities of improving outcomes for Māori and the objectives of its Wellbeing Framework.

*It is vital that we embrace a Te Ao Māori lens in the way we operate and our collective vision for a shared future. This is an integral framework within the Waikato Arts Navigator, our regional arts strategy. Recognising that land is a taonga tuku iho, we must acknowledge the wellbeing of tangata whenua and understand things from a te ao Māori perspective as being central to our understanding of wellbeing in Aotearoa.*

### **Changes to the Financial Strategy**

Proposal to change rate increase limit to LGCI +3%

Council is proposing to increase its self-imposed rates revenue increase limit from the Local Government Cost Index (LGCI) +2% to LGCI +3%.

- This will enable Council to maintain its levels of service.
- Result in projected annual rate increases of around 5% per annum from year four (2027/28) of the Long Term Plan for the remaining seven years.
- Ensure Council's budget is balanced.
- Keep Council within its self-imposed debt limit of 2x rates income in all but the first year of the Long Term Plan, and;
- Allow the gradual repayment of some debt leaving Council in a better debt position at the end of the Long Term Plan period in 2033/34.

Option 1 - Maintain current self-imposed rates revenue increase limit of LGCI +2%

Option 2 - Increase self-imposed rates revenue increase limit to LGCI +3% (Council's preferred option)

*Given that Option 1 would exceed the self-imposed debt affordability benchmark of x2 rates income in seven years of the Long Term Plan,*

*projected debt would be \$13.7 million higher than if Council adopted LGCI +3%.*

*Furthermore, it would be more difficult to maintain levels of service for communities with this option. This option would best ensure communities would be better off with not having their levels of service reduced (i.e., community services, organisational support from Council etc).*

### **Changes to fees and charges**

Proposal to increase fees and charges to recover increased costs of services. Any increases to fees and charges reflect the increased cost of providing these services.

Council believes that the user-pays principle promotes fairness, as individuals or businesses that use more of a service bear more of the cost, rather than spreading it across other ratepayers regardless of their usage levels.

For the up-coming 2024/25 rating year, Council is budgeting to receive 7% of its required income worth \$3.8m from fees and charges.

*It is difficult to ascertain what fees have increased and/or changed, however, you may wish to mention that fees for hall hire, temporary stalls in public places, library fees etc should be affordable as they enable community connection, social cohesion and celebration.*

*Libraries are an essential service.*

- *They contain resources, spaces and support community wellbeing.*
- *Are named components in local government legislation.*
- *Contribute positively to cultural wellbeing through access to knowledge and resources, but also provide spaces for social connections.*
- *Libraries are community spaces, where people connect and can access education, digital spaces, things like Wi-Fi, computers, printers and scanners, which are necessary in this digital age.*

*Library fees/fines should be affordable for everyone.*