

Community Summary South Waikato District Council - Long Term Plan 2024-34

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.¹ 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.’²

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 funded³. Under the Local Government Act, Councils must consult with their communities on the LTP (or 10 year plan) every 3 years.⁴ 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 wellbeing of communities. This is the required (or statutory) purpose of council.

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

² 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://bmcpublikealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-015-2672-7>.

³ 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).)

⁴ 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.

Consultation on Fees and Charges 2024-25 and six Policies

South Waikato District Council consulted on their Fees and Charges 2024-25 as well as six Policies in May, due to these needing adopting sooner.

A summary of what has already been consulted on is below:

- Full Fees and Charges 2024-34
- Rates Postponement Policy (no changes)
- Rates Remission Policy (minor changes)
- Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy
- Treasury Management Policy (minor changes)
- Significance and Engagement Policy (complete review)
- Revenue and Finance Policy (complete review)

Council is now consulting on its full Long-Term Plan 2024-34. Consultation closes on:

Friday 7 June 2024

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 consultation document, supporting documents, and feedback portal here:

<https://www.southwaikato.govt.nz/our-council/consultation>

We have pulled out some key moments where arts, culture, creativity and community are mentioned. 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.

The South Waikato District Council's Draft Vision is '***Tirohanga hukihuki mō ngā tau tekau ki tua - A thriving community and robust economy that outpaces the rest of NZ***'. It is about making the South Waikato a place where our people can thrive, grow and benefit from investment in the district.

The three goals of Council are:

These are:

Thriving communities

Our diverse people of South Waikato are healthy and well, with ample opportunities to support their quality of life.

A sustainable environment

The District is a national leader in benefiting economically from a circular economy.

A robust economy

Leveraging our location and rich soils, we rebuild a strong foundation for our grandchildren.

South Waikato District Council believes that in ten years' time, it will have delivered on its vision by achieving these draft goals:

- More people in South Waikato own their own home than ever before.
- More people participate in community activities and events than ever before.
- No waste or rubbish leaves the district.
- Our economy grows faster than anywhere else in the country.
- All our young people are in either education or employment.

You may wish to support Council's goal of more people participating in community activities and events, as this will enable social cohesion and overall wellbeing for communities.

Council is proposing an average rate revenue increase of 8.9% for Year 1, with 8.9% again for years 2 and 3. Over the 10-year period the proposed average is 5.7%. The highest percentage increases are in the first five years.

Biggest challenges

Infrastructure *Hanganga*

Due to under-investment in existing and growth-related infrastructure, significant investment into core infrastructure will be made primarily through debt funding, which means there will be less funding available for other projects.

Financial sustainability *Toitū ahumoni*

Debt will and must grow over the coming decade so that Council can invest in its infrastructure that will support service delivery for generations to come.

You may wish to encourage Council to invest in soft infrastructure (people and services) as well as hard infrastructure (venues and facilities) in order to achieve more holistic outcomes for communities i.e., more community connectedness, overall health and wellbeing etc.

Rationalise facilities and services *Ngā take ratonga hanganga*

Council is proposing to rationalise its assets to deliver fit-for-purpose modern facilities that cater for the whole district.

There may be opportunities for Council to integrate arts, culture and creativity in the facility design and development. It is also important to remember community groups who utilise current facilities/services and that their needs are also taken into consideration in this process.

Growth *Whakawhanaketanga*

The district is growing and Council recognises that it must invest in its towns, infrastructure and people.

In addition to building a robust economy, you may wish to encourage Council that it is also important to ensure its people thrive, which means providing more opportunities to create and connect.

Major signals

An important focus for Council is to provide for the replacement of assets - both the backlog and for the future. The following are a list of 'signals' that Council has identified in the coming years.

Focus for the first three years

- Keep business ticking along delivering what the community expects from Council
- Continue journey towards financial sustainability
- Catch up on renewals in the three waters space. This is where the bulk of the capital spend must be
- Deliver a completely overhauled pool facility in Tokoroa.

Shift from rates to those who benefit

- Where practical and reasonable, there will be a shift away from rates to charging individuals who benefit directly from services.

It is important to remember that all residents deserve access to public amenities (such as libraries), keeping costs affordable is important to maintain accessibility to these services.

Housing development

- Signalling a move away from roads and rubbish, to actively support the provision of housing.

Provision of affordable housing facilities is important for a thriving community.

Rationalise facilities, buildings and land

- Focus on the need to build, refurbish or develop and maintain single fit-for-purpose modern facilities that serve the entire district.

There may be opportunities to incorporate public art within infrastructure to provide a sense of identity within community spaces.

Pensioner housing portfolios

- The cost of servicing and maintaining the units outweighs the rental income Council currently receives from tenants.
- Council staff are currently considering options to enable long-term delivery and sustainability of housing.

Community contracts and community grants

- Council is proposing a fresh approach to community contracts to better align with its new proposed vision and goals for the district to deliver a tangible return on investment.
- Council will develop criteria outlining what it will support with funding and how it should be delivered, including areas such as cultural wellbeing, youth development and community vibrancy. A robust Expression of Interest (Eoi) process will be developed inviting community service providers (groups, organisations and/or individuals) to tender for contracts where their capability clearly aligns to Council goals.
- Council has also shifted the administration of Creative Community Grants to Creative Waikato and will be discontinuing Community Development Grants.

Alignment with the new vision and goals of Council provides a strategic approach to funding, so that measurable outcomes can be achieved in all the key areas.

Leak detectors/water meters

- Installing water meters is known to detect leaks, reduce water consumption, improve water conservation and reduce costs associated with the water supply network in the long run.

With the effects of climate change and population growth in the South Waikato, you may wish to support the Council in its attempts to ensure sufficient water supply and water conservation.

Under-pinning the LTP

There are several documents that underpin the LTP. These provide a compass that guides Council through the complexities of community development, resource allocation and service provision.

30-year Infrastructure Strategy and Asset Management Plans (AMPs)

- This strategy identifies infrastructure challenges over the next 30 years and how Council will manage these challenges.
- The Strategy outlines Council's approach to managing and investing in the District's infrastructure including what will be required, when and how much it will cost across three waters (water, wastewater and stormwater) and land transport.
- This planning ensures that Council has the right infrastructure at the right time for current and future generations and that it can rise to the challenges of growth.

- Proposed business and residential zones in Tirau and Tokoroa have also been included to align with Council’s Growth Plan and Economic Development Strategy.

Whilst hard infrastructure (facilities/venues) are important, it is also important to consider soft infrastructure (people/services) in the planning and development phases, particularly with regard to activation and longevity of community spaces and places.

Growth

- After decades of population and economic decline, the South Waikato district is in a growth phase.
- Council is not only looking at how to make the district bigger and more economically sustainable, but also how to make us better through health, education, job creation and wellbeing.

Considering a creative approach to building communities enables unique solutions to common growth issues. Involving the community in important decisions provides ownership and a sense of achievement.

Economic Development

Council’s Economic Development Plan (adopted in 2023) is built on three key pillars.

1. Enabling circular economy clusters to drive industry transformation
Council will deliver this through iwi, business and community partnerships, streamlined regulation, facilitating technology trials and innovation into renewable energy.
2. Thriving South Waikato communities
Council will deliver this through vibrant and attractive town centres, promoting the development of new and affordable housing, and community, iwi, hapū and Pasifika engagement.
3. Future-proofed skills development
Council will deliver this through facilitating pathways from secondary education to tertiary education and employment, advocating for schools to deliver skill training local businesses require, fund and partner community-led initiatives that enable young people and partner with schools to improve attendance, engagement, attainment of their students, enhancing rangatahi aspirations.

Economic development is important for growing towns and districts. Arts, culture and creativity should also be considered alongside this development as it provides creative solutions to local issues.

Town Concept Plans

Town Concept Plans have been developed in conjunction with stakeholders and the community to define what is important about the district and the towns and how their character and qualities can be conserved, improved and enhanced over the coming 10-20 years.

Each town (Tokoroa, Pūtaruru and Tirau) has an individual role and identity, providing different benefits and opportunities, and offering different facilities to local communities and visitors.

The next three years will be spent completing key assessments and studies, identifying key partners, finalising designs and costs and putting together a comprehensive funding plan.

There are various opportunities for integrated planning over a range of projects and planned infrastructure. You may wish to ask the Council to consider arts, culture and creativity being a crucial part of this planning. Not only will this be beneficial for the local community, with regard to providing a unique identity for each area, but this will also be appealing for visitors to the district.

Three Waters

Proposed changes to the Three Waters Reform, specifically the establishment of four entities to manage three waters nationally, has now been abolished. However, management of three waters is still yet to be determined.

As part of this LTP, Council is proposing to fund the depreciation of its water assets going forward as well as catch up on what hasn't been funded in the past. This means that the library and community hub, outcomes from the Town Concept Plans, and other capital expenditure cannot move beyond the design stage.

Working with other Waikato councils is necessary to see if there are efficiencies and cost-savings possible, and because central Government has specifically said they will not deal with individual Councils on this issue.

You may wish to encourage Council to work with other councils, as clean, safe water to drink, clean rivers, and waters and wastewater treatment that

meets increasing health and environmental standards are important for community wellbeing.

Climate change

While there is no mandate, councils are being encouraged to fund for climate change in future budgets as part of today’s ethical responsibility for future generations.

Local government is also on the front line of climate change. Councils have statutory responsibility to avoid or mitigate natural hazards and to consider the effects of climate change when making decisions.

Council has included \$60,000 in Year 1 of the LTP for a climate change risk assessment for the district. Information from this will be used to prepare a climate adaptation plan.

Artists and creatives are well placed to look at complex problems and can be included in planning, to provide unique solutions.

Financial & Development contributions policy

Development contributions outline Council’s approach to funding development infrastructure needed to make demands on assets and services due to growing populations and businesses. It is intended to ensure that Council recovers a fair and equitable portion of capital costs of the infrastructure to support development.

There are minor changes proposed including:

Change/Addition from the 2021 Policy	Reason
Section on Māori Freehold Land	To meet the requirements under LGA Section 102 (3a), and Council’s obligations under Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi)
Updated Household Unit Equivalent (HUE) development contribution figures	Updated HUE figures based on updated project costs/estimates
Updated Financial Contribution (FCs) figures	Recalculated on 5 February 2024. Note, these may change following the adoption of the Fees & Charges on 29 May 2024.

You could provide your support for the collection of development contributions which include community infrastructure. Community spaces and the support of the people who activate them are important to the growth of the South Waikato.

Capital spend

Council intends to spend \$238 million over the coming 10 years. This includes \$130.3 million on three waters (\$66.7 million on water supply, \$50.4 on wastewater and \$13.2 on stormwater). This is just over half of the capital spend.

A further \$20.7 million is proposed to be spent on community facilities.

This includes:

- A completely overhauled pool facility in Tokoroa
- Tokoroa pool playground
- Tokoroa Library building renewal
- South Waikato Sport and Events Centre renewals
- Library collections and information resources
- Libraries shelving and equipment upgrades

\$5.7 million in the parks and reserves space

- Bridges/boardwalks, walkways and internal road renewals
- Signage, furniture, bins and fencing renewals
- Lake Moananui retaining wall renewals
- Playground renewals
- Te Waihou Walkway boardwalk and track renewals
- Putāruru Parks and Reserves Growth - additional greenspace (funding returned through developer contributions)

\$10.3 million on economic and community development

- Maraetai Road Intermodal Business Park - development of a 13-lot business park for new business and industry, creating jobs in the district
- Growth Cell 4 access - Princes St, Putāruru - enabling industrial growth through the delivery of new infrastructure.

Provision for community outcomes i.e., opportunities for spaces and places to connect and create will help facilitate overall wellbeing.

Other capital allocations include:

\$57.7 million on roading
\$2 million in the solid waste area
\$3.6 million on business support (technology and system upgrades)
\$7.5 million on property

Other capital works

Tokoroa Library

Making this facility fit-for-purpose for the life of this LTP will give Council breathing space to investigate other options for a larger district library and community hub space.

South Waikato Heated Indoor Pools, based in Tokoroa

This will be a complete rebuild. It has been split into three stages. Concept stage is complete, Council is currently working through the design stage and will then move onto construction, following a tender process.

It may be useful to encourage Council to consider utilising artists in the design phase. Artists are adept at working with the community to enable unique and interesting outcomes.

Creative Waikato are submitting to the long term plan too, and advocating for support for arts, culture and creativity in the South Waikato district. If you want to read some of what we will be sharing, you can check out these documents on our advocacy page:

<https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/standing-up-for-the-arts> - this will contain links to all our public submissions.