

## **Community Summary South Waikato District Council - Fees and Charges 2024-25 and Six Policies**

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.

### **Consultation on Fees and Charges 2024-25 and six Policies**

South Waikato District Council has delayed consultation on its Long-Term Plan, due to complexities caused by the changing legislation related to three waters.

Several of Council's Fees and Charges need adopting earlier than what it can now achieve with the full Long-Term Plan, so it is consulting on this component now. The remaining portions of the Long-Term Plan - activities, plans, budgets and key areas, will be out for consultation in the coming months.

In addition, several of Council's policies are ready for consultation, so those have also been included. A link to the consultation suite of documents can be found [here](#) and includes

- Consultation document - '*Launching the Long Term*' - Fees & Charges - 2024 and Policies, related to the Long Term Plan 2024-34
- 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)

Consultation on Fees and Charges 2024-25 and six Policies closes on:

### **Friday 3 May 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 Vision is **'Healthy people thriving in a safe, vibrant and sustainable community'**

The three outcomes of Council are:

These are:

**Growth - Te Tupunga Ohanga**

*Activities and strategies that facilitate sustainable economic growth and lift community pride.*

**Resilience - Kia Eke Panuku**

*A resilient district with good infrastructure and services, a sound financial position, rates affordability, and a healthy environment that has the ability to anticipate, resist, respond to and recover from significant change or events.*

**Relationships - Ngā Hononga**

*Strong relationships with iwi and Māori, Pacific Peoples, community and business groups that can achieve growth and a resilient community.*

**Fees and Charges**

Library - Wharepukapuka

- Library charges are increasing by a small amount to align with the shift to charging people who benefit from the service. However, Council is removing the fee for overdue books, so there will be no more fines.

**Rating & Treasury Policies**

Significance and Engagement Policy - Ngā Kaupapa Here Moni me te Tuku Tahua Pūtea

The Significance and Engagement Policy provides guidance on how and when Council should engage with its community on significant issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities.

A key change to the policy is to remove reference to consultation being required when a 'threshold of 5% of total operating expenditure' was reached. The policy has now been rewritten to allow Council flexibility to respond to the current economic environment. Council can also initiate consultation for projects that don't necessarily meet the Policy guidelines.

'Significant' means that the proposal has a high degree of impact on the community or a group within the community.

Council could be encouraged to consult with the community where there are any arts, culture and creativity implications. This could be wide-ranging and include parks and reserves, events, hard infrastructure (venues/facilities), tourism, economic development, policies and bylaws and environmental sustainability.

Community input allows for a more holistic integration of arts, culture and creativity.

#### Rates Remission and Postponement on Māori Freehold Land Policy

The Rates Remission and Postponement on Māori Freehold Land Policy recognises that land is a taonga tuku iho of special significance and the importance of retaining that land and facilitating its occupation, development and use for the benefit of its Māori owners, their whanau and hapu. The Council believes it has a role to encourage owners of Māori land to retain that land and to develop it in ways that benefits its owners, their whanau, and their hapū.

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.

The Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy has been amended to cater to an emerging situation for very small blocks of land.

The change is to enable users of Māori Freehold Land, usually neighbouring farmers, to apply for a partial rates remission where a small block of land is used as part of a farm and has a rating valuation more than the value that would be attributed if the land was part of the farm property itself.

It is also important to note that the following conditions or criteria also apply:

- All applications for rates relief must be supported by details of the land, evidence of ownership and the reason for the remission.
- Applications for remission under this policy must be made in writing and if granted will apply for a maximum of three years. Applications cannot be backdated beyond the current rating year.

### Treasury Management Policy

The objective of this policy is to control and manage costs, investment returns and risks associated with treasury management objectives.

A treasury management policy provides the framework under which council operates all borrowing and investment activities.<sup>5</sup> It outlines governance and management responsibilities, liability management, investment policy and risk recognition/identification management.

With regard to investments, Council's approach is, as a responsible public authority any investments that it holds should be prudently managed. However, you may wish to encourage Council to prioritise investments that support healthy and vibrant communities.

Minor changes have been made to this policy and there are no substantive changes.

### Rates Postponement Policy

This policy identifies when a ratepayer may apply to have the payment of rates delayed due to personal circumstances. The primary principle of this policy is 'to assist ratepayers experiencing extreme financial circumstances that affect their ability to pay rates'.

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<sup>5</sup> Auckland Council Treasury Management Policy 2023  
<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-policies/Documents/treasury-management-policy.pdf> p, 1

The purpose of this policy is to postpone the payment of rates (as distinct from remitting the payment of rates) to give the ratepayer time to make alternative arrangements.

Postponement of rates for 'Extreme Financial Hardship' is restricted to residential properties, rural properties and vacant urban properties (as defined by Council) will be eligible (subject to criteria) for consideration of rates postponement for extreme financial circumstances.

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.

This policy has been reviewed by Council and there are no substantive changes.

#### Rates Remission Policy

Although this policy has no substantive changes, there may be clauses of interest to you below.

This policy provides specific financial assistance and relief to community, sporting and other organisations to assist in maintaining and enhancing community wellbeing.

Rating Units used primarily for the promotion of art, education, health, recreation and sport, and not used for pecuniary gain, may receive up to a 100% remission of general rates levied on rateable value and on a uniform basis, 100% of the Putāruru Business Fixed Charge and 50% of sewerage disposal.

This remission does not apply to rating units where the land is used by organisations affiliated to New Zealand Chartered Clubs Incorporated or used for dog or horse racing.

Rating Units used by churches, marae and play centres, which have a non-rateable status under the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, may have one half of the service charge for refuse collection, sewerage disposal and water supply remitted.

#### *Conditions and criteria*

This policy does not apply to groups or organisations whose primary purpose is to address the social or entertainment needs of adults or who engage in community, recreational or sporting secondary purpose, or properties operated for pecuniary profit, or separately used or inhabited parts of the rating unit.

Applications for remission under this policy must be made in writing and if granted will apply for a maximum of three years. Applications cannot be backdated beyond the current rating year.

Any organisation (other than those with non-rateable status applying for remission of service charges) should include the following documents in support of their application:

- Statement of Objectives
- Most recent Financial Accounts
- Information on Activities and Programmes
- Details of Membership or 'Clients'

Remission of rates on land protected for natural, historical or cultural conservation purposes (including significant natural areas and indigenous vegetation)

Rating units that have some features of cultural, historic or natural heritage which is voluntarily protected, may qualify for a remission of up to 100% of general rates of the land being protected. In addition if the whole rating unit is being protected all service and Uniform Annual General charges can be remitted as well.

The remission will be calculated after an apportionment of rating value to the 'area of interest' (that area of interest being the feature of cultural, historic or natural heritage which is voluntarily protected).

Rates remissions mean the requirement to pay the rate for a particular financial year is forgiven in whole or in part.<sup>6</sup> These are positive allowances, which Council has made provision for. You may wish to comment on these.

## **Revenue and Financing Policy - Ngā Kaupapa Here Moni me te Tuku Tahua Pūtea**

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<sup>6</sup> Tauranga City Council 'Rates Remission Policy 2022'  
<https://www.tauranga.govt.nz/Portals/0/data/council/policies/files/rates-remission-policy.pdf>  
p, 2

This policy explains the choices Council has made in deciding the appropriate sources of funding for operating and expenditure from sources listed in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA).

Council sets out funding sources for operating costs and considers each activity and how they best be funded.

The funding sources for operating costs include:

- User charges
- Grants, Sponsorship Subsidies and Other Income
- Investment Income
- Development contributions, financial contributions, proceeds from sale of assets and lump sum contributions
- Reserve funds
- Borrowing
- Rates

Council will apply funding source preferences to each activity in its Funding Needs Analysis. The table below indicates the primary and secondary funding sources of the revenue required for each activity and are indicative only. They may change over time as a result of changes in expenditure requirements. It is possible that actual funding may differ from budgeted funding sources.

X = Primary Funding Source  
 X = Secondary Funding Source

**Summary of Funding Sources by Activity**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>General Rates</b>	<b>Targeted Rates</b>	<b>Fee &amp; User Charges</b>	<b>Subsidies &amp; Grants</b>
Resource Management	x		X	
Building Control	x		X	
Animal Welfare	x		X	
Health and Alcohol	x		X	
Transport and Roothing	X			X

Water Supply		X		
Wastewater		X		
Stormwater		X		
Solid Waste and Recycling	x	X	x	x
Pools	X		x	
Libraries	X		x	
<b>Parks &amp; Reserves</b>	X			x
Economic Development	X			
<b>Community Development</b>	X			
South Waikato Events Centre	x		X	
Democracy	X			
Iwi Liaison	X			
Business Support	X	x	x	
Property	X		x	
Emergency Management	X			x
Project Management Office	X			
Strategic Planning	X			
Infrastructure Strategy	X			

You may wish to comment on the above funding allocations i.e., perhaps 'community development' and/or 'iwi liaison' could be funded through 'subsidies and grants' allocation.

### **General Rates**

The general rate is allocated to all rateable properties based on the capital value of the property. A Uniform Annual General Charge (UACG) will be set on each separately used or inhabited part (SUIP) of all rating units.

The Council has determined in its Funding Needs Analysis that all or part of the following activities should be funded from the general rate and the UAGC.

Resource Management	<b>Parks and Reserves</b>	Emergency Management
Building Control	Economic Development	Project Management Office
Animal Welfare	<b>Community Development</b>	Strategic Planning
Health and Alcohol	South Waikato Events Centre	Infrastructure Strategy
Transport and Roothing	Democracy	Libraries
Solid Waste and Recycling	<b>Iwi Liaison</b>	Property
Pools	Business Support	

South Waikato District Council has indicated that they have a ‘key leadership role’ in the area of Community Development. Council also considers libraries and parks and reserves key infrastructure of Council. You may want to let them know that you agree with this stance, and support them in investing in these spaces.

### **Other key changes for your information**

#### **Operations funded by rates alone**

Operations will no longer, as far as possible, be funded by debt.

#### **Debt funding**

Council has committed that debt funding is only used for new assets or intergenerational assets not operational maintenance.

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.