

Community Summary Taupō 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.

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

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://bmcpublihealth.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.

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.

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

Friday 5 July 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.taupodc.govt.nz/council/consultation/draft-long-term-plan-2024-34>

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 Taupō District Council's Draft Vision is ***'A District of connected communities who thrive and embrace opportunities.'***

The community outcomes of Council are:

- Tangata whenua are acknowledged and respected.
- Vibrant places and connected communities
- Resilient communities working in partnership.
- Innovative, thriving economy.
- Flourishing environment

What council is planning to do in the next 10 years:

Investing in infrastructure

- Council intends to keep up with future population growth and make good decisions to look after people and the environment - **\$174.9 million**

Sport and recreation facilities

- Providing flexible places that cater for communities' changing needs - **\$116.1 million**

Building resilience

- Being prepared for the effects of climate change, such as floods and weather events - **\$15 million**

Places to live

- Quality, nice-looking homes for working people to buy - **\$27.6 million**

Strengthening our relationship

- With hapū and iwi - **\$5.12 million**

You may wish to comment on supporting opportunities where arts, culture and creativity can contribute to some of these focus areas, i.e., integrating creativity within planned infrastructure.

At current levels of service, council is proposing around an 8 percent rate increase to cover the rising costs of interest, depreciation, electricity and insurance.

This is what council has already proposed to save money:

- Cutting the operational funding for Destination Great Lake Taupō and Amplify by 20 percent
- Pausing or cancelling some projects, such as delaying a fourth court at Taupō Events Centre
- Budget reductions and other cost efficiencies across the board, such as, rationalisation of council vehicles, cellular network charges and postage costs.

Council has focussed on delivering essential services and infrastructure; and maintaining current service levels. If the community chose to, council is suggesting that it could reduce its services and facilities to keep rates increases smaller. Council has used as an example, cutting down opening hours of libraries and doing less mowing of parks and reserves.

Alternatively, if the community wants council to deliver improvement projects, or bring forward plans for improvements, there would be an increase in rates and debt over and above what is proposed.

You may wish to comment on the importance of public amenities such as libraries and that these spaces are 'essential' for social connectedness and respite in what are uncertain economic times.

Wastewater

Tūrangi

Taupō District Council provides wastewater services for 12 towns and communities in the district. All of these plants, except Tūrangi, discharge treated wastewater to land. Tūrangi's wastewater is currently discharged into a wetland. The wetland discharges into a stream, which then discharges into Lake Taupō. The community has raised concerns over current disposal and its impacts on the waters of Lake Taupō.

Council and a community steering group are working together to find a suitable site to discharge Tūrangi wastewater to the land in the long term. Council is committed to working closely together to find a suitable site to discharge Tūrangi wastewater to land in the long term.

Council is committed to working closely with iwi and hapū through the steering group to develop and design future options for Tūrangi wastewater and understand their impacts.

Council is proposing to put in provision for a short (one to three years) to medium-term solution (over the next 10 years) while it continues to work through the long-term options.

You may wish to encourage Council to keep working with the community and iwi to find more long-term sustainable solutions.

Taupō

Population growth on the northern side of the Waikato River means the pipe that takes wastewater across the river to the Taupō Wastewater Treatment Plant is almost at capacity.

As in the case of Tūrangi, Council is working with a community steering group of local iwi and hapū to explore long-term solutions. In the

short-term, additional resilience measures (storage tanks) are planned to provide increased options to manage high flow events and reduce the risk of overflows.

Housing crisis

Taupō District has a severe housing shortage, which is a barrier for skilled people living and working in the district.

Council is proposing to sell land that they own to a development partner who would build and sell some decent, high-quality homes that aren't million-dollar houses and holiday homes.

The development partners would build the homes and manage the sales and marketing of completed homes. Council becomes the enabler of this development but is not the developer nor is it carrying all the typical development risk.

You may wish to encourage Council on their endeavours to make available housing for working families and first home buyers, as this would attract residents who could then make a contribution to clubs, schools and their communities.

Waikato River Crossing

Due to the amount of growth on the northern side of Taupō and in Kinloch, council is preparing for the transport impacts of this growth to ensure existing issues are not made worse and it meets its legal requirements.

Planning for a new bridge across the Waikato River was included in the previous Long-Term Plan 2021-31 as part of the Transport Asset Management Plan for 2031 to 2033. Community feedback has indicated that this project is important to help ease traffic congestion and save commuting time.

Over the next three years Council plans to work with Mercury and iwi and hapū to begin planning for another bridge. Detailed design and consent would start in 2027/28 and construction in 2029/30 at an estimated cost of \$73.5 million.

There are opportunities for artists to be involved in the design stage of this development, which would result in a more interesting and unique bridge. Incorporating art into the early design stages enables a more integrated

outcome and artwork which is visually pleasing to both residents and visitors.

Tūrangi Town Centre

In Council's Long-Term Plan 2021-31 council had allocated \$15.9 million for a new Tūrangi recreation facility. A feasibility study indicated escalating costs including day-to-day running costs of the facility would need to be funded by rates.

Council is now considering the state of the wider Tūrangi town centre, following feedback from the community that they are unhappy with its current state.

Council has offered to work with land and business owners to come up with a structure plan to get the town functioning better. Council has also included an indicative budget of approximately \$17.5 million in years 4 and 5 of the long term plan. There is an assumption that the facility will be a community hub and be community led. Who should operate the facility and how is something council will consult the community on before it begins designing it.

You may wish to encourage council to continue to consult with the Tūrangi community on its new facility, community-led means that it will be deeply embedded in the fabric of the town and will lead to more holistic outcomes.

Other key documents Council is consulting on include:

TDC LTP Infrastructure Strategy 2024-34
TDC LTP Financial Strategy 2024-34
Final Draft Revenue and Finance Policy 2024-34
Final Draft Fees and Charges Schedule
Final Draft Development Contributions Policy 2024
Final Draft Rates Remission and Postponement Policy 2024
Towncentre Taupō Targeted Rate
Community Funding changes

Infrastructure Strategy and Financial Strategy 2024-34

As part of this Long-Term Plan, Council has reviewed its Infrastructure Strategy which sets out how it intends to manage and maintain this

significant infrastructure over the next 30 years. The draft infrastructure strategy seeks to ensure:

- Assets are well looked after and in good condition for future generations.
- Council is planning and investing to support growth and housing development
- Council is maintaining levels of service and improving public health and environmental outcomes, including working with iwi and hapū to protect and restore the health and mauri of the waterways.
- Managing natural hazard risks to ensure infrastructure is resilient.

This strategy also proposes an increased budget for renewals of infrastructure such as roads and water pipes, significant investment for growth; and working in partnership with iwi to improve environmental outcomes. It also sets out the major infrastructure challenges that council expects to face over the next 30 years, the options for addressing these, and when important decisions will need to be made. These are:

- Identifying a solution for transport from the northern side of the Waikato River through Taupō town.
- Managing wastewater north of the Waikato River
- Improving wastewater disposal in Tūrangi

It is interesting to note that the scope of the Infrastructure Strategy is limited to three waters and transport infrastructure. Council's long-term asset management plans include parks and reserves and community buildings and facilities. However, there is currently no plan or policy that includes provision for 'soft' infrastructure: the people and services that activate and utilise 'hard' infrastructure (i.e., buildings).

You may wish to encourage council to consider soft infrastructure in addition to hard infrastructure considerations.

Financial Strategy

Council's draft Financial Strategy outlines the financial vision and priorities for the next 10 years. It aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the needs of its communities, responsible management of assets, and financial sustainability over the long term.

To achieve this, Council is proposing the following:

- Maintaining current levels of services
- Prioritising essential infrastructure, such as water services

- Prioritising topping up negative reserve balances with rates funding in later years. This will ensure no further pressure is put on future generations and that Council is setting aside funding for the eventual replacement of those assets.
- Continue to use development contributions and development agreements to fund the portion of new assets required as a consequence of growth.

You may wish to comment that it is prudent Council is trying to strike a balance between essential infrastructure and planning for future generations. Provision and maintenance of community facilities could be a priority, perhaps through development contributions, as places for social connectedness, mental wellbeing and connection.

Revenue and Financing Policy

The Revenue and Financing Policy sets out the Council's funding approach and describes how each of the Council's activities will be funded, including the rationale for the use of each funding method. The key changes relate to:

- Council has looked at how the allocation of costs is balanced between the person benefiting from the service and the ratepayer. See Fees & Charges below
- An alignment of electricity generators and utility assets and networks with other industrial/commercial ratepayers.

Council is proposing to align electricity generation and utility assets and networks with other commercial/industrial activities. Changing the differential will mean that electricity generators will contribute a higher proportion of rates, which will reduce the impact on other ratepayers, particularly those in urban areas.

Given that employment in the arts and creative sectors is mostly cyclical and/or inconsistent, reducing the burden for those in these sectors would be helpful. As the energy sector benefits from being in the Taupō district, it is prudent that they contribute back into the community.

Fees and Charges

Some of the key proposed changes include increases to fees for:

- Building and resource consent
- Alcohol and health licensing
- Taupō and Tūrangi pools, and other council facilities

- Cemeteries
- Landfill, transfer station fees, and kerbside rubbish stickers/bags

Council is proposing to increase rents at its housing for the elderly units, due to work required to ageing housing stock to keep it warm, safe and suitable for the needs of the tenants.

You may request that Council keeps fees minimal, particularly for community facilities such as pools and cemeteries, given that these are well utilised by the community and are utilised for enjoyment and wellbeing. It is noted that fees have not been increased for libraries and the Taupō Museum, but they have been increased for use of the exhibition spaces (page 45 of the policy).

Fees for use of the 'Ora Garden' have been significantly reduced from \$310 to \$30 (p/hr) due to it being rarely used.

Development Contributions Policy

Council is reviewing its Development Contributions policy as required under s106(6) of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA). Some key changes are below:

- New catchment area maps specific to Tūrangi and Mangakino for water and wastewater infrastructure. This proposed change would require developments in these two areas to pay development contributions for new or upgraded wastewater infrastructure needed to service these developments.
- New provisions providing the option for developments on Māori land to request different payment conditions. This is expected to facilitate the occupation, development and utilisation of Māori land. This change would better align the policy with the requirements under the Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993.
- Updated development contribution charges. The proposed new charges impact different catchment areas differently. Developments in some catchment areas will pay a lower contribution while developments in other areas will pay a higher contribution.

Development contributions ensure that any new development that places additional demand on local infrastructure contributes to the additional capital cost that it imposes on the community. This is done to avoid the burden being placed on general rates or other indirect funding sources.

You may wish to comment on allocating development contributions toward community spaces and infrastructure, which foster social connectedness.

It is encouraging to see that council recognises that land is a taonga tuku iho of special significance to Māori people. You may wish to comment on Council actively promoting the retention of that land in the hands of its owners, their whānau, and their hapū, and to protect wāhi tapu.

Rating Remission and Postponement Policies

These policies outline the circumstances in which the Council may remit or postpone rates. Remission of rates involves reducing the amount owing or waiving the collection of rates altogether, while postponement of rates means payment can be delayed for a certain period of time, but not waived.

It is acknowledged that this policy provides rates remission that will assist community, non-commercial, not-for-profit-organisations to provide free care, relief or assistance to any person in the community that is in need. Another key change is simplifying the rates remission available on Māori freehold land that is being developed.

You may wish to comment on Council seeking to provide relief for community, churches, Marae and other organisations.

Towncentre Taupō Targeted Rate

Towncentre Taupō is a member-based organisation which promotes Taupō's central business district as a safe and vibrant space. Its work is supported by Council via a targeted rate which is paid by more than 500 Towncentre Taupō members as part of their annual rates.

The Towncentre Taupō rate pays for services that enhance and develop the social and economic wellbeing of the Taupō central business district. It is assessed on each separately-used or inhabited part of industrial and commercial rating units within the defined central business district part of Taupō town.

Towncentre Taupō's costs have increased while the sponsorship it would normally secure for some of its events has also diminished.

At the Towncentre Taupō AGM in September 2023, a \$12,950 increase to its 2023/24 budget was approved by the members - from \$185,000 to \$197,950 - representing a 7 percent increase to the targeted Towncentre Taupō rate for the 2024/25 year.

Given that costs have increased, if you think having a central business district which is safe and vibrant is important for the community you may wish to comment on the importance of vibrancy for the community.

Community funding changes

The key changes in the proposed policy include:

- A contestable, multi-year fund accessed by community groups or organisations who deliver a service that supports Council to achieve core strategic outcomes. These organisations operate district-wide and have a primary focus under each of the community wellbeings (social, environmental, cultural, and economic).
- A contestable, multi-year fund that can be accessed by eligible organisations to support community aspirations and contribute to community wellbeing. Agreements under this fund are for three years and the organisation cannot reapply under this fund.
- A one – off community grant fund to support community events, projects or initiatives that strengthen the community sector and meet local needs. These funds would focus on location-based communities. Creative, sport and social service agencies who have previously applied to sector-based funds would apply to one of these location-based funds under the proposed structure.
- Community Grant funds (one off funds) are open once per year. Previously, some one-off funds have opened multiple times per year.
- A limit on the amount of funding granted to applicants under each fund.
- Amendments to the accountability and reporting requirements – to be outlined in agreements with Council.
- A link to the proposed eligibility and assessment framework which outlines our priorities, how we will consider requests and how funds will be allocated.
- Council officers assess requests and make recommendations on funding allocation to decision makers. Decision makers decide on the amount of funding to be allocated.

You may wish to comment on the importance of funding for community and arts groups, in that they provide vitality and vibrancy to Taupō making it a key destination for visitors, but also supports wellbeing for residents.

Creative Waikato are submitting to the long term plan too, and advocating for support for arts, culture and creativity in the Taupō 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.