



MAYORAL COLUMN

ANNUAL PLAN 2023/2024

Council will soon seek feedback from its community on the 2023/24 Annual Plan.

This will be your opportunity to tell us what matters to you and how you would like our district to look over the next year.

In our 2021-31 Long-Term Plan, we indicated that to achieve the community outcomes the average rates increase for 2023/2024 would be 7.8 per cent. Since then, we have seen interest rate increases, staff recruitment and retention pressures, and significant project, and contract cost escalations. We now face ongoing costs to rebuild and recover from Cyclone Gabrielle.

Council will hold an Extraordinary Meeting next week to adopt our Annual Plan draft engagement document, where we will signal the proposed rate increases.

Every year Council develops an Annual Plan which sets out the budget and rates required for the upcoming year and describes the activities and community outcomes it hopes to achieve for the district. The 2023/2024 Annual Plan will also focus

on the key priorities to assist the district with recovering from the devastating effects of Cyclone Gabrielle and previous weather-related events. This recovery is expected to take several years, with this Annual Plan focusing on the short to medium-term and will lead into planning for the future via Council's next Long-Term Plan.

We want our community to have an opportunity to have input into our upcoming plan while understanding what it costs to run the district and having a structured focus on recovery.

As a district, we cannot undertake and fund recovery on our own. This plan will signal to external agencies and the NZ Government that we can fund some recovery activities but still require major external financial support.

We want to understand our people's views and will be listening through community-based meetings, online engagement, and a social media programme. We welcome your involvement in this process as we face the challenges of rebuilding our community together.

MEETING SCHEDULE (VENUES STILL TO BE CONFIRMED)

MONDAY 12TH JUNE

- 6PM Zoom Meeting

TUESDAY 13TH JUNE (SOUTHERN WAIROA)

- 9AM-11AM Putorino
- 11.30AM-1.30 Raupunga
- 2PM-3.30PM Mohaka
- 4PM-6PM Kotemaori

WEDNESDAY 14TH JUNE (FRASERTOWN)

- 8.30AM-12PM Frasertown/Marumaruru
- 12.30PM-2PM Ardkeen
- 2.30PM-6.30PM Tuai

THURSDAY 15TH JUNE (MAHIA)

- 9AM-11AM Opoutama
- 11.30AM-1.30PM Mahanga
- 2PM-4PM Te Mahia
- 4.30PM-6PM Mahia
- 6PM Mahia community meeting

FRIDAY 16TH JUNE (EASTERN WAIROA)

- 9.30AM-11.30AM Iwitea
- 12PM-2PM Whakaki
- 2.30PM-4.30PM Nuhaka

MONDAY 19TH JUNE (RUAKITURI)

- 8.30AM-12.30PM Frasertown
- 1.30PM-3.30PM Ohuka
- 4.30PM-7PM Ruakituri

WEDNESDAY 21ST JUNE (WAIROA TOWN)

- 9AM-11AM Awamate/Turiroa
- 11.30AM-2.30PM Town Outside Oslers Bakery
- 2.30PM-4.30PM North Clyde
- 6PM Meeting

THURSDAY 22ND JUNE (WAIROA TOWN)

- 8.30AM-12.30PM Town Eastend cafe
- 1PM-4.30PM North Clyde

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Life is very challenging at the moment. Most of us are impacted by rising costs and now the effects of Cyclone Gabrielle.

We know our people are struggling because we are part of these communities – We get it because we're affected too.

The position we are in, and what is ahead of us, is daunting. I don't think we have been in a situation like this before, and there are big decisions to be made by elected members and the community.

In our 2021-31 Long-Term Plan, we indicated the average rate increase for 2023/2024 would be 7.8 per cent. We did allow for rising costs but did not foresee just how high these increases would be, and we certainly couldn't predict we would be hit with extreme weather events in 2022 and now Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023. Before we even started this financial year's budget and Annual Plan, we were on the back foot to the tune of \$ 1.4 million in our share of the roading costs from the 2022 weather events and spiralling landfill costs.

Moving forward is going to be really difficult and somehow, we need to do this together and in partnership to rebuild and make Wairoa the best it can be.

I am really worried about where we are at. I want to hear ideas from the community, but we are already under so much pressure that now is not the time for us to be divided. Moving forward, we need to do this together with a united and supportive approach.

We simply cannot function unless we can effectively recover from these weather events. To move forward successfully, we need to fund the Recovery Office functions with \$500,000. We also need to invest in attracting additional external funding and support packages to enhance, grow, develop and rebuild the district. We don't want to go backwards or stand still; we want to move forward, create opportunities, and improve lifestyles for our people.

We need to address the significant cost increase at the Wairoa landfill. Central Government is driving waste minimisation - half the cost of providing the Wairoa landfill service goes to the Government in levies, and these are increasing. The waste disposal levy for landfills that take domestic waste started at \$10 a tonne in 2009 and is rising to \$60 per tonne as of July 2024. We need to focus on educating and assisting our community with waste minimisation, such as more recycling. Achieving this is better for the environment and will also reduce costs.

To retain our capable and qualified staff, we recognise they need to be remunerated at the market rate. We must retain our good people by ensuring they are not poached by other organisations, particularly government agencies. Now is not the time to lose our valuable staff to other organisations. Council is committed to retaining its staff to ensure organisational resilience and capability and attracting the right people with the right skills at the right time. This was demonstrated in the Cyclone Gabrielle emergency when our locally based skilled Council staff stepped up for the community.

We know there have been massive increases in the cost of living and weather-related expenses. We have tried to cut back and will continue to review our expenses wherever possible. However, we are now in a position where our forecasted increase of 7.8% is not going to be high enough and we will be sharing soon with the community what the average rate rise will be for 2023/24.

No one wants this, but we have to face the facts. Wairoa is not alone, Councils across the country are signalling significant increases.

Again, I acknowledge that making ends meet and finding additional money to pay a rate increase at this time is not something people will be happy about. As a ratepayer, none of us wants increases, but the reality is that costs are spiralling, and we have a lot of work to do and pay for.

We look forward to meeting with you, answering questions and hearing your ideas.

