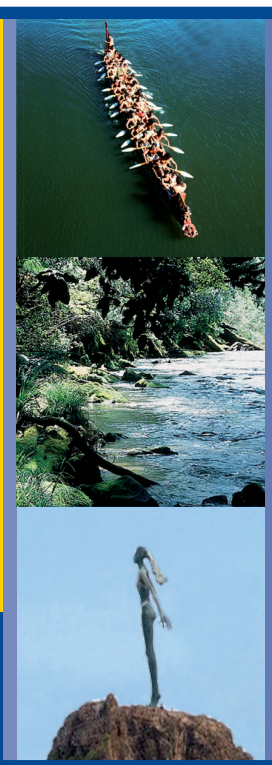




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Whakatane District Council

BYWAYS



Council adopts 2009-2019 LTCCP

Whakatane District Council has adopted its Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) after an extensive public consultation process. Over 1160 submissions were received.

The LTCCP outlines the Council's strategic direction, priorities and planned programme of works for the next 10 years (2009-19) and provides a long-term focus for decision-making.

Below is a summary of the key decisions made:

Murupara Service Centre

In the draft LTCCP the Council considered options for the Murupara Service Centre aimed at reducing costs. It proposed to close and sell the centre and relocate the adjoining library at an estimated saving of \$100,000 a year.

The proposal drew strong opposition from the Murupara, Minginui and Ruatahuna communities with hundreds of people making submissions in favour of keeping the centre open.

Aware of the impact closure would have on the small communities, the Council has opted to keep the Murupara Service Centre open and will work to make it more cost effective to operate. This will mean looking at ways of improving its financial viability and finding other services that can operate from the centre.

In the meantime, it is business as usual and Murupara residents are encouraged to make good use of their local point of contact with the Council.



Arts and Culture Centre

The Council has included \$3.25 million in this year's budget, to provide better library, museum and exhibition facilities.

A final decision has not yet been made on where the facilities will be located.

The Council is further investigating the options of retrofitting two buildings favoured by many submitters to the LTCCP – the Niederer Plaza (former Farmers building) on The Strand and the former Briscoe's building in the Esplanade Mall.

It will look closely at both buildings to see whether they will meet the long-term needs of a modern Library and Museum & Gallery which have been operating in less-than-ideal conditions for some years now in terms of space, environmental controls and the appropriateness of the facilities.

The integrated cultural, environmental and tourism centre proposed for the rear of The Strand will be considered again in three years time when the Council develops its 2012-2022 LTCCP.

Sale of Assets

Sale of Pensioner Housing

The Council agreed in principle to sell its pensioner units subject to conditions that will ensure their ongoing use as low-cost housing and protect tenants' rights and welfare.

Whoever the successful purchaser is – and no decision has yet been made on who this will be – must be a recognised aged care provider.

The proceeds from the sale will be used to retire debt.

Pensioner housing was an emotional subject that stirred much discussion in the community, including a protest march, a petition and hundreds of submissions to the draft LTCCP.

The decision to sell the units came as a result of the Council reviewing levels of service and recognising the need to focus on its core business.

It is expected that any sale of the pensioner housing units will prove beneficial to tenants.



Sale of properties and reserves

The Council will consider and evaluate properties identified in the LTCCP, to determine whether they are required by the community or for any operational use or if they are to be sold.

It will decide whether some reserves will be sold or put to an alternative use if they are not meeting community needs. Any proposal to divest reserve assets will be completed in accordance with legal requirements. The project will ensure appropriate reserves are retained to meet the community's current and future needs and that any consultation on possible divestment will be included in the 2010/11 Annual Plan.

The LTCCP identifies a number of properties and reserves throughout the district that will be assessed. These include the Whakatane Astronomical Society's Observatory in Hurinui Avenue and the Otawairere tennis court.

It is noted that the Astronomical Society has a long term lease of the land at Hurinui Avenue until 2024. The Council will not consider divestment of that reserve unless the Astronomical Society was planning to relocate. The Council also noted significant public support for the Otawairere tennis courts and reserve for its amenity, recreational and aesthetic value. The Council is keen to increase the use of the tennis court facility given the demand for additional tennis courts by the Ohope Tennis Club.

Rural Community Halls

The Council has confirmed its intention to find different ways for the ownership and/or operation of rural halls. This will be done on a case by case basis in conjunction with stakeholders. The Council considers the ownership costs associated with rural halls are more than the economic, social and cultural benefit provided to the community. The low usage of rural halls has resulted in the Council reviewing the viability of these facilities. The Council will also liaise with the RSA, the community and interested parties in regard to the War Memorial status of some halls.

More viable options could include rural hall committees or the halls' main users taking over the maintenance and operation of the facilities, offering hall users the opportunity to buy or lease the hall or selling the halls outright. The Council is not considering the sale of urban halls.



Harbour Endowment Fund Review

In the draft LTCCP the Council signaled its intention to review the appropriateness of the legislative framework controlling the Harbour Endowment Fund. The Harbour Fund has been in existence since 1976 when harbour assets were vested in the Council.

Following the consultation process the Council has decided not to undertake a review of the fund.

The Council accepts that the money from the harbour endowment fund needs to be used to build a workable harbour entrance. In recognition of the long standing issues over harbour access, an investigation is being commissioned to establish a long-term sustainable solution. This process includes a detailed modeling project that will provide the design criteria for a number of options that the Council will consider when completed in 2010/11. It is expected that any proposed physical works will be consulted on as part of the 2010/11 Annual Plan.

Use of the Harbour Endowment Fund for District-Wide Disaster Mitigation and Toi-EDA Funding

The Harbour Endowment Fund will not be used to fund Disaster Mitigation costs or to fund the regional economic development agency, Toi-EDA. Funding for Toi-EDA which was proposed in the draft LTCCP to come from the Harbour Fund (\$100,000) will now come from the commercial properties across the district.

The Council also resolves to provide an additional \$50,000 to Toi-EDA to be funded from commercial properties across the District.

The Council also received a number of submissions about the application of the Disaster Mitigation Funding Policy to Matata. As a result the Council plans to review this policy for inclusion in the 2010/11 Annual Plan.

Town Vision

The Town Vision Plan, adopted in May 2008, provides a strategic long term vision of how the Whakatane town centre could look in the future.

The Council will establish a Town Vision Advisory Board to implement the Town Vision Strategy. Funding for the Board will come from the harbour endowment fund. As a result of submissions, the governance costs associated with this project have been reduced. The Board's progress will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis to coincide with the LTCCP process. Funding has been included until 2015/16.

While the current economic climate might limit development opportunities, the Council believes there is still a need to progress implementation of the Town Vision.

Without such funding there would be little progress to facilitate development initiatives in the Central Business District.

The quieter economic period will allow the board to be established and get up and running so that when the economy picks up, it will be well-placed to respond to the approaches of developers and investors.

Community Development

The Council has cut funding in the area of community development.

While the cost of services has been reduced, there will be no cut in the initiatives currently being delivered.

The Council wants to gain a higher level of central government funding to support this activity, which has given the community such worthwhile initiatives as the Tag-Off graffiti clean-up programme.

The Council intends to retain the Iwi Liaison committee and has put in place appropriate resources to fully support the work of this Committee and the wider Council organisation.

Solid Waste

The Council is looking at establishing a composting plant at Awakeri this financial year to handle organic waste. This will divert some of the approximately 14,500 tonnes of residential and commercial rubbish landfilled each year and will help reduce the major cost increases facing the District as a result of the Burma Road landfill closing at the end of the year.

Once the Burma Road site is closed, all of the district's non-recyclable waste will need to be transported to Tirohia near Paeroa.

It is estimated that 43 % of the content of kerbside bins is organic material, either greenwaste or kitchen waste. About half of this could be recovered through a weekly organics collection.

With an 8000-tonne per annum capacity, a composting plant could accommodate greenwaste and food waste from the Whakatane District and other horticultural and wood waste.

The Council will develop a transfer station in Whakatane in 2009/10.

It is also continuing to explore the establishment of a local or regional landfill. This will require thorough research and consideration. A new landfill is signaled in the LTCCP in 2013/14 at a cost of \$7.8m (excluding resource consent costs).



Rating Changes

Separately Used or Inhabited Parts of a Rating Unit (SUIPs)

The draft LTCCP included a proposal that the Council alter its definition of a rateable unit so it could set rates on separately used or inhabited parts of a rating unit (SUIPs).

Following consultation the Council has agreed to not implement SUIPs for 2009/10.

In making the decision the Council recognised the potential of uncertainty surrounding the proposed changes including the lack of definition or criteria.

The Council believes the issues by submitters may be able to be resolved through better definition of what a SUIP is and the criteria for applying it to a property.

These issues will be worked through in the next 12 months and a decision will be made on whether to include a modified form of SUIPs in the 2010/11 Annual Plan.

Remoteness Differential

The Council has introduced a remoteness differential for the Te Urewera Subdivision of the Murupara ward.

The uniform annual charge is half the Murupara rural swimming pool, Murupara library rural rate and District wide parks rate

Uniform Annual General Charge (UAGC)

The UAGC has been reduced from \$325 in the draft LTCCP to \$200 for 2009/10.

UAC for Refuse Management

The Council has agreed to a new uniform annual charge of \$21 across all properties in the district.

This charge is to cover the on-going costs associated with the management of landfills and the disposal of residual waste.

Costs covered by the uniform annual charge include capping the landfills to cover over the waste, revegetation, ongoing monitoring for hazardous substances and leachate, and waste education in schools.

The landfills are being closed as they run out of space, resource consents expire or they no longer meet environmental standards.

However, the Council has an on-going responsibility to take care of the landfills and there are long-term costs associated with this.

Hazard Mitigation

The Council has reduced the Matata catchment rate for disaster mitigation from \$354 to \$274.

This reflects the reduced costs due to the Awatariki debris detention structure not being constructed in the next 12 months.

Submitters have asked for the introduction of a \$250 cap on this rate. In response, the Council will review its Hazard Mitigation Funding Policy for inclusion in the draft Annual Plan 2010/11.

Matata and Te Teko Wastewater

The installation of wastewater schemes in Matata and Te Teko will go ahead subject to the Council receiving subsidy from the Ministry of Health.

There is some concern about the affordability of the schemes for the communities and further community consultation is planned.

Matata and Edgcombe Water Meters

The Council has confirmed plans to install water meters in the Edgcombe Matata water schemes in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 year. There will be applications made to the Ministry of Health for subsidies for both these projects. The project will proceed if the Council secures the proposed funding support from the government.



Ruatahuna Transfer Station

The Council will be working with the Ruatahuna community to find a suitable site for a transfer station. It has included \$300,000 in the LTCCP to construct a transfer station in the 2010/11 year.

Minginui Transfer Station

Similarly it has included \$100,000 in the 2010/11 financial year for the development of a transfer station in Minginui at the ex-Forest Service compound. This was requested by the Ngāti Whare Trust.

Development Contributions Policy

A review of the Development Contributions Policy has led to the Council adopting an approach that better links population growth and its location, to the need for new or upgraded services. In dollar terms, this means a reduction in the development contributions levy in most parts of the district.

The purpose of the development contributions policy is to ensure those who build on, use or subdivide land or connect to a service make a fair contribution to the costs of upgrading or building new infrastructure. This includes improved or new parks and reserves, upgraded roads, stormwater, water, wastewater and solid waste facilities, and other enhanced community infrastructure like a better library, and more public toilets.

The Council has also accepted submissions that the development of smaller sized houses should not incur the same level of development contributions as larger households. It has changed its policy to acknowledge that small houses are likely to have less impact on services. The Council has introduced a sliding scale for houses of 75m² in gross floor area or less. These houses will pay a percentage of the full development contribution based on how much less that 75m² in area they are. This means a house of 60m² in area would pay 80 per cent of the full development contribution.



District Plan Review

Over the next three years the Council will be reviewing and updating the Whakatane District Plan, parts of which are now more than 10 years old.

This will bring the District Plan in line with new legislation and ensure it contains an up-to-date planning framework that meets the needs of the community.

The review will build on strategic studies the Council has already completed including a retail strategy, residential growth strategy, industrial land study, transportation study and Whakatane Airport Master Plan.

Widespread feedback from the community will be sought during the process and the Council encourages all residents to get involved and participate in this project.

Future Whakatane

The Council will complete its growth strategy for the Whakatane and Ohope area called "Future Whakatane" by the end of December 2009.

The growth strategy will bring together the demand for residential, retail and industrial development over the short term (10 years), medium term (20 years) and the longer term (40 years). When completed, the strategy will be implemented into the District Plan through zone changes, structure planning and infrastructural planning needed to support new areas.

Peak Demand Water Pricing

The Council has confirmed its policy on peak demand water pricing for Whakatane and Ohope and intends to read meters every three months from 1 July 2010.

The Whakatane and Ohope water schemes have been amalgamated and the Council will charge peak prices for water over the summer period.

The Council is concerned at the costs of providing significant volumes of water over a short period of time and wants to change its pricing to reflect this additional consumption. The approach will ensure the Council recovers costs directly from the people who are placing extra demands on the water infrastructure.

The pricing regime, will enable the Council to forecast summer water demand and more accurately charge the people who use more water between December and February.

There has been confusion around this issue and the introduction of peak demand water pricing will be accompanied by an education campaign to ensure everyone is better informed.

The average price per cubic metre will not change over a 12 month period but residents using high volumes of water over the summer months will pay a higher water-by-meter charge. Costs will be lower in the cooler months.

People who use a consistent amount of water throughout the year will not be penalised by the new charging regime.



Rapid Numbers for Rural Properties

The Council has taken heed of concerns raised by Federated Farmers, the New Zealand Fire Service, Police and other emergency services about the state of the RAPID (Rural Address Property Identification) numbers that they rely on to direct them to the right address.

It has included \$116,000 in the 2009/10 to replace RAPID numbers on rural properties which are either non-existent or difficult to read because they are faded or fixed to houses instead of at the roadside.

There are approximately 8000 RAPID numbered properties in the District – a majority of which will need to be replaced.

The Council believes that replacement is important for the health and safety of the rural community and will in future, make sure property owners are aware of their ongoing maintenance responsibilities.



Progress made on District Plan Appeals

The Council has made substantial progress in resolving many of the appeals to the Proposed Whakatane District Plan. Most of the appeals relating to the urban areas have been successfully resolved. The outstanding urban appeals include matters relating to the Gateway industrial estate, the Reef Site and residential properties subject to coastal hazards.

Similarly most of the appeals in rural areas have also been resolved just two matters – relating to the Ohiwa Harbour and esplanade reserves – remaining unresolved. Work is proceeding on these remaining appeals with options for their resolution currently being investigated.

The resolution of the appeals allows the Council to focus its attention and efforts on the future needs and planning for the district.



Whakatane District Council

FINANCIAL GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

Are you involved in community work? Do you need fundraising assistance?

Applications for financial assistance for the 2009/10 year are invited from charitable organisations involved in community work. The fund is only available to community service organisations providing assistance to the general public of the Whakatane District and priority will be given to those with a high volunteer base.

This year the fund includes 'multiple year funding' to provide medium term funding security to organisations over a three year period.

Applications forms for both the annual grants and multiple year funding can be downloaded from our website <http://www.whakatane.govt.nz/Residents/CommunityFunding/AnnualGrants/> funding or collected from the Council Office or Public Libraries. Applications must be submitted on the prescribed form and in our hands by 5.00 pm on Monday, 31 August 2009.

For further information please contact Janie Storey, Administration Officer Community on 306 0530 or 0800 306 0500.

Diane Turner
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Representation Review – Initial Decision

The Council indicated in the draft LTCCP that it would be looking at abolishing all five community boards and reducing the number of Councillors from 10 to eight, as part of a representation review.

The proposal had been included in the draft LTCCP to highlight the cost implications of the governance arrangements. However, following submissions the Council decided to retain the 'status quo' with some minor changes.

The representation review is now open for public consultation and submissions close on 10 September. The Council will hear submissions and is scheduled to make a final decision on 25 September.

The proposed representation arrangements are:

Mayor and Councillors – The Mayor to be elected from the district at large

10 Councillors, elected from 4 wards as follows:

- Whakatane–Ohope Ward – 5 members
- Rangitaiki Ward (formerly the Edgcombe–Tarawera Ward) – 3 members
- Galatea–Murupara Ward – 1 member
- Taneatua–Waimana Ward – 1 member

Community Boards – 5 Community Boards, namely the

- Rangitaiki Community Board (formerly the Edgcombe–Tarawera Community Board)
- Murupara Community Board
- Taneatua Community Board
- Ohope Beach Community Board
- Whakatane Community Board

Members – the number of elected Members on each Board will be 6 plus 1 appointed Councillor from the ward in which the Board is situated

The Council has proposed some minor boundary adjustments to the Whakatane ward. Further details are available on the Council website.

Biodiversity – the variety of life!

If you ask most people what 'indigenous biodiversity' means, they may not be too sure. But if you talk to them about natural areas such as native forest, bush and wetlands or threatened species such as kiwi or kokako, they will have some idea about the values in these areas and their importance.

There has been a lot of "buzz" in the community in recent years about the management of indigenous biodiversity, and landowners have been doing their bit to actively manage and protect natural areas through covenants, fencing, native replant and pest control.

Successful community projects have also been created, such as the Manawahe Ecological Corridor and the Whakatane Kiwi Trust, with the work helping to offset the losses of the past.

To work out what its future role should be in managing indigenous biodiversity, the Whakatane District Council is embarking on an indigenous biodiversity management project. The Council will be talking to community groups and individuals caring for natural areas, particularly landowners who have natural areas on their property to understand their views.

With this knowledge and understanding, together with all stakeholders and interested parties the Council will look for the best methods to address biodiversity. Some of these methods will end up in the District Plan, which is now under review. For more information please contact the Council's Senior Policy Planner, Penny Doorman on 07 306 0500.

Young Achievers awards attract private sponsorship

Horizon Energy and Eastbay REAP have joined hands with the Council in supporting and recognising the achievements of the young people in the District. Horizon Energy and Eastbay REAP will this year be sponsoring the Young Achievers Awards event. The Awards recognise and celebrate young people in the district who will have excelled in their fields of pursuit either in academic or sporting disciplines.

The Council's Administration Officer– Community Janie Storey said the community needs to recognise these achievements and celebrate the successes of our youth. "It is by recognising and celebrating these achievements that we can motivate our young people to be the best they can in their areas of interest."

In September, teachers and club coaches will be asked to nominate local students who may have represented this area overseas, come third or better in a national event or competition, or first while competing in something that includes a regional event outside the Bay of Plenty. Nomination forms will be available from 1 September and will close on Friday 2 October 2009.