



Safeguarding service delivery for our communities

We've activated a plan to safeguard service delivery to our communities in the face of the anticipated impacts of the COVID-19 Omicron variant.

The Council's Executive team has made decisions based on principles of continuing to provide vital services to our communities, while minimising risk to our people and their whānau, and doing all we can to support our health system to serve those who need it most. For many of our staff members, this means working from home, and for others it means maintaining rosters of team work bubbles.

Chief Executive, Steph O'Sullivan, says it is easy to foresee the effect of having a staff member test positive for Omicron. "The resulting need to isolate could mean we wouldn't have enough staff to maintain services – it is far more practical to proactively put distance between our people now, to help slow the spread and ensure we can keep our business running in an ever-changing COVID-19 environment."

In recent months, we've worked hard to increase the range of services available online, including meeting agendas, rates payments, dog registration and LIM applications – visit whakatane.govt.nz. You can also call 07 306 0500 or email info@whakatane.govt.nz for more information. Our Customer Service Centres in Whakatāne and Murupara remain open, with vaccine pass use. All Council and Community Board meetings will continue to be held online.

OUR PLACE

Ko Konei

Your Whakatāne District Council Community Update - February 2022



Kua nuku mātau We've moved next door!

A reminder that the Whakatāne District Council Customer Service Centre is now located at 4 Commerce Street while the main Council building undergoes a futureproofing redevelopment.

Please note, a vaccine pass is required for entry; however, there is a contactless payment window located on the northern side of the building. Most of our services are available online, including rates payments, dog registration and LIM applications – visit whakatane.govt.nz.

Please share this message with your whānau and friends so everyone knows where to find us.



SH30 Tikitere to Whakatāne speed review

Waka Kotahi - NZ Transport Agency is proposing new speed limits along State Highway 30 from Tikitere (near Rotorua) to Whakatāne, in order to save lives and prevent serious injuries.

You have the opportunity to provide feedback on this proposal by 5pm Friday, 18 February 2022.

Visit nzta.govt.nz/projects to find out more.



We're often on the look-out for superstars to join our team!

Visit whakatanejobs.co.nz to learn more about the opportunities currently on offer.

Total fire ban in place

The Bay of Plenty Fire District, which includes the Whakatāne District, has moved to a prohibited fire season. This means everyone in the Bay of Plenty can no longer light an open-air fire. All fire permits previously granted are suspended, and new permits won't be issued while the ban is in place.

Bay of Plenty District Manager, Jeff Maunder says the change will help prevent a large wildfire in the district.

"The current climate conditions have driven the total fire ban as the indicators have hit our pre-determined fire plan triggers for a prohibited fire season. The temperatures are high and dry and the humidity is low, making it the perfect condition for fires to get out of control," he says.

There are still some activities involving fire that are allowed during a prohibited fire season. For more information on what you can and can't do, and how to do your activity safely, go to checkitsalright.nz.

Mr Maunder would also like to remind everyone to take extra care when undertaking activities that can cause sparks.

"Reduce your risk as much as possible - it takes just one spark to start a wildfire. Have plenty of water available, wait until the morning or evenings when the humidity is higher and temperatures are cooler, and if possible undertake the activity on cleared bare ground," he says



Whakatāne set to become a thriving arts district

The Whakatāne District is set to burst with colour following investment from Whakatāne District Council and a funding injection from the Creative New Zealand Local Government Art Fund.



The fund, designed to assist councils to support the resilience and recovery of local arts organisations affected by COVID-19, will see the development of a bold arts strategy to support a thriving and resilient arts sector across the district; and a local creative is returning to her roots to make it happen.

Recently based in Wellington where she has worked in the live performance sector and a current board member of Arts Wellington, Vanessa Immink, a wahine Māori/Pākehā theatre maker, producer and marketer, is now tasked with creating an artistic vision for the district.

"The Whakatāne District Arts Strategy is the first of its kind for our rohe and will set out a clear roadmap for the development of the arts sector across our communities," says Vanessa, Kaiwhakarite Whakatipu Toi / Art Development Coordinator, at Whakatāne District Council.

Meet the team Kanohi kitea

Emlyn Hatch

General Manager People and Engagement



What I love most about my job
I love meeting people and working with them, and I get to interact with literally hundreds of people on any given day. Finding out about their issues, their opportunities, their inspiration and their situation is what makes me tick. My current position has a huge people focus, and I believe my part is to help everyone I can be the best they can be. These are exciting times for the Whakatāne District, and I love being part of a vibrant organisation at the heart of a vibrant district.

What I find most challenging about my job
Trying to get things in the right order to achieve them. Council has thousands of tasks underway at any given time and hundreds more planned! Everything is a priority, but we can't do it all at once. Working with customers and staff to make sure we programme

work as best as we can, then communicating the plan and getting it done when we said we would, can be a big challenge.

Why I love the Whakatāne District
The Whakatāne District has the best of Aotearoa - beaches, bush, sun and coffee. When we arrived from Wales in 2006, our first weekend away was at the Ōhope Beach Top 10 Holiday Park. We'd been in overdrive since leaving Wales, and Ōhope was the place that we learned to unwind and get into the rhythm of Aotearoa.

Hobbies/interests outside work
I love spending time with my family, and exploring towns and villages along the way to wherever we're heading. I'm a frustrated musician and play in a band (we're terrible) with four other dads. I'm at my happiest in the water and I'm training to swim around Mauāo.

Each month, we'll introduce a Whakatāne District Council staff member so you can 'meet' the team working for our communities.