

Minutes Whakatāne District Ordinary Council Meeting – 20 March 2025

	Details of Meeting:	WHAKATĀNE DISTRICT ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN ROOM TŌTARA, COMMERCE STREET, WHAKATĀNE, ON THURSDAY, 20 MARCH 2025, COMMENCING AT 9:00 AM.
	Present:	His Worship the Mayor Dr V Luca, Deputy Mayor L Immink, Councillors T Boynton, G Dennis, A Iles, J Jukes, T O'Brien, J Pullar and N Rangiaho <i>Via Teams:</i> Councillors W James and N Tánczos
	In Attendance:	S Perdia (Chief Executive), D Bewley (GM Planning, Regulatory and Infrastructure), E Hatch (GM People and Partnerships), B Gray (GM Finance and Commercial Services), A Pickles (GM Community Experience), L Woolsey (GM Strategy and Growth), H Patrick (Kaihautu Strategic Māori Partnerships), S Ellis (Acting Manager Strategy and Performance), H Keravel (Senior Policy Analyst), V Fergusson (Manager Strategic Property), S Whittle (Acting Manager Communications and Engagement), L Hunt (Climate Change and Resilience Manager), C Viljoen (Manager Governance Services) and S Duffy (Senior Governance Support Advisor) <i>Via Teams:</i> G Mischefski-Gray (Strategic Policy Analyst)
	Visitors:	Mr C Susan and Mr A Labuschagne (Audit NZ) <i>Via Teams:</i> S Henderson (Risk and Assurance Independent Chairperson)
	Apologies:	

1 KARAKIA

Mayor Luca welcomed all to the meeting at 9:00 am, and Deputy Mayor Immink opened with a Karakia.

2 MEETING NOTICES

Mayor Luca shared meeting notices on health and safety and live streaming.

The meeting was advised that agenda item 10.6, 'Matatā Cemetery Trustee Report', had been withdrawn from the meeting due to information that had come to hand since the publishing of the agenda. It was intended that this paper be reported to a meeting at a later date.

3 APOLOGIES

It was noted that Councillor Tánczos would be partial attendance online.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / TRIBUTES

The Coalition Government and Transport Minister Bishop were acknowledged for the allocated investment in road safety for works at the intersection of State Highway 2 and Wainui Road.

Mr Hone Patrick was welcomed to Council in his role as Kaihautu Strategic Māori Partnerships.

Congratulations were given to the Managers of Ywari Farms, Georgia Mischefski-Gray and Canice O'Sullivan, who recently won the Ballance Farm Environment Awards for both the People in Primary Sector Award, and the Innovation Award.

5 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Nil.

7 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Refer to page 11 of the agenda.

Moved Councillor Iles / Seconded Deputy Mayor Immink

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the following Whakatāne District Council meeting minutes be **confirmed** as a true and correct records:

- Ordinary Council meeting held on 12 December 2024
- Extraordinary Council meeting held on 19 December 2024
- Emergency Council meeting minutes held on 10 February 2025

CARRIED

8 STANDING AND JOINT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND MINUTES

8.1 Minutes of Standing Committees

Refer to page 12 of the agenda.

Moved Councillor Pullar / Seconded Councillor Jukes

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes from the following Whakatāne District Council Standing Committees be **received**:

- Infrastructure and Planning Committee – 14 November 2024
- Living Together Committee – 14 November 2024
- Finance and Performance Committee – 28 November 2024
- Risk and Assurance Committee – 29 November 2024

- Living Together Committee – 5 December 2024
- Environment, Energy and Resilience Committee – 13 February 2025
- Finance and Performance Committee – 27 February 2025
- Living Together Committee – 6 March 2025

CARRIED

9 MAYORAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

9.1 Chief Executive Report – March 2025

Refer to pages 13-15 of the agenda.

Moved Deputy Mayor Immink / Seconded Councillor Rangiaho

RESOLVED:

THAT the Chief Executive report – March 2025 be **received**.

CARRIED

9.2 Mayoral Report – March 2025

Refer to pages 16-25 of the agenda.

Attendance: Mr Stuart Henderson joined the meeting at 9:09 am.

A clarification was noted; Fonterra were converting three North Island gas boilers sites to electricity, and five other sites throughout NZ were being converted to wood pellets to run their boilers.

Moved Councillor Iles / Seconded Deputy Mayor Immink

RESOLVED:

THAT the Whakatāne District Council **receives** the Mayoral Report – March 2025.

CARRIED

9.3 WDC Response to Health System Crisis

Refer to pages 26-38 of the agenda.

Attendance: Councillor Tánčzos joined the meeting at 9:19 am.

Elected Members expressed support for the investigation and during discussions the following points were noted:

- How the group would integrate with the Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora
- Support of other partners e.g. Opotiki and Kawerau District Councils, Iwi, LGNZ
- Engagement with other Māori health providers within the Eastern Bay
- Identification if any funding was required
- Concern staff or Councillor involvement could distract from their other duties
- Investigation to be open minded if a better suited advocacy group was identified.

It was agreed Mayor Luca invite the hospital interim GM and/or Cath Cronin (Te Whatu Ora) to speak at a Council meeting to provide further clarification on the issue and answer questions raised.

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the Council **receives** the report entitled 'WDC Response to Health System Crisis'; and
2. THAT the Mayor **writes** a letter to the Minister of Health and Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora - expressing general concern regarding the health system crisis and in particular the loss of secondary obstetrics and gynaecology service in Whakatāne and the effects that on-going funding cuts will have in sub-regions like ours; and
3. THAT Council **investigates** the establishment of a Health Advisory Group modelled on that of Kapiti Coast District Council as a response to the current health crisis and to contribute to the ongoing advocacy for equitable and quality health care for all New Zealanders and more specifically service provision at Whakatāne Hospital.

CARRIED

10 REPORTS

10.1 Whakatāne District Council Standing Orders 2025

Refer to pages 39-190 of the agenda.

Manager Governance Serviced summarised the changes made to Standing Orders and noted that 75% of members must agree to any changes. She reported that the drafted Standing Orders been circulated prior and no comments received.

Members requested Recommendation 2 be updated to clarify the changes to Standing Orders 13.7 and 13.8.

Moved Councillor Iles / Seconded Councillor Pullar

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the Whakatāne District Council Standing Orders 2025 report be **received**; and
2. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **agree** that Standing Order 13.7 which enables members to join hui by audio visual link remains unchanged and that Standing Order 13.8 is updated whereby members attending by electronic link are counted as present for the purposes of the quorum; and
3. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **note** that Standing Order 19.3 Chairperson has a casting vote, remains unchanged; and
4. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **agree** to retain Option B as the default option for speaking and moving motions; and
5. THAT Whakatāne District Council **agree** to retain Standing Order 6.7 Delegation to Chief Executive during Election Interregnum Period; and
6. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **adopt** the updated Standing Orders 2025 document as appended to this report and **delegate authority** to the Chief Executive to make any final minor changes to the document as agreed by the Whakatāne District Council.

CARRIED

Attendance:

Audit NZ representatives Mr Susan and Mr Labuschagne joined the meeting online at 9:57 am.
Manager External Reporting entered the meeting at 9:57 am.

10.2 Adoption of the Whakatāne District Council Annual Report 2023/24

Refer to pages 191-423 of the agenda and pages 423a-g of the tabled items.

The appointed auditor for 2024-2025 Mr Labuschagne introduced himself, spoke of his professional background and his auditing relationship with WDC over the years.

The Acting Manager Strategy and Performance referenced the tabled items, which included the Audit Opinion and the Schedule of Changes. The schedule of changes included six corrections involving rounding errors, grammatical errors and updates to variances. She acknowledged Councillor Jukes and Deputy Mayor Immink for reviewing the document prior to Audit NZ receiving it.

Attendance: Manager Governance Services left the meeting at 10:03 am.

In response to a query regarding any ramifications that the statutory deadline was not met, Mr Susan advised that, via the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), it would be reported to parliament. He gave a commitment that future deadlines would be met however noted there were responsibilities of Council to help ensure this.

Audit NZ would provide a workplan for the 2024/25 Annual Report audit that would indicate focus areas.

Moved Councillor Iles / Seconded Councillor Jukes

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the Whakatāne District Council Annual Report 2023/24 report **be received**; and
2. THAT the Council **notes** auditors will issue a qualified audit opinion; and
3. THAT the Council **adopts** the audited Whakatāne District Council Annual Report 2023/24, attached as Appendix 1 of this report, subject to any corrections identified prior to publishing in accordance with Section 98 of the Local Government Act 2002; and
4. THAT the Council **notes** the adoption is outside the statutory timeframe and a disclosure is included in the Annual Report; and
5. THAT the Council **notes** the Annual Report 2023/24 and a Summary thereof will be made publicly available within one month of the adoption of the Annual Report.

CARRIED

Attendance:

GM People and Partnerships and GM Community Experience left the meeting at 10:15 am.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 10:15 am and recommenced at 10:31 am.

Attendance:

The Senior Policy Analyst and Acting Manager Communications and Engagement entered the meeting at 10:31 am.

10.3 Approval of the Draft Annual Plan Budget for 2025/26

Refer to pages 424-454 of the agenda.

The Acting Manager Strategy and Performance summarised recommendations presented in the paper.

The Senior Policy Analyst reiterated areas where the savings had been identified, and resulting from previous guidance given by Elected members, proposed changes to the LTP budget. He added that Management was not expecting any change to levels of service following on from this change and would monitor the impact of the FTE reduction. The changes made were assessed as low to moderate and did not trigger a formal consultation process.

Regarding the proposed digital communication campaign, it was requested hardcopies be available for the more remote areas of the district and to also include a range of options if residents were having difficulties with rates invoice payments. Councillors could forward further suggestions to the Communications team.

Attendance:

GM People and Partnerships and GM Community Experience re-entered the meeting at 10:36 am. Climate Change and Resilience Manager entered the meeting at 10:44 am.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- Once the draft budget had been approved, the graphs within section 4.3 of the report would be updated resulting from the savings made.
- Management was confident the savings would not significantly change Levels of Service.
- It was clarified that the 'stop/go' decision for the Rex Morpeth hub would be within year 4 of the Long Term Plan and this fell within the next triennium.

Management and staff were acknowledged for the work.

Attendance:

GM People and Partnerships left the meeting at 11:11 am and returned at 11:15 am. The Strategic Policy Analyst joined the meeting online at 11:17 am.

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the Council **receives** the report 'Approval of the draft Annual Plan budget for 2025/26'; and
2. THAT the Council **notes** that the draft Annual Plan budget for 2025/26 identified savings to decision to defer unsubsidised activities within the transport work programme and other adjustments to existing work programmes, including the removal of additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) roles proposed in the LTP for the year 2025/26, and other line by line savings; and
3. THAT the Council **approves** the recommended option for the Annual Plan budget for 2025/26 proposing to reduce the proposed LTP year two rate increase from an average of 12.7% to 11.7% and to apply any further savings to reducing the operating deficit; and
4. THAT the Council **notes** that the 2025/26 fees and charges schedule will mostly be updated to reflect inflationary changes; and
5. THAT the Council **approves** the recommendation that formal public consultation on the draft Annual Plan budget for 2025/26 is not required; and
6. THAT the Council **notes** that a public information campaign will be delivered to provide key messages to the community about the draft Annual Plan budget for 2025/26; and
7. THAT the Council **notes** that the final Annual Plan 2025/26 will be provided to Council for adoption before 30 June 2025.

CARRIED

Councillor Iles requested his vote against recommendation 3 be recorded.
Councillor Pullar requested his vote against recommendations 1-7 be recorded.

Attendance:

Acting Manager Strategy and Performance and Senior Policy Analyst left the meeting at 11:19 am.

10.4 Solar Panel Business Case Report

Refer to pages 455-469 of the agenda.

Ms Hunt, recently appointed as the Climate Change and Resilience Manager, was introduced.

Ms Hunt reported the stated 2.2% inflation on electricity costs was conservative and therefore the potential for further savings. She explained that because the project was income generating, Trust Horizon Policy determined financing would be a loan (rather than a grant). Staff were following up regarding the grant opportunities.

Moved Mayor Luca / Seconded Councillor Tánczos

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **receive** the Solar Panel Business Case report; and
2. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **approve** in principle a request to Trust Horizon for a loan of up to three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) on a 10-year repayment period at a 3.5% interest rate; and
3. THAT the Whakatāne District Council **delegate authority** to the Chief Executive for final loan approval.

CARRIED

Attendance:

Manager Climate Change and Resilience and the Strategic Policy Analyst left the meeting at 11:38 am.

10.5 Change Recover Manager

Refer to pages 470-474 of the agenda.

Moved Councillor Iles / Seconded Councillor Pullar

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the Council **receive** the Change in Appointment of Recovery Manager report; and
2. THAT the Council **recommends** to the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group the rescindment of the appointment of Leny Woolsey as Local Recovery Manager for the Whakatāne District Council; and
3. THAT the Council **recommends** to the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group the appointment of Lou Hunt as a Local Recovery Manager for the Whakatāne District Council.

CARRIED

10.6 Matatā Cemetery Trustee Appointment

As advised earlier in the meeting, this paper was withdrawn.

11 RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

Refer to pages 480-482 of the agenda.

Moved Deputy Mayor Immink / Seconded Councillor Iles

RESOLVED:

THAT the public be **excluded** from the following parts of the proceedings of this Council meeting, namely:

1. Public Excluded Minutes Ordinary Council meeting 12 December 2024
2. Public Excluded Minutes Emergency Council meeting 10 February 2025
3. Public Excluded Minutes Living Together Committee – 14 November 2025
4. Public Excluded Minutes Risk and Assurance Committee – 29 November 2024

5. Public Excluded Minutes Iwi Chairs Forum – 3 December 2024
6. Public Excluded Minutes Environment, Energy and Resilience Committee – 13 February 2025
7. Public Excluded Minutes Living Together Committee - 6 March 2025
8. Advisory Group
9. Project Future Proof (Floodwall) update

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

	General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter	Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution	When item can be released into public
1.	Public Excluded Minutes Ordinary Council meeting 12 December 2024	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
2.	Public Excluded Minutes Emergency Council meeting 10 February 2025	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
3.	Public Excluded Minutes Living Together Committee – 14 November 2025	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
4.	Public Excluded Minutes Risk and Assurance Committee – 29 November 2024	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
5.	Public Excluded Minutes Iwi Chairs Forum – 3 December 2024	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised

6.	Public Excluded Minutes Environment, Energy and Resilience Committee – 13 February 2025	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
7.	Public Excluded Minutes Living Together Committee – 6 March 2025	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
8.	Advisory Group	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised
9.	Project Future Proof (Floodwall) update	Good reason to withhold exists under Section 7.	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists. Section 48(1)(a)	To be advised

This resolution is made in reliance on sections 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by section 7 of that Act, which would be prejudiced by the holding of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are as follows:

Item No	Interest
1, 4, 8	Protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons Schedule 7(2)(a)
1	Protect information made available that would likely be unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information Section 7(2)(b)(ii)
1, 4	Maintain legal professional privilege (Schedule 7(2)(g))
1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	Enable any Council holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities Schedule 7 (2) (h)
1, 2, 4, 7, 9	To carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations) (Schedule 7(2)(i))

CARRIED

Councillor James advised the Governance staff that he could not attend the public excluded section of the meeting and gave his apology.

Attendance: Councillor James and Mr S Henderson left the meeting at 11:42 am.

The meeting moved into Public-Excluded session at 11:42 am.

The meeting returned to the Public session at 1:43 pm.

Mayor Luca restated the following resolutions made within the Public Excluded session of the meeting:

1. THAT the Council **receive** the Advisory Group report; and,
2. THAT the Council **confirms** the report can be released to the public on the Chief Executive's approval on assessment that no private person will be affected by its release and that Council is not disadvantaged commercially.

The meeting closed at 1:46 pm with a Karakia by Deputy Mayor Immink.

Confirmed at the meeting dated:
CHAIRPERSON

[You Tube link to Council meeting 20 March 2025](#)