

# Taupō District Council

## Notes of Council Workshop

<b>Group</b>	Council
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday 26 March, 11.00am-12.00pm
<b>Venue</b>	Council Chamber
<b>Topic</b>	Waikato Regional Council Long-term Plan 2024/34 Roadshow – public transport regional rate
<b>Facilitated by</b>	Waikato Regional Council Chairperson Ms Pamela Storey (via MS Teams), Waikato Regional Councillor Ms Kataraina Hodge, and Waikato Regional Council Science, Policy and Information Director Tracey May
<b>Elected Members present</b>	Mayor David Trewavas (in the Chair), Cr Duncan Campbell, Cr Karam Fletcher, Cr Sandra Greenslade, Cr Anna Park, Cr Christine Rankin (from 11.50pm) Cr Rachel Shepherd, Cr Kevin Taylor, Cr Kirsty Trueman, Cr Yvonne Westerman, Cr John Williamson
<b>Officers present</b>	Chief Executive (J Gardyne), Acting General Manager Operations and Delivery (T Hale), General Manager Organisation Performance (S Matthews), General Manager People and Community Partnerships (L O'Brien) General Manager Strategy and Environment (W Zander), Executive Manager Mayors Office (J Later), Policy Manager (N Carroll), Senior Policy Advisor (K Goode), Policy Advisor (A Wilson), Asset Manager Transportation (C Sharland), Property Manager (S Attenborough), Governance Quality Manager (S James), Legal and Governance Coordinator (D Periam)
<b>Public / media present</b>	No public or media present
<b>Documents either pre-circulated or tabled</b>	Waikato Regional Council Long-term Plan 2024-34 Roadshow Presentation (A3519558)
<b>Public or closed<sup>1</sup></b>	Public

### Notes<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the workshop was to share the Waikato Regional Council's (WRC) Long-term Plan 2024-34 (LTP) with Elected Members. The region had faced some significant challenges in recent times including Covid-19, extreme weather events and a cost-of-living crisis so the focus of the LTP was resilience and efficiency. The LTP timeline was provided with consultation open currently till 2 May 2024.

The rates requirement was set to increase from \$130.355 million in 2023/24 to \$178.477 million in 2033/34. Money collected from rates was split into a general and targeted rate. A snapshot of the impact on rates was shown with proposed rates increases for the 2024/25 year being 6% and year 2025/26 8%. The increase in the second year was due to an introduction of a region-wide public

<sup>1</sup> Workshops are public (and are always advertised whether public or closed), unless there is a good reason(s) for information to be withheld and there is no overriding public interest in holding the workshop in public. Withholding grounds set out in the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) are a guide. If closed, cite relevant LGOIMA section.

<sup>2</sup> Workshops are not decision-making forums, therefore this document contains notes of key points discussed only, not decisions.

# Taupō District Council

transport rate. There were 23,500 WRC ratepayers in the Taupō district and 95% of those would have an increase of \$49 per annum for year one with the median increase being \$22.86 per property.

The four key topic areas that were being outlined in the LTP were:

1. Investing more in our region's biodiversity
2. Simplifying public transport investment
3. Regional economic development funding
4. Investment and affordability

## **Investing more in our region's biodiversity**

WRC provided funding for conservation projects however this had not kept up with demand or inflation. More people were involved in conservation efforts and required support. The existing funds had enabled many valuable projects like planting, predator control and ecological restoration, however there were more applicants than there was funding available. WRC proposal and preferred option was to increase the Natural Heritage rate to \$8.68 per property per annum. WRC Councillors had also asked to consult about a \$15 increase to the community. It was confirmed that the money collected for this fund would not be used for anything other than what was intended. In answer to a question, it was explained that the gap between amount of money applied for and what was available was roughly \$2 million and the \$8.68 increase in funds would close that gap by roughly \$700,000 and the \$15 per property would increase it to \$1.4 million.

## **Simplifying public transport investment**

The current system created delays and hindered planning for a connected region-wide network. WRC rates some areas for public transport services whereas for other areas (including Taupō) it was funded through district council rates. The proposal was to introduce a region-wide public transport rate. The benefits would include streamlined planning and administration, fairer cost sharing based on proximity to services, more efficient response to changing community needs and no impact to levels of services or council borrowing. Current services would not be decreased. Elected Members provided feedback that the Tūrangi to Taupō bus service was well used, and they would like to see this bus service offered more frequently throughout the week. WRC were aware there was a huge demand for the Tūrangi to Taupō bus service and they were looking at different opportunities for this route such as increasing the service or getting a bigger vehicle. The two options were explained and per 100,000 capital value, option one would be \$2.50 and option two would be \$4.

## **Regional economic development funding**

The Regional Development Fund was established in 2015 for environment-friendly economic projects. The money for the fund was from income from investments and not rates, there was currently \$3.9 million in the fund. The fund had not been hugely successful with three grants approved in the past eight years. WRC were looking to disestablish the regional economic development fund and put the money and staff resources towards higher priorities that will help economic and environmental growth.

The following points were clarified:

- An independent review panel reviewed applications and made recommendations to council who could either agree or disagree.
- There had been roughly six applications which had not made it to council or had been declined.
- The application needed to have both an economic and environmental benefit.
- WRC Councillors felt that the fund was confusing and needed to be administered better.
- No applications were currently being received in case the fund was disestablished.

Te Waka was established in 2018 by the Waikato Mayoral Forum and the purpose was to champion regional economic growth through partnerships. Council had decided to consult on the

# Taupō District Council

funding of this and were encouraging territorial areas to provide feedback. The proposal was to continue funding \$750,000 per annum for three years using unallocated funds from investment returns. The benefit of this would be to continue having an agency that can champion regional economic growth through partnerships. Regional Councillors did feel that there needed to be more accountability over how the funding is used so Te Waka would need to meet accountability measures.

## **Investment and affordability**

Changes to the funding of primary industry compliance were being proposed. Currently permitted activity monitoring is funded by all properties two hectares or above and farm plan implementation is funded by general rates. The proposal was to have a new targeted 'Primary Industry Compliance Rate' for larger properties. This would increase fairness as larger properties would pay more for the services that they primarily benefit from. In answer to a question, they explained that they were looking to review rural lifestyle vs rural environment in the future.

Work that WRC were prioritising, and work not being prioritised was shown.

The following points were clarified:

- There was a big focus on Lake Taupō and foreshore erosion. This was a key issue and not an easy fix as the entire system needs to be considered.
- Water quality monitoring occurred weekly in Taupō District including tributaries and streams.
- WRC were happy to provide elected members with information about WRC investments in the Taupō District.

A member noted that the monthly water quality monitoring in the Mangakino area needed to be more frequent as there was a 14-day cycle lake to river so monthly monitoring did not provide a good enough picture of what was happening on the river. WRC looked at weather predictions every April and October to plan and understand what's happening. WRC were working with MPI and local iwi closely. They asked elected members to provide a submission and feedback on the LTP before submissions closed on 2 May 2024.