Taupō District Council

Notes of Council Workshop

Group	Council
Date	1 October 2026 10.06am – 3.37pm adjourned from 12.00pm-12.29pm
Venue	Chambers
Topic	Long-term Plan Workshop – Capital Programme - Venues
Facilitated by	Aidan Smith, Team Leader Corporate Planning Steve Giles, Events and Venues Manager
Elected Members present	Mayor John Funnell, Cr Rachel Cameron, Cr Nicola de Lautour, Cr Ngāhuia Foreman, Cr Sandra Greenslade, Cr Steve Manunui (via MS Teams), Cr Wahine Murch (from 10.25am), Cr Kevin Taylor, Cr Yvonne Westerman, Cr Hope Woodward (from 10.25am until 3.10pm)
Officers present	Chief Executive (J Gardyne), General Manager People and Community Partnerships (H Tattle), General Manager Community Infrastructure and Services (T Hale), Acting General Manager Organisation Performance (J Paenga), Acting General Manager Strategy and Environment (J Sparks), Policy Manager (N Carroll), Communications Manager (L McMichael), Customer Experience Manager (P Ramsay), Property and Development Manager (C Haskell), Library and Museum Manager (L Haines), Parks and Reserves Manager (J Gordon), District Venues Manager (B Green), Senior Project Manager (T Delich), Senior Financial Planner (E Erasmus), Team Leader – Resource Management/Reserve Planning (E O'Callaghan), District Events Manager (S Ashton), District Aquatics Manager (M Kriel), District Lifeguard Operations Team Lead (M Hands), Executive Assistant – People, Community and Performance (M Bennett), Legal and Governance Coordinator (M Cammell)
Public / media present	No public or media present.
Documents either pre-circulated or tabled	Tūrangi Event Centre (TRAC) feasibility and business case (October 2022) (A3986460) Tūrangi Youth and Community Centre (April 2026) (A3986459)

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	Operational budget for TRAC and Tūrangi Youth and Community centres tab 1(A3986466) Operational budget for TRAC and Tūrangi Youth and Community centres tab 2 (A3986469) Operational budget for TRAC and Tūrangi Youth and Community centres tab 3 (A3986811) Operational budget for TRAC and Tūrangi Youth and Community centres tab 4 (A3986468) Short comparison of event centre type facilities in small town New Zealand (A3986463) Key outcomes requested by the Tūrangi Community when developing the TRAC concept – youth, economic and social outcomes (A3986461) Excerpt from LTP 2024-34 (A3986462) Capital Programme Workshop – Project List (A3986471) Capital Programme Workshop – Project Summaries (A3986470)
Public or closed[1][2]	Public

Notes[3]
The purpose of this workshop was to review proposed projects in the capital programme for Events and Venues. Council staff were seeking direction and a shortlist of projects to further explore as part of the Long-term Plan (LTP). The Events and Venues Manager was joined by various members of his team to discuss projects that were categorised as a "must do," "should do," and "could do." The following was discussed and clarified: - There was only one "must do" on the Events and Venues list. This was because officers had done prep work and defined "must dos" as projects that were required by legislation, regulation or currently in the workflow. The "must do" project was the Owen Delany Park upgrade. **Owen Delany Park Upgrade** - This project was the third stage of works at Owen Delany Park. It was already included in the budget and work programme and involved seismic upgrades to

[1] 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.

[2] Workshops are recorded and livestreamed on Council's YouTube channel unless they are closed.

[3] Workshops are not decision-making forums, therefore this document contains notes of key points discussed only, not decisions.

the grandstand. Deferring the work would create an inherent health and safety risk.
- Elected Members indicated that they would like to keep this project as part of the capital programme.

Library Books
- Staff requested to keep the current level of funding for new physical and digital books. This item was in the list of "should dos" because the library was in the middle of a multi-year contract with a book provider.
- The 26/27 fiscal year was the first year of a 10% reduction in funding. As a result, check-outs of physical books dropped by 1% and E-Book usage increased dramatically.
- $302,000 was the reduced rate that the library was allowed to spend on books.
- The library had a contract in place with a consortium with other Bay of Plenty libraries that required Wheeler's, the book provider, to hold pricing for two to three years.
- Physical visits to the library last year totalled 182,000.
- Elected Members indicated that they would like to keep this expense in the capital programme.

Taupō Event Centre Bleacher Renewal
- The bleachers that were being used at the Taupō Event Centre were labour-intensive and sometimes required hiring of a forklift to set up and take down. The cost of setting them up was charged back to the group that required use of them.
- Staff wanted to purchase a more modern system where the bleachers come out at the touch of a button. They would cost less staff time and therefore, be less expensive for groups to come in and use.
- The bleachers at the Taupō Events Centre were used between 8-10 times a year.
- There was potential to go out and look for other funding sources such as Sport Waikato.
- The quoted cost for the bleachers included installation and annual maintenance.
- With reliable maintenance, a set of bleachers could last for 40 years.
- While the income lost through staff discouraging use of the existing bleachers was difficult to quantify, staff were confident that the bleachers would eventually fail without intervention, requiring events such as the Taiopenga Festival to relocate.
- The bleacher replacement project was proposed for 2028/29 to allow time to plan the work around existing bookings and manage the temporary displacement of sports groups and other users.
- Elected Members were in favour of keeping the bleacher renewal on the LTP.

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Hickling Park Hockey Turf Renewal

- The AstroTurf at the park had not been laid correctly, which had caused issues with the underlay and meant international hockey could not be played there. Council staff were working with Taupō Hockey Club (the Club), which had removed the existing turf, to seek compensation for the error. A further $90k from the last replacement was also available to go towards this project.
- The Club had assisted with ongoing maintenance of the turf but not replacement of it. Replacement would come out of the renewals budget.
- Elected Members indicated that they wanted staff to approach NZ Hockey for a funding contribution.

Taupō Events Centre and AC Baths PA system renewal

- Staff were proposing a new PA system for the Taupō Events Centre and AC Baths. The maintenance for which would be paid by Council.
- The system would last 20 years or more.
- The system would be used to play music, make announcements, and in emergency situations. The Taupō Events Centre and AC Baths was also a Civil Defence welfare centre so a PA system would be used in that situation.
- The contract for installing a new PA system would include removal of the old hardware.
- Elected Members indicated that they would like to include this project in the LTP.

District-wide sportsground fencing improvements

- Council staff proposed a phased approach over 3 years, with $75k spent per year for improvements to fencing. These improvements would be made at high-risk areas that would keep vehicles and other negative behaviours off playing fields.
- Lower-cost alternatives, such as CCTV, did not necessarily prevent inappropriate behaviour or vehicle access to playing fields. Vehicles had previously damaged a field just three days before a major tournament. The proposed improvements intended to keep sportsgrounds in the best condition possible by restricting access.
- Bollards were another potential option. Staff would assess the suitability of solutions for each site individually.
- Some reserves were used for parking for events. Event organisers would sometimes have a charge in their contract for carparking. The Resource Management Plan excluded carparking on reserves but did give an allowance for events. The money collected from carparking went into operational expenses.
- Councillors felt that this could potentially be included in the LTP but wanted to look at lower-cost options.

Automatic court curtains for Taupō Events Centre

- The curtains used to separate the courts at the Taupō Events Centre were old, time intensive and required a forklift and basket to put up.
- New curtains could last 20-25 years.
- Councillors agreed to include this project on the list.

Tūrangi Recreation and Activity Centre (TRAC)

- This project had been in the public domain for several years. It underwent a feasibility study and a number of locations and options were considered. The community and partners at Ngāti Tūrangitukua were consulted. They were interested in a 2-court indoor standalone facility in Te Kapua Park. However, there were still challenges to overcome in suitability of the land due to a high-water table, rationalisation of other buildings currently in the space, and working around rates caps and financial challenges.
- The existing indoor court in Tūrangi was not regulation size, which presented a barrier to its use. This would be considered in the design of a new court.
- The youth centre, Rangatahi Hub, was not owned or operated by Council.
- A large standalone centre would cost around half a million in operational expenses – excluding depreciation- per year. Additionally, interest and loan principal repayments bring the total spent to around $800,000 per year. The existing gym had operational costs of about $120,000.
- The project was included in the 2024 LTP as a placeholder, not a commitment to proceed. The proposed rates caps had changed since the project was discussed three or four years earlier.
- The project was originally priced in October 2022. There was a second option that was priced in April 2026 that would include renovating the current building.
- For every $10M in capital expenditure there would need to be a 1% increase in rates. There were concerns from staff about whether the Tūrangi community could afford such an increase.
- The current facility had not been maintained in several years in the anticipation of a new facility.
- Tennis and netball courts had been proposed as part of one version of TRAC but it would be difficult to achieve that version due to the high-water table.
- Conversations with Ngāti Tūrangitukua about TRAC were coming in the weeks following the workshop.
- Projects such as this remained in the LTP as placeholders so Council could collect development contributions towards them.
- Cost implications to rates for this project would be included in the consultation document that went out to the community.
- Councillors agreed that something needed to be done for Tūrangi in this space but thought the cost of the current scoped work was too high and perhaps

there was an option to do something for less cost. The discussion was deferred for the time being.

Taupō Event Centre 4th court extension incorporating rockwall relocation

- The Taupō Event Centre (TEC) was operating at peak capacity from 3pm–9pm each night. Demand for indoor courts and daytime activities from 8am–3pm had also increased, with more organisations interested in using the facility. The existing rockwall occupied part of the 3rd court. Adding a 4th court would involve relocating the rockwall and create additional revenue opportunities. A minimum of four courts was required to attract national events.
- There was a charitable trust interested in operating a sports hub. It was a temporary building that could be built in 7 days and would include an investment from Council of $150,000 plus a land lease that would extend into the AC Baths/TEC carpark. This investment could delay the need for a 4th court.
- The rockwall was utilised 145 days a year. There were groups from Taupō Nui a Tia College, birthday parties, and ad hoc groups as well as climbing 3 nights a week.
- Councillors were supportive of a joint venture for a pop-up sports hub but not funding a 4th court yet.

Hickling Park 2nd Hockey Turf

- If there was a second hockey turf at Hickling Park this would open the possibility to hold national-level events rather than regional events; however, the data indicated that the second turf was not required. Taupō Hockey and Sport Waikato also did not see a need for a second turf. Therefore, the Elected Members opted to exclude this project from further investigation.

AC Baths Sheltered Areas for Outdoor 25 Meter Lane Pool

- The outdoor 25 lane pool had no protection from wind, rain, sun or cold for swim school instructors. This project was to provide protection in the form of a roof and wall like a bus shelter.
- Staff assured the Elected Members that no pool staff were standing for hours exposed to the elements and were given adequate uniforms and sun protection.
- Elected Members were not interested in exploring this project at a $1.8M price tag. They were willing to consider this project if the cost was less.

District wide Sportsground irrigation improvements

- There were several sportsgrounds without irrigation for the summer months such as the end of Crown Park, Mangakino Sportsground, Kaimanawa and Northcroft Reserve. Irrigation in those grounds would improve the quality of the grass.
- There was not a high risk of fire in non-irrigated grounds because the grass was kept short anyway.

- Playing sports on non-irrigated grounds could potentially cause more injuries.
- No staff hours were spent watering grass at non-irrigated sportsgrounds.
- Irrigation would maintain grass quality for longer, reducing wear on machinery and providing minor operational savings. The primary benefit was an improved level of service to meet community expectations for playing fields, although watering would increase operational expenditure.
- The Elected Members were not interested in including this project in the list of projects to explore further.

AC Baths Entrance Remodel

- The main carpark at the AC Baths had a 6-step stairway which was difficult for mobility impaired and people with prams to navigate. This project would include a ramp as well as a one-way entrance network in the carpark.
- This was not a mandated improvement but rather a level of service improvement.
- There have been very few accidents in the carpark except for a recent near miss. However, there were a lot of young children running through the carpark often.
- Elected Members noted that accessible and parent parking spaces could be provided in the west carpark, allowing users to avoid the stairs, therefore they did not want to include this project.

AC Baths Entrance Digital Screen

- A digital screen put up near the road outside of the AC Baths could be used to communicate updates to disruption of services. There was also an opportunity to take a small amount of revenue from advertising on the screen.
- Generally, disruptions such as “code browns” at the pools were communicated to the community through the AC Baths Facebook page and through Council’s Communications team.
- Some Councillors were in support of this and thought there could be good opportunities to advertise events and it would likely pay for itself while others felt that the expense was too high for something that could be communicated with a white board in front of the building.

Digital Customer Self-Service Enablement

- Customer Services were exploring self-service kiosks for the visitor’s centres where customers could pay a bill, register their dog and access other Council services.
- There was potential to install a self-service kiosk at the AC Baths and other Council locations.
- Elected Members questioned whether this was needed as most people who came in-person to visitor’s centres wanted to speak to an actual person rather than use a kiosk.
- The $100,000 budgeted for this project would support information gathering and assessment of options.

- Elected Members were split on whether they would like to see this included in the list of potential projects but ultimately believed they would exclude the project for this LTP and potentially explore it in the future.

Taupō Library Community Heritage Space Redevelopment

- The space was originally built as an internet café with a half wall that created a barrier between services. There was $150k in the current LTP for a refit of the space. Staff were proposing returning $90k of that and retaining $60k to remove the half wall and integrate the area into the rest of the space. They had received feedback from users on how the space was being used and proposed realigning electrical ports and plugs.
- Elected Members were in favour of including this in the LTP list of potential projects.

Museum Ora Garden Removal and Courtyard Upgrade

- Staff proposed removing the Ora Garden and reimagining the space. Maintaining the water feature was very labour-intensive with contractors being called out weekly to fix something. Removing it would reduce capital expenditure.
- Some Elected Members supported removing the garden, while others favoured reimagining and retaining it in recognition of its gold award at the Chelsea Flower Show. Those supporting removal suggested inviting expressions of interest from the community in rehoming the garden.

Archives Building Refit

- Staff proposed a budget of $20k in year 3 of the LTP to do some scoping around what was needed. There was currently a building in town that the archives had outgrown. There was no storage room left, and they could not take new items.
- Museum staff had to work with the Information Management team that shared the space to negotiate and plan.
- Elected Members indicated that they would like to keep this project on the LTP list.

By the end of the workshop, staff and Elected Members were comfortable with the projects they had cut from further consideration and where the budget stood.

The workshop closed at 3.37pm.