

CONCERNED RATEPAYERS KAPITI: CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2025

Affordability and Financial Management

1. Projected Rates Increases

The Long-Term Plan (LTP) 2024–2034 outlines average rates increases totalling 115% over 10 years.

If (re)elected, would you support these planned increases?

- If yes: Why do you believe these increases are affordable for ratepayers?
- If not: What level of average annual increases would you consider acceptable instead?

ANSWER :- I Believe that we are at our current rates ceiling and that there needs to be work done to identify what is an acceptable and fair ceiling or formula for Kapiti rates which is why I voted against the current rate increases.

I also note that in my experience the LTP can change quite dramatically when it goes through the LTP process/update (every three years) . I expect the next LTP to get a bit of a shake up and for it to potentially change quite dramatically due to Three Waters and government legislative impact .

2. Council Staffing Costs

Between June 2022 and June 2025, the Kapiti Coast District Council's (KCDC's) total staffing costs are projected to rise by 50%. This includes a 15% increase in staff numbers (FTEs) and at least a 24% rise in average cost per FTE.

- ***If you are a current councillor seeking re-election: Why did you support this level of increase, and what – if anything – would you do differently in the next term to manage costs?***

ANSWER:- I'm quite surprised and would dispute the 50% increase in staffing cost , especially since in that time there has only been a 15% increase in staff numbers . Some factors that would be impacting this figure that have occurred in that time frame are

:- *Nearly doubling the size of the infrastructure programme for delivery, this would require an increase in staff numbers around delivery*

:- *Moving from using external contractors to building internal capacity (cheaper option)*

:- *KCDC has had a LTP geared towards capacity for growth*

:- *Covid has heavily impacted the employment market with large increase in remuneration, this is compounded by larger salaries being available down the road in Central Govt and Wgtn Council , There has been significant cost impact around those reasons. If we want good staff we need to offer competitive wages .*

:- I would note that since the new CEO has come on board (halfway through 2023 financial year) , staff number increase have slowed down as the organisation has been re configured to be more “fit for purpose ”

With regards to what I would do differently, I would look to potentially stretch out the CAPEX programme, if service levels are to be cut to decrease wage cost, that would be a discussion (and consultation) for the next LTP. I have already been a part of change from the last triennium to this triennium with the New CEO coming on board, The organisation is working a lot more efficiently than it has previously and I will continue with oversight to ensure that trend continues.

- ***If you are a new candidate: Do you consider this level of increase acceptable? If not, how would you address it if elected?***

3. Economic Development Spending

The LTP plans to spend an average of \$3.1 million per year on “economic development” over the next decade, mostly funded by residential rates.

Would you support continuing this level of spending?

- If yes: Why?

ANSWER:- I support that the Kapiti Coast requires an Economic development strategy based around growth, business support and attraction, work force capacity building, tourism, as well as the many other facets that are involved in building a strong and resilient community . I campaigned on the delivery of a strategy (there wasn't one) and the independent board to give it oversight, and have been very proud to land it. Currently an Independent trust is being set up, to be run by business for business with the expectation that council will receive a dividend payout once that starts working, these funds will off set the Economic development Rates requirement, which I believe will be a great outcome for the ratepayer.

Councils spend money in all sorts of ways to support community growth . Turn over in the 24/25 year is forecast to be 141 million , I was under the impression the ED was a bit less than 3.1 but note you talk to an average, but I support what is currently spent in this area.

- If not: What level of spending would you support instead?

4. Toi Mahara Gallery Funding

Funding to the Toi Mahara gallery increased from \$218,600 in 2022/23 to \$671,300 in 2025/26—a 207% rise.

Would you support this level of funding continuing over the next three years?

- If yes: Why?
- If not: What level of funding would you support instead?

ANSWER:- Quite a loaded question this, and not straight forward. I had issues around how this project's opex was not included in the initial discussions , but that was before my time. This is a situation inherited by this Council and a lot of work has been done to bring that cost down (it was

initially higher), that included bringing staff cost inhouse to Council to better manage how that would work , i.e. potential cross over staffing with the library .

A lot of districts have a central Gallery and Toi Mahara is supported by many elements of our community, but having a gallery, libraries and museums do come at a cost to the community . I would like to see external grants being applied for to assist in the operation cost of running Toi Mahara.

5. **Debt Reduction and Rates Burden**

KCDC plans to reduce its debt from a peak of \$345 million (in 2030) to \$262 million by 2034, largely funded through higher rates.

Do you support this debt reduction strategy? Why or why not?

Answer :- Although I appreciate the idea behind debt reduction so as to create more head space for resilience in case of emergency, I think the current strategy is too aggressive. Debt is a tool to use to spread the intergenerational equity of infrastructure for 30-50 years. Also rates are just another form of Taxation, Rates come out of the same pocket that pays for utilities and tax's. What is a fair formula for rates ? no one can tell me ! work needs to be done to establish what is a fair and reasonable \$\$ amount for Rates as a baseline so that limits can be set , or there needs to be a serious grown up discussion with Central Govt around deliveries of Both Capital and Social infrastructure and how it is paid for as we move forward, because the current system is no longer fit for purpose In My opinion.

Kapiti also needs to explore the development of other revenue streams to assist in minimising the rates burden .

6. **Capital Expenditure Programme**

The LTP proposes \$799 million in capital spending over 10 years—about a third of the Council's current fixed asset value—putting considerable upward pressure on rates, especially through increased depreciation costs.

If (re)elected, how would you prioritise infrastructure spending to balance affordability and essential services?

Answer :- Council already has very good systems in place to identify infrastructure requirements and relevant planning through 2024-54 Infrastructure plan. The quality of the plan is highlighted in the fact that we are keeping our three waters infrastructure ring fenced in house while other Councils are not . KCDC invests in its infrastructure and debt (supported by depreciation allowance) is how this cost is spread over the life of the asset . The question is , are rates enough to pay for it , and I don't think so. Some funding needs to come from general taxation to support Councils to deliver on big ticket infrastructure as IMO it is unreasonable to think it can be delivered by rating alone . I do and will continue to advocate for this point of view if re-elected.

- Are there specific projects you would delay, reduce, or cancel? Why?

7. Rates Cap Proposal

The Government is exploring the possibility of capping local authority rate increases.

Do you support the idea of capping rate increases? Why or why not?

Answer:- What is being capped ? That needs to be established first, I do support a ceiling on rates, but what does that look like has yet to be defined and that should be addressed first . Rates capping has not worked in Aussie , the main issue being , Infrastructure needs to be paid for by someone and just limiting the money to do that is not the answer. Capping sounds great but in reality I think there are better, more realistic ways that this required spend can be addressed, but that conversation/outcome has to involve the Central Government. If Re elected I will be lobbying for this to happen.

Transparency

8. Public Engagement

Do you believe KCDC currently engages well with the community on key plans like the LTP?

- If yes: Please explain.

ANSWER:- Having been in Council for 2 triennums now I have seen a great improvement in community engagement. This has also been reflected in the amount of responses that KCDC receives during its various forms of consultation; Vision Kapiti engagement had thousands of responses.

There have been many forms of engagement - “ have you say ” , Pop ups at Markets, libraries and other community spaces, emailing out that consultation is taking place and links to participate, Newsletters etc

Could it be better ? there is always room for improvement and in ways/pathways used to engage . Citizen assemblies or just local community type meetings are something I would like to explore

if not: What would you do differently?

9. Flood Mapping Consultation

Are you satisfied with the Council's recent consultation process on the revised flood hazard maps?

- If yes: Why?

ANSWER:-This has been quite a compressive process and as a process is still underway. Maps are being updated (last time was 2017) and with the increase in technology the maps will be more granular in detail which will mean more detailed information and modelling will be able to be conducted for current and future planning . People affected have been sent information and invited to engage and a large number have . There have also been pop ups around the district that were well attended . There will also be comprehensive feedback to those that have engaged . I am happy that this has been a robust consultation process and has reached and been engaged with by a large number of the community .

- If not: What should have been done differently?

10. Decision-Making Behind Closed Doors

Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti has raised concerns that decisions are effectively made before public consultation and often behind closed doors and, as a result, little if anything changes through public consultation processes.

If (re)elected:

a) What will you do to minimise the use of "public excluded" sessions?

Although concerns are being aired here , In my experience there are not that many public excluded sessions in current meetings , especially in relation to the last triennum. less are being

held and when they do occur it is usually around commercially sensitive information or situations around personal privacy.

b) Will you advocate for prompt public release of decisions made in secret once confidentiality is no longer necessary?

I am not aware of decision's made "In Secret" but do advocate for decisions in public excluded to be released as soon as confidentiality is no longer necessary and would continue to do so.

11. Improving Transparency

If (re)elected, would you introduce new measures to increase Council transparency and public participation?

ANSWER:- This triennium I have found Council to be a lot more open and transparent than previously, this due to the change in the CEO and approach, which has also been driven and monitored by current councillors of which I am one. A lot of work has also gone into making key reports such as the quarterly update, annual report (as examples), easier to understand for the community and I have had a lot of positive feedback in relation to this. But that shouldn't lead to complacency. If elected I would continue to push council around ensuring transparency and easy to understand report structure, this is where the experience and understanding of how Council works that I have accumulated over the past 5.5 years becomes an asset.

- If yes: What would these be?
- If not: Why not?

Governance and Accountability

12. Voting Rights for Non-Elected Members

Somenon-elected individuals currently have voting rights on KCDC committees.

In other councils, non-elected individuals attend in an advisory role only.

Do you support continuing voting rights for non-elected committee members

ANSWER:- For clarity there are no non-elected members that vote in full Council meetings. In some committees there are appointees that bring experience into those committees, Audit and risk is a good example and they have voting rights for those committees as such . Mana Whenua also have positions on all committees with voting rights (except Council meetings) as per obligations to Te tiriti O Waitangi and local govt legislation around Maori participation in local decision making . I support the Maori Ward for this reason , it is using the democratic process for Broader Maori representation .

KCDC also has a selection of community based Advisory groups that also feed into committee and Council decisions and are a very valued part of community engagement and representation .

- If yes: Why, and would you extend this to other groups?
- If not: Why not?

13. Māori Ward Referendum

KCDC established a Māori ward without a referendum, which was later mandated by central government. The Government has since required Councils to hold a referendum on the establishment of Māori wards.

Do you believe this decision should have been put to a local referendum regardless? Why or why not?

Answer :-The process that local Government uses to establish local representation is via a representational review that is required to happen at least once every six years. This follows the same consultative process used for plan changes, the LTP process and policy and strategy updates that are also legislatively required . We use consultation for these not referendums, so it is very disappointing to again see central govt over reach into Local govt processes. Why single out Maori Wards for referendum ? it smacks of political agendas that seem to be rife in the Maori space. The Correct process was followed with regards to the last representation review where the Maori Ward was introduced , which gives democratic representation for Maori as is required via both Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Government legislation .

14. Top Three Priorities

What are the three most important changes you would want to see from the next Council compared to the current one?

I would note that a significant change from the last Triennium to the current one was the change in CEO . In my opinion that has had a profound impact on the organisation with it moving from a very adversarial and controlled space to being a more supportive, open and constructive space . IMO the organisation has turned a corner and if re-elected I would continue to support the many changes that have been made in the organisation and the direction it is headed , this in conjunction with ongoing collaboration and consultation with our Kapiti Community .

For me it's not so much as change (a lot of that has happened) as focus.

1: The Issue of rates affordability being addresses

2: Combining KCDC and Kapiti's portion of the Greater Wellington Regional Council into a unitary Council.

3: Advancing the Social and health needs assessment (as was done in housing) so that an MOU with health NZ can be put in place to advocate and lobby for delivery of more health services In Kapiti and the expansion of the kapiti health centre for 24hr Urgent care and other identified health services. Advocacy and lobbying being key.

I haven't listed financial prudence as I take it that is a critical part of a Councillors day to day role.

15. Your Experience

What relevant experience do you bring to help address the financial and affordability challenges facing KCDC over the next three years?

ANSWER:- Top of the list is 6 years as a current KCDC Elected Councillor, and that I have been committed to the role full time for that period of time. Why ? Council is a large and complex organisation and it takes time to get your head around it and to build up a strong base of accumulated knowledge . I have done those hard yards, built up my understanding of how the organisation works and accumulated the knowledge around the many different policies, strategies and plans that are in constant use by Council and that we as Councillors have Governance and oversight of. I have also built up strong relationships with Council management that also greatly assists in both my Governance role but also in helping members of the community that might be experiencing their own challenges with KCDC.

Before being elected:- I have 35 years in the hospitality industry where I have worked from entry level up into senior management Roles. I have also set and run my own businesses in the hospitality industry over that period of time, that includes financial systems and the real world understanding of them. I have had success and challenges all of which have added to my growth and understanding of business and financials as well as the developing of my leadership skills with real world experience.

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