

# 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?

I 100% reject this economic strategy embedded in the long-term plan. As your Paraparaumu Ward Councillor I argued vehemently against this strategy, The elected members who voted for this strategy have not in my view put enough weight on rate payer affordability, in that no one can actually afford this strategy. How is gods name do they expect our residents to afford pay for a doubling in rates all in order to reduce debt. With future councils most likely to take our debt up again! There is no doubt that rates and rates affordability is complex and a very real tension with delivery of services verse investing in our community. But to have a strategy that deliberately doubles rates that are already unaffordable is boarding on criminal! The next opportunity to influence this strategy is 2027 Long Term Plan I hope to be there to reject this strategy.

### 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?***

I think it would be unfair to say I support the number of staff employed as I don't.

“As councillors our responsibility is strategy and governance, not day-to-day operations. We employ one person – the Chief Executive – and staffing levels are an operational matter for him and him alone. However, councillors influence costs through the Annual Plan and Long Term Plan. The current Long Term Plan builds in 7% rates increases year on year, which in my view removes the pressure on the CE to find efficiencies and slim down the organisation.

As you can imagine CE's are extremely precious about their staff and are very reluctant to make redundancies. The other conversation in my view is, KCDC do all these work streams that are not core business, how much is spent of climate change! I have and will continue to influence these work stream or actually try and make some of them redundant!

I will continue advocate for stronger financial discipline in those plans — ensuring the CE must demonstrate cost savings and smarter delivery before turning to ratepayers. Ratepayers expect us to lead by example, and that means making sure council itself is operating as efficiently as possible.

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

I have been and continue to be against the Economic Development Strategy, voting against it. The new strategy of setting up an independent trust who will funnel rate payers' money to their own company without any meaningful governance or oversight back to the community or ratepayers is absurd affront to common sense! The view that we KCDC can spend your money better than you prevails through out this strategy. I voted and spoke out against this strategy. The container city in Waikanae is a prime example which I understand was funded through economic development rates close to \$800,000 of wasted money, in my view with absolutely no accountability. Leave the money in business and residents and let them drive their own economic development.

### 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?

I believe we should invest in culture and arts such as libraries, essential community infrastructure, But. I have been trying to get accountability on this spend for the past 3 years as a councillor, to no avail! I believe on the numbers I have seen this needs an independent review. I will continue to argue for accountability transparency and answers to this question. When I pushed this issue I was told this is a “operational spend” and as such outside our remit. I will continue to push for a review on Toi Mahara and can only hope enough of the new councillors agree so we can get some answers. I believe there are many, many thousands of rates payers' money that could be saved in this area. A full independent review will dictate what is appropriate and what model to go forward with, such as a volunteer model or slimmed down model.

## 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?***

NO, What I can't understand in this strategy is we have accumulated this debt over the past say 60 years, but we want to smash it out in the next 7 years. Then some future council then says hey look we have all the debt head room let's spend, spend on some project, most likely a vanity project! At what cost do we enforce more unaffordable rates to pay this debt. I will tell you! At the cost of a functioning community, fixed income homes, retirees, middle NZ, beneficiaries actually everyone including renters. This strategy is going to break the back of our community. So, no I am 100% against it. How about we live within our means try and run a small surplus and pay down debt as the community can afford

## 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?***

- Are there specific projects you would delay, reduce, or cancel? Why? As far as I am aware the two major nice to have spends currently in the Long Term Plan and under way are the Otaki Pool upgrade and the Waikanae Library. I would not stop those projects. The big infrastructure projects such as pipes, water infrastructure is needed to support our growth. Having said that we must be laser focused on only spending on need not want, ensure that projects are well costed prior to sign off so they don't blow their budgets. I would assess project by project based on best evidence as to need, not nice to have

## 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?***

Yes I would, I think the current plan is the perfect example of why we need a cap. That will force council and councillors to live within their means! And it might just mean we can actually afford to live here and retire here.

## Transparency

### 8. Public Engagement

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

- If yes: Please explain.

Yes I think the documents prepared are easy to read and the process is open for members of the public to feed in through their councillors, open briefings. The unfortunate fact is most of the community has no interest in engaging in the process, this is not necessarily a fault of the process or the documents produced by council. Having said that we have seen in this term some shocking examples of bad engagement and communication between the council and the community, this is definitely a area that can and should be better.

- 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?
- If not: What should have been done differently

This has not been a good process and I have been asking questions and advocating for transparency, use of good science working with the appropriate general manager! The way this was communicated to the public, being rushed with data that was immediately questioned was not good. I have been supporting CRU in their efforts for accountability. I have been actively behind the scenes pushing for accountability and a good process. My advocacy has had some change but there needs to be more pressure to ensure we get this right. It is critical to every resident in Kapiti that this process is based on up to date data, verified information and good science.

### 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?***

To be honest I thought KCDC was quite good at briefings that are open to the public. The only closed briefings I have been involved in are areas that have commercial sensitivity or issues where councillors need to be brutally open. But very supportive of having closed briefings when expressly needed. I would challenge staff if I thought a briefing should be open (as I have done in the past 3 years)

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

I Already do that through building strong relationships based on respect and ability to be straight and direct always remembering that I am there to serve the community I do not represent employed staff. And as such, I am quite comfortable asking hard hitting questions holding staff to account for their decisions. I have on a number of occasions taken issues and advocated directly to the CE having frank and challenging conversations. Being on the council you need to be able to build relationships where you can speak your mind. You are not there to be friends!

#### **11. Improving Transparency**

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

- If yes: What would these be?

I am open to suggestions as to what that would look like! So yes

- If not: Why not?

## Governance and Accountability

### 12. Voting Rights for Non-Elected Members

Some non-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?***

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

The only person who should be non-elected that gets to vote in meetings should be the chair and deputy chair of the risk and audit committee who I am happy with being independent.

I believe in the Democracy of being elected!

### 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?***

*Yes at the election in October this year*

KCDC currently has unelected 3 iwi representatives on all meetings with full speaking and voting rights. On full council 3 iwi have full speaking rights but not voting rights. These 3 iwi are paid the same as elected members (the money is sent to the respective IWI and they spend it how they like, I would assume they give it to the member attending but this is up to them).

The council spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to have a maori ward at this election. The cost came from once voting for a maori ward it triggered a statutory requirement to have a representation review, knowing the maori ward question was going to a referendum in this election! At great cost.

Those who voted for the maori ward knew it was going to cost ratepayers hundreds of thousands of dollars for the maori ward even though there was a referendum in this election. I believe we should have waited for the result of this referendum and listened to the community.

I understand the maori ward is extra not instead of. This would mean in every committee 3 x unelected maori representation and 1 x maori ward. Full council 3 iwi speaking rights and 1 maori ward speaking and voting, meaning a block. And whilst I agree council should meet its obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi I believe this is over representative, and I do not agree with this!

### 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?***

1: Review of spending to focus on core business, Infrastructure, Regulatory and Public service

**2:** Review and cut wasteful spending being accountable to every dollar spent including reviewing the long term plan and preparing for change in 2027

**3:**Winding back the Economic Development Strategy and sensible coastal planning and flood mapping

#### 15. Your Experience

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

*I have been a councillor for the past three years. It is not easy coming in on your first term and having impact. It takes time to understand the machine and how it manipulates councillors. I feel much more equipped to push back, moderate and influence being a second term councillor (if elected)*