

CONCERNED RATEPAYERS KĀPITI: CANDIDATE QUESTIONER 2025

1. PROJECTED RATES INCREASES

Projected Rates Increases: 115% Over 10 Years

Do you support these planned increases?

No. Here's why:

- A 115% increase is unaffordable and economically damaging, erodes disposable income across our region and especially harms residents on fixed incomes in particular seniors on super.
- We propose to **cap rate rises at 3% per annum on average**. Lower increases may be possible once we access full council financials, but we won't make empty promises
- We've reviewed publicly available financial data and LGOIMA material, our analysis shows this cap is achievable.
- Cost-neutral budgeting and having a good look at the Long-Term Plan will help identify and cut unnecessary spending.

With six WE LOVE KĀPITI candidates standing, we'll have the numbers to deliver this rates cap if elected.

2. COUNCIL STAFFING COSTS

50% Increase in Staffing Costs (2022 – 2025) which includes at least a 24% increase in average costs per FTE.

Do you consider this acceptable?

No. Here's our position:

- Rates are funding increasing numbers of staff and at higher salaries, a double burden for ratepayers.

What We'll Do If Elected

- Refocus council on core services, reduce or cease non-essential activities like:
 - Intergenerational inequity reporting
 - Emissions target setting - central government function
 - Local health strategy work – central government function
- Conduct a structural review to reduce full time employees where appropriate.
- Implement cost-neutral budgeting, no scope for unchecked staffing growth.
- Respect staff roles but advocate for discipline and restraint in future hiring.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPENDING

\$3.1M Per Year on Economic Development Do

you support this level of spending?

This is a complex question, and I need more information before I can give a simple black and white answer. Here's why:

I totally support economic growth – it is essential for our community and here are my suggestions to help enable it:

- **Attract people to live and work in Kāpiti** by supporting development that reflects our community character, personality and beauty.
- **Support local enterprise:** Make council processes positive and efficient so businesses and entrepreneurs are encouraged to set up here and flourish. This seems to be the biggest problem for industry go-forward.
- **We'll review the current governance model to ensure it is fit for purpose**, especially with a \$3.1m budget on the table. It's vital this is aligned with our goal to reduce rates and deliver real value. At the same time, we'll explore fresh, creative ways to attract private investment and ease the burden on ratepayers. I'm still gathering information to assess how well current spending and processes serve our community.
- **Celebrate what makes us unique:** Keep funding iconic events like the Kāpiti Arts Trail, Kāpiti Food Fair and Māoriland Film Festival, they're the heartbeat of our district.
- **Growing together:** Economic development isn't just about numbers, it's about people, pride, and building a thriving future for everyone. While reducing rates is essential, we also need to explore ways to prosper. **Smart budgeting matters, but so does opportunity.**

4. TOI MAHARA GALLERY FUNDING

Toi Mahara Gallery Funding: +207% Increase Do you support this level continuing?

No. Here's why:

- Funding rose from \$218,600 (2022/23) to \$671,300 (2025/26), a 207% increase.
- Operating costs jumped from \$436K to \$785K, mainly due to staffing.
- We support **baseline funding at 2022/23 levels**, with CPI-based adjustments only.

What We Propose

- Focus on building a **resilient, cost-effective operating model**, that does not rely on constantly escalating funding.

5. DEBT REDUCTION AND RATES BURDEN

KCDC Debt Reduction Strategy

Do you support it?

No. Here's why:

- KCDC plans to cut debt from \$345m (2030) to \$262m (2034), funded by steep rate hikes.
- This aggressive repayment drives cumulative **rates increases**.
- Assets are being paid off faster than their useful life, **not intergenerationally fair**.
- True equity means future users help pay for long-lived assets they benefit from.
- Under our 3% rates cap, debt would peak in 2034, like KCDC's but without overburdening current ratepayers.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING PRIORITIES

How would you balance affordability and essential services?

- LTP proposes \$799m in capital spending over 10 years - a third of Council's asset base.
- We propose reducing this by at least \$50m without compromising core infrastructure.
- We'll work with officials to:
 - Identify assets that can be deferred or reevaluated
 - Understand population growth needs and service gaps
 - Ensure compliance with new legislation (e.g. water quality under LWDW)
 - Prioritise stormwater and flood protection

Examples of Excessive Spending

- \$15m Waikanae Library rebuild
- \$5m on Coastal Adaptation Process – undertaken before hazard identified and used incorrect data
- Strategic Land Purchase (\$17.3m) and Parks Land Purchase (\$37.7m), need review

7. RATES CAP PROPOSAL

Support for Rate Capping Do

you support it?

Yes, with strong local focus.

- Many ratepayers are on **fixed incomes**; Council must be fiscally responsible.
- We propose **3% annual cap on average** for Kāpiti, but **one-size-fits-all national cap** may not suit all councils, some face higher infrastructure needs.
- Caps should reflect **local conditions**, not blanket formulas.
- We'll lobby Central Government to help design a fair, flexible rate capping framework.
- A cap encourages a **culture of cost control**, not cost-plus spending.

8. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Current Engagement on Key Plans (e.g. LTP) Do

you believe KCDC engages well?

No. Here's why:

- Consultation starts too late, after staff have shaped or dismissed options.
- Discounted options lack explanation or transparency.
- Public documents are vague, little detail, hard to access deeper info.
- Drop-in sessions are one-on-one, often during work hours, not inclusive.
- Online surveys offer limited space for meaningful feedback.

What We'd Do Differently

- Invite community input before options are drafted.
- Share clear, detailed analysis of all options.
- Host open forums at varied times to suit more people.

- Encourage group discussion, not just individual feedback.

9. FLOOD MAPPING CONSULTATION

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

Not satisfied, Consultation was poor, sudden, and based on flawed data.

- Community reaction - Caused confusion and anger due to inaccurate risk assessments which used flawed and extreme modelling.
- What's needed - Clear plans for how the data will be used.
- Focus should be - On practical flood mitigation, not just mapping hazards.

This is important work for our district.

- Some areas are flood-prone due to low-lying land and wetlands.
- We'll use solid data to guide protection and upgrades, like stormwater improvements.
- New housing must not be built on flood plains.
- New developments must manage stormwater well to avoid worsening current issues.

The National Policy Statement for Natural Hazard Decision Making (NPS-NHD) guides councils on managing natural hazards in new developments.

- It covers risk levels, consequences, and community tolerance.
- Upcoming RMA reforms will set clearer rules for councils.
- Government plans to replace the RMA with:
 - A Natural Environment Act (for environmental management)
 - A Planning Act (for development and infrastructure)
- These changes matter for us. Bills are expected late 2025, with laws passed mid-2026 after public input.
- We'll keep watch as this evolves.

10. DECISION-MAKING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Concern:

Too many decisions are made before public consultation, often in secret—leaving little room for real change.

If elected, we will:

- Limit “public excluded” sessions
- Only use them when necessary.
- Push for open workshops so residents hear all views before decisions are made.
- Advocate for timely release of decisions
- Share info as soon as confidentiality ends.
- Respect privacy/commercial limits, but default to openness.
- Support the Ombudsman's call for proactive transparency in local government.

11. IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY

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

Yes, we'll boost openness and public input:

- Notify and open all meetings and workshops (unless legally confidential)
- Make it easier for residents to see how decisions are made and have their say

Why?

Because good governance means clear and transparent accountability.

12. VOTING RIGHTS FOR NON-ELECTED MEMBERS

Position: No to voting rights for non-elected members

- Non-elected members offer advice
- They're not accountable to the community
- Only elected members should vote, they're chosen to serve and speak for their area

13. MĀORI WARD REFERENDUM

Position: Yes, a referendum should be held

- Council should have asked the community
- Feedback showed the community wasn't in favour
- This time, we'll respect the democratic decision of Kāpiti residents

14. TOP THREE PRIORITIES

1. **Affordable rates** - Cap increases and ease pressure on households
2. **Common-sense decisions** - Spend wisely, focus on essentials
3. **Democracy over bureaucracy** - Listen to locals, not just process

15. YOUR EXPERIENCE

Why I'm Standing for Council:

- I'm standing with WE LOVE KĀPITI to restore affordability and cap rates at 3% per year on average and drive economic growth so our community can thrive.
- I'm deeply aware of rising costs and rates, and I'm concerned that continued hardship will drive people away, changing the community we love.

The experience I bring to tackle KCDC's financial and affordability challenges ahead are:

- **Background in finance, property investment, and advocacy for realistic coastal planning**
- **After a decade in retirement industry sales**, I've gained deep empathy for seniors living on fixed incomes, often the hardest hit by rising rates. I want families to be able to keep their loved parents close, not pushed out to distant, more affordable communities
- **Committed to cutting red tape, reducing rates, and smart, transparent spending**
- **I stand for integrity, community wellbeing**, and keeping Kāpiti a place to **live, work, raise kids, and retire with dignity**
- **I believe it will take a team to create the change our community needs** - the WE LOVE KĀPITI team are highly skilled everyday people with big hearts and a passion to create real change.
- **I want to make a difference for you.**

NAME: Joanne Welch Districtwide

DATE: 15th August 2025