

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?

As a current, and hopefully returning, Councillor, I want to see rates kept as low as possible. However, Councillors have a responsibility to consider the wider picture. That means balancing the community's ability to pay with the need for financial sustainability and debt reduction. It cannot be only about what we as individuals might prefer.

On the surface, rates may appear straightforward. In reality, councils must meet obligations under more than 40 different Acts of Parliament. This requires us to maintain and improve many of councils services while also managing growth in Kāpiti in a way that is both affordable and sustainable.

At the same time, I believe there is always room to improve how rates are managed—finding efficiencies, reducing unnecessary costs, and ensuring that every dollar is spent wisely. This is particularly important in the current economic climate, where households, rural communities, and businesses are all facing pressures.

Council itself is under similar strain. With high debt levels, significant costs tied to infrastructure and assets, and continued population growth, we are heavily reliant on rates to fund services. Setting rates too low in the short term only defers costs, leading to much higher rate increases or growing debt in the years ahead.

The real challenge—and responsibility—is to strike the right balance: keeping rates affordable while ensuring Council remains financially sustainable and able to deliver the services and infrastructure our community needs, now and into the future.

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

It is my understanding that staffing levels at the end of the 2025 financial year will be lower than in the previous two years, with numbers capped at 432 for the next three years. This comes at a time when the volume of work and the complexity of decisions facing Council are increasing—particularly with additional responsibilities handed down from central government, often without accompanying funding. From my perspective, it is clear that staff are working very hard to meet these demands.

That said, I have questioned—and continue to question—why annual salary increases are applied across the board. As good governors, it is our responsibility to scrutinise staff numbers and salary impacts on rates. However, it is important to note that staffing decisions ultimately sit with the Chief Executive, not elected members.

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?

The figure quoted in the current Annual Plan is \$2.8 million, not \$3.1 million as the question suggests, with most of this funded through residential rates. This funding is split into two parts: a portion is used within Council, while the remainder is provided to the Economic Development Board. These activities are now being transitioned to a Trust, which will create opportunities to secure external funding.

Because the primary beneficiaries of economic development are businesses, a targeted business rate is applied to help fund these activities. However, the wider community also benefits. When our economy is strong, it supports not only local businesses but also the well-being of all residents.

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?

Toi Mahara reopened in October 2023 after the redevelopment of the former gallery on the site into its current form as the district’s art gallery. Since reopening, staffing and operating levels have increased in line with its expanded role.

Of the \$6.5 million rebuild cost, \$4.5 million was raised through the efforts of the Gallery Trust. Under the newly negotiated Partnership Agreement between Council and the Toi Mahara Trust, Council will contribute up to \$605,000 annually towards operational costs. The Trust is actively exploring opportunities to increase self-funding capacity to avoid the need for further rates

support in future years. In the past year alone, the Trust secured more than \$211,000 in external revenue.

Between July 2024 and July 2025, Toi Mahara welcomed over 15,300 visitors across 13 exhibitions and 147 events, including workshops, talks, demonstrations, openings, and tours. More than half of these visitors came from outside Kāpiti, supporting both the gallery and the wider local economy. Local artists benefited through sales of their work, while cafés and the hospitality sector also saw positive flow-on effects. A cost-benefit analysis prepared in 2019 for a Waikanae Community Board grant estimated a return of \$13–\$60 for every dollar invested.

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?

The more debt we carry, the more interest we pay, so it makes sound economic sense to reduce debt—just as households aim to pay down their mortgages.

In the current financial climate, it has been a difficult but important decision for this Council to begin reducing debt. Realistically, we should never have reached this point, and responsibility lies with previous Councils. The key question now is how quickly we can bring debt down while balancing other financial pressures.

5. 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?

Over the past year, we reduced the capital expenditure programme by one third. This meant some projects, such as the Waikanae Library, were scaled back in cost, while others were cancelled altogether.

As I've noted earlier, Council is required to deliver a wide range of services—some of which may be seen as essential by some in the community but not by others. KCDC manages its infrastructure and assets through its Project Management Group, which brings together the entire Senior Management Team to provide oversight across all Council operations.

Each year, through both the Annual Plan and the Long-Term Plan, it is our responsibility as councillors to review capital expenditure almost line by line. That level of scrutiny is essential and must continue.

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?

I don't support rates capping at this stage, particularly when we don't know what the rate would be.

Cr Darriea Turley, President of Local Government NSW has urged caution around moves to introduce rate capping "That should also be of concern to the New Zealand Government because in the simplest terms: if councils fail, communities will not get the services and infrastructure they need and expect."

She says that local government's capacity to fund existing levels of services and infrastructure is under increasing stress and there is a wealth of evidence that NSW councils and their communities have been damaged by rate pegging, including adverse impacts to services, delays to infrastructure delivery and deferred maintenance, a compounding backlog of asset renewal and a lower level of community protections from natural disaster." I agree with her thoughts.

I also agree with Sam Broughton (LGNZ President) who wants the Government to keep an open mind about rates capping, and to explore other alternatives that could achieve the same result. He says the Government has indicated to us that councils need to be efficient and accountable in how their money is being used and what it delivers. I also agree with him on this.

Transparency

8. Public Engagement

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

- If yes: Please explain.
- If not: What would you do differently?

I believe there is significant room for improvement. The community should be involved in the Annual Plan, Long-Term Plan, and other Council processes much earlier.

There is also a valuable opportunity to test draft consultation documents with key community groups before they are finalised.

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?

Based on information available on the KCDC website, the data and modelling supporting the updated flood maps were in draft form and scheduled to be updated after the consultation period closed. There was no further opportunity for the public to provide feedback.

Additionally, submitters have not had the chance to be heard directly by the Councillors who will ultimately make the decision. At the time of writing, it is unclear whether Councillors will have access to the responses submitted.

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?

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

Public excluded sessions and closed briefings are sometimes held to allow Councillors to have open and frank discussions, or when commercially or personally sensitive matters are being considered. No decisions are made during these closed briefings.

During my time as a Councillor, the number of public excluded sessions and closed briefings has reduced significantly, and information is released as soon as it is appropriate.

As an elected member, it is vital that I question why a session is held in public excluded and ensure that the information is made publicly available as soon as possible.

11. Improving Transparency

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

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

The more transparent Council, its staff, and Councillors are, the better. However, information must also be fit for purpose, which can be challenging. Different people require different levels of detail, creating a range of expectations. How and where information is provided is equally important. Council needs to understand the key information needs of the community, the most effective ways to share it, and how they provide feedback.

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?

KCDC includes an iwi representative from each of the mana whenua on all its committees. These are paid positions, regardless of attendance at meetings and briefings, which often support the committee agendas. Representatives have speaking rights on all committees and voting rights on all committees except the full Council.

The Risk and Assurance Committee also includes two externally appointed members, one of whom serves as Chair. They have speaking rights within this committee and may attend other committees as they wish.

At the beginning of the new triennium all these positions and their voting rights needs to be reconsidered.

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, there should be a referendum on this issue. The outcome of the Council poll on establishing a Māori Ward was disregarded.

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:** Councillors understanding the true implications of the decisions they make
- 2:** More control and oversight of the Council work programme and spatial planning
- 3:** All Councillors are members of the Chief Executive Performance and Employment Committee (CEPEC)

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 served as a Kapiti Coast District Councillor for two trienniums, giving me extensive experience in understanding the types of decisions required and the accountability we have to those who elected us—even when I may be in the minority.

I bring a strong sense of pragmatism shaped by my rural upbringing, raising a family, and being deeply connected to Kāpiti, having lived in Waikanae for the past 26 years. I hold a

Masters in Applied Science degree and have worked as a Scientist, as well as in Compliance, Investigations, and Auditing. I am also an RMA Hearing Commissioner.

Currently, I serve as Chair of the Climate and Environment Committee, along with a number of other roles both within and outside Council.

If re-elected, I see the next triennium as a critical opportunity for elected members and staff to evaluate what has worked well—and what hasn't—over the past term, and to make the necessary improvements.

In summary, I stand for the values of respect, integrity, honesty, transparency, and inclusiveness. I am well connected to the community, and I listen to and act on the concerns of our residents.

NAME: _____Jocelyn Prvanov_____

DATE: _____17 August 2025_____