

# 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?

No. Big rate rises are not sustainable, especially for those on fixed incomes. Council must take a line-by-line approach to spending, focus on essentials, and look for efficiencies before asking ratepayers to pay more. I would aim to keep average increases as low as possible while still maintaining core services

### 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?***

The increase is unacceptable. Salaries are one of council's largest costs, and we must ensure staffing levels and pay rates are justified. I would request the CEO review positions, look to consolidate staff and only add resource where there's a clear, measurable benefit to ratepayers. Councillors in turn keep a watching brief of staffing costs.

### 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'm not convinced the current \$3.1 million a year is delivering value. Without clear evidence of return on investment, I cannot support that level of spending. There isn't good evidence of this kind of investment into economic development in New Zealand giving a return on investment. I would much

rather the Kapiti Coast invested in business development - helping existing businesses thrive and encouraging existing ones to locate here. This is far more measurable than pie in the sky economic development spending.

My primary focus however would be on removing barriers to business and development, encouraging jobs and affordable homes through a more open, enabling council that reduces consenting red tape and makes it easier and faster to develop and build.

#### 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?***

I support investing in valued community facilities like galleries, However I would want to investigate other possible ways of funding other than just from Ratepayers . I do however I believe that Local Government has a role to fund and maximise these kinds of facilities. They improve the experience of living on the Coast.

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

#### 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?***

I support reducing debt, but it can't be done solely on the backs of ratepayers through constant increases. We need to manage capital spending carefully, prioritise essential projects, and avoid overcommitting to "nice to have" initiatives.

#### 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?

I'd prioritise projects that directly benefit residents experience of living here, along with core infrastructure projects that renew existing critical infrastructure like bridges, roads, footpaths and

climate resilience that protect core infrastructure and people's homes. \$799 million over 10 years is a huge commitment, so every project must be justified, staged appropriately and delivered competently so it delivers real value.

KCDC should look to the advice produced by the Infrastructure Commission which focuses on maintenance and renewal of existing assets to gain real value from them. There should be caution applied to constructing new assets that create ongoing cost burdens for ratepayers. I would seek an independent assessment from an external party on the scope and level of the capital programme. Such an assessment should be scoped, tasked and answer to elected members, not council officers.

## 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?***

I support the principle of capping rate increases, provided councils retain the flexibility to deal separately with investment in infrastructure and capital renewals, and for genuine emergencies. A cap forces discipline and ensures councils live within their means.

## 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?

Engagement can be better. Too often consultation is box-ticking. I'd push for earlier and more genuine conversations with residents, especially before budgets and priorities are set.

### 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?

I have heard that Communication was poor, and many residents felt blindsided. I'd ensure affected communities are fully briefed and have a fair say before major changes are adopted. We all have to live with a level of risk, the council faces a balancing act of determining what that risk looks like at any given time.

### 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?**

I would minimise "public excluded" sessions to only those matters where confidentiality or genuine commercial sensitivity is required.

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

Yes – I'd push for prompt release of decisions once confidentiality no longer applies.

### 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'd introduce regular, plain-language financial updates to the community, so people can see where their money goes. I'd also make consultation feedback more visible, showing residents how their

## input influenced decisions

- 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?

I believe decision-making power should sit with elected representatives who are directly accountable to the public. Non-elected members can and should have an advisory role, but not voting rights.

### 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 – this should have gone to a referendum. Major changes to council representation should be decided by the community.

### 1. 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: Keep rates affordable through disciplined, line-by-line spending reviews.
- 2: Invest in core community facilities and infrastructure that enhance daily life and that further develops Kapiti as an economic and lifestyle destination.
- 3: Open the door to business and development to create jobs and more affordable housing.

### 14. Your Experience

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

I bring decades of local business experience and a 15-year track record in local government in Porirua. This included 3 years as Deputy Mayor. I've got wider governance experience as the current Chair of the Pataka Foundation and as a past director (10years) on the Board of the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand. I know how to scrutinise budgets, make practical decisions, and deliver results. My focus is always on value for money, strong communities, and protecting what makes those communities unique.

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