

KCDC SPEAKING POINTS 22 SEPTEMBER 2026

Thank you, Madame Chair.

I am speaking today on behalf of Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti on agenda item 7 regarding the strategic direction for the next Long Term Plan.

Firstly, we really appreciate the Council embarking on a process of early engagement with the community on the LTP. Many people have told us they want consultation before decisions are made rather than after, and so we know that early engagement is vital, as by the time the formal consultation stage is done next year, the LTP will be pretty much locked down. So thank you for giving the community a voice at this early stage.

When the LTP survey came out, we were concerned that it was an open-ended, all-things-to-all-people survey. The list of 'priorities' was presented as an unfocused mix of functions and aspirations that were not going to give the Council useful feedback to discern key choices needed to keep spending focused and future rates affordable.

Reading the summary report, it seems that this has materialised. In the report, you can find any viewpoint that you want, to defend or justify any approach that you happen to like. There are responses calling for more spending, less spending, more expansive roles in a range of areas or more restrictive roles, working to a financial constraint or suggestions that assume the Council has an unlimited source of funds.

If we were in your shoes, we would wonder what to make of it all.

For us, there are a couple of standout themes. One is a general consensus that we have reached the limit of what are affordable rates increases, and a lower rates path is required in the future. There is also a theme of Council needing to reduce discretionary or non-essential spending. And residents are actually open to you making the so-called hard choices, but they want to be taken along this journey with you, and contribute to it, rather than being given a done deal in early 2027.

Disappointingly the survey analysis report also seems to have a dismissive attitude towards the majority of survey respondents, who happen to be older people. We do not understand the apparent antipathy to the views of your older rate-paying demographic. I'm an older person – but I'm planning to be around for the next 25 years or so – and so I reckon that I have just as much of a stake in the future of this community as any rangatahi.

All that said, there are some other things to help you make sense of the jumble of views and responses that you have in front of you.

The Local Government Systems Improvement Amendment Bill was passed by Parliament last week. This sets out a narrower purpose for Local Government as well as a clear set of core functions for Councils. You can now abandon the Economic Doughnut model of trying to do everything. Instead, you can focus the upcoming LTP using the new legislation to narrow back down to your core functions as set out in the amended Local Government Act.

We understand that you are planning a further round of community engagement in October. We strongly recommend that this be a more focussed and real discussion about actual choices, trade-offs and costs. We need to get away from uncoded vagaries to specifics. We recommend a framework whereby core services are separated from those activities where there are genuine choices.

There is a group of council activities that most people would regard as core – things like water, libraries, cemeteries. Put processes in place to ensure that we are not paying over the odds for these and put them to one side.

This would allow the next engagement to focus on those activities where there is a legitimate choice on discretionary spending - whether to do more or less of something, or not at all. Cost these choices up so that the community can give you an informed view ... if you want this, or want more of it, here's what the bill would be.

We have been developing a prototype framework for this approach that we would be happy to share with you. It was surprisingly easy to put together.

Finally, thank you again for this early engagement process. This is a very welcome development, but the task now is to get away from generalities – and being all things to all people – and to get down to brass tacks. We think there is a way to do this that would work for you and for residents.

Thank you again for your time today.

Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti