Long-term Plan 2024–34

Respondent No. 168

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Kāpiti Coast DISTRICT COUNCIL
Me Huri Whakamuri, Ka Titiro Whakamua

Personal information

First name	Mark
Last name	Fielder
I'm providing a submission (choose one):	as an individual
Please let us know what ward you live in	Paraparaumu
Do you want to speak to Council about your submission at our public hearings on 2 May?	No
Are you happy for your name to be published with your feedback:	My name can be published with my feedback

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Submission

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about this LTP?

My wife and I have lived in Paraparaumu for a short period. We shifted up here from Nelson and after looking at numerous houses n the market we bought in Paraparaumu. Our house in Nelson was zoned in a flood zone and we wanted a house which was not subject to this major risk or to the risk of a rising sea level. Many of the houses here on the market we discovered were deemed at risk from these natural hazard events so we opted not purchase any of these.

The Council LTP discusses the need to increase rates and a significant part of the rate increase is to undertake projects which protect properties and infrastructure from an imminent threat of rising sea levels and also flooding. due to climate change. In our search for a place to buy it was very clear from the information supplied by Council Planners which houses were in areas potentially at risk from such natural hazards.

This climate change risk, however, is not reflected in the price or demand for these properties or in their rates. Rate calculations do not take into account the cost of risk mitigation measures needed to protect these vulnerable properties. The community as a whole, is expected by Council to share the cost of these major infrastructure projects for example, the $ 41 million replacement of the sea walls at Paekakariki and Raumati. This sends out a mixed message to house buyers and developers. They can ignore the risk and be reliant upon other rate payers to pay for any remedial work.

The risk of living in identified specific hazard areas will be born by the whole community. The policies of the Council should instead reflect the projections of their own environmental risk assessments. Any rate increase due to going ahead with these projects should be borne by those rate payers who stand to benefit the most and who have chosen to take the risk and live in these areas, not the whole community. Such proportioning of rate increases is common practice with other organisations whose customers have different risk exposures, for example, insurance companies. This proportioning of rate increases, according to risk, is fairer and more equitable than all ratepayers being treated the same and paying the same for climate change protection and damage repairs.

The concept of User Pays also needs to be applied to rate increases relating to the costs of new development and infrastructure costs. New subdivisions and in-fill subdivisions should cover the major proportion of additional costs and it should not be expected that other existing ratepayers will pay for the increased demands of these development projects. The Council needs to lead this through its policies, for example, new houses should be encouraged to be more self sufficient in their water usage, by requiring the installation of rainwater tanks as well as reasonable charging for water usage and stormwater infrastructure. New housing in flood prone areas and those potentially affected by sea level increases should either be halted or require the inclusion of a minimum foundation height above existing ground level of 1 metre, as is required by other councils. The cost of flood prevention and likely debilitating recovery costs following a major event must be minimised through proactive Council policies. The council is, after all, responsible for allowing housing development in identified risk areas.

The LTP focuses too much on revenue collection and not on controlling cost and debt at the source. It has carried out modelling risk events such as flooding and sea level increases. However this information is not incorporated into its policies which relate to these events and projects which will significantly affect the districts financial resilience. Does this show that the Council has little confidence in its own modelling ? The LTP also fails to describe trends in the district's population growth and composition over the 10 year period yet this information is fundamental to decision-making about infrastructure requirements and costs. The aging population of the district will be impacted more by significant increases in their rates and any increase should be fairly proportioned according to those who benefit most from the need for that infrastructure.

Looking at significant infrastructure projects nationally most have gone significantly over-budget. Will the cost of Kapiti's projects be any different ? There is a need for systematic and tight accountability in all project management. This begins with examining exactly what projects the district needs and their priority. Rate payers need to have a strong involvement in the decision-making. As the key purpose of the Development Contributions Policy states, a fair proportion of the cost of growth will be funded by those who cause the need for that infrastructure. How is s a "fair proportion" determined ? The LTP does not demonstrate this in its proposed system of rate changes and rate increases.

The LTP does not explain how the benefit and performance of its major infrastructure projects will be evaluated in terms of benefit to the community. If assessment is to be useful and fair then the evaluation of major projects should be transparent from the start of the process. Rate payers are expected to cover the cost of overruns in many projects which remain unexplained and unaccounted for. Council must not look upon their rate payers as a bottomless bucket which accepts these unexplained cost increases and lack of tangible benefits. The cost of major projects identified in the LTP does not indicate any likely range in cost. Recommended rate increases are largely based upon the arbitrary cost of these major projects but how accurate are these cost estimates? There is no mention in the LTP of efficiency incentives to reward contractors for meeting budgets and completing these on-time. This is best practice in most major projects these days. The measurement of efficiency of projects needs to assess their cost/benefit to the whole community, their robustness and their longevity. If projects' efficiencies are not able to be assessed tangibly then they are high risk and rate payers should not be held liable to bear this risk.

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