

OIR: 2425/1037

19 August 2024

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED],

Request for Information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) (the LGOIMA)

Thank you for your email of **26 July 2024** requesting the following information:

- 1. As with previous years, we are inviting New Zealand's Mayors to nominate examples where under your watch you (or your officials) have found savings, and (where they are easily calculated or reasonably estimated) the savings amounts.***

In June 2024, the Council adopted the Long-term Plan to reduce operating costs and minimise the impact on rates without compromising service levels. This plan includes:

- cutting \$9.4 million in operating costs by prioritising funding for essential infrastructure and community facilities;
- capping permanent staffing numbers for the first three years; and
- reprioritising existing economic development budgets to identify future revenue-generating opportunities for supplementary funding.

- 2. Secondly, we would like to know what, if any, specific instructions have been issued by you (or your Council as a whole) to your Town Clerk/CEO (or other officials) about savings targets since the last local body elections.***

The adoption of the Long-term Plan 2024-34, the Council has consulted the community on a number of strategies to ensure long-term financials and infrastructure services of the district are sustainable. The strategies are:

- **[Financial strategy 2024](#)**
This strategy sets out the overall financial goals of the Council for the Long-term Plan 2024–34 through building on the current financial position by setting out where the Council wants to be positioned during, and at the end of, the long-term plan period.

Please note that any information provided in response to your request may be published on the Council website, with your personal details removed.

- [Infrastructure strategy 2024–54](#)

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to ensure the district's core infrastructure services (transport, stormwater, water supply, wastewater, and coastal assets) for the next 30 years are managed efficiently and effectively.

3. For example, Central Government has tasked certain government department heads to find at least 6.5 percent. Has your council tasked officials with a similar target? If so, how much?

The Council has not been tasked with targets by Central Government. However, under the Local Government Act 2002, the Council undertakes three yearly consultations with the community to set out the overall financial goals for the 10 years ahead. The Council's adopted Long-term Plan 2024-34 is available here:

[Long-term Plan 2024-34](#)

4. We ask for the details as a request for official information under the LGOIMA. Where that information exists, please provide the date of the request, and the relevant minute, communication, or instruction to the CEO/relevant officials.

In June 2024, the Council adopted the Long-term Plan which sets out the overall financial goals of the Council for 2024-34. This Plan is available on our website at:

[Long-term Plan 2024-34](#)

5. Please also include any examples where a council committee (such as Audit and Risk) have identified areas of possible savings (or cutting wasteful spending) since the election. If so, what, if any, reductions in spending were actually made (and from when)?

We have previously provided (OIR:2223/431 – 17 January 2023) and are continuing to implement policies and operational initiatives that provide our communities and ratepayers with efficiencies. These include:

- a. Continue upgrading air blowers in a wastewater treatment plant to reduce power consumption.
- b. When renewing playground equipment, we undertake any required works on surrounding footpaths at the same time. This ensures we can maximise the value and efficiency of these contracts and minimise disruption, including applying procurement practices that support costs savings over the long term through one-off multi-year engagements.
- c. Applying 'growth' related demand on recreational open space by first accommodating the need through cost-effective enhancements and upgrades within the existing network where possible before building new assets.
- d. Continuing 'no mow' areas and areas where we can reduce the number of times we mow/cut the grass. As we manage over 500 hectares of parks and reserves, this is a significant saver of both time and fuel costs.

- e. Continue using Hybrid mowing equipment. While more costly up front to purchase, over the lifetime of the machine, it provides savings along with improving carbon footprint.
- f. Continuing trialling 'warm' season grass species that while requiring more work to establish into a sports field, over time will require less water and maintenance.
- g. Ongoing investing in electric vehicles, transitioning most streetlights to energy-efficient LED lights and supporting Energise Ōtaki solar farm which provides power and resilience to the town's wastewater treatment plant.
- h. Ongoing creation a paperless environment - now we have approximately 50% of accounts being paid by direct debit and a similar percentage of invoices being sent by email. We will continue to transition paper-based forms to online forms, including:
 - ongoing encouragement of rates payments by direct debits, which also qualifies for remission of penalties (under rates penalty remission policy)
 - encouraging invoices/communications sent by email instead of post with a quarterly prize draw of up to \$500 if receiving invoices by email and paying by direct debit
 - working to change existing paper-based forms to online forms that can be completed on our website or sent in electronically; and
 - changing paper-based accounts payable to electronic invoices based as well as workflow built in for more effective and efficient payment processes.
- n) Capital invested in upgrading Spa Pool filtration at CAC, reducing operational and maintenance costs.
- o) Capital invested in renewing Waikanae Pool filtration systems, resulting in less consumable cost and manpower spent maintaining water quality.
- p) Reviewed microbiology testing services to come-in house, stage 1 has now been completed and resulted in savings of approximately \$8,000 per annum. Stage 2 will be carried out in the next financial year.
- q) We reviewed and adjusted our 'user pay services' to deliver better cost-to-revenue efficiencies.
- r) Reallocated budget to appoint an in-house maintenance coordinator saving on contractor costs.
- s) Revisited chemical suppliers' pricing competitiveness.
- t) Improved stock management and pricing in our cafe and retail to ensure appropriate margins.
- u) Implemented Microsoft Shifts for operational team management saving the equivalent of 0.25 FTE.

- v) Reducing rates by re-scoping and value engineering some planned capital works due to significantly increased construction costs.
- w) Developing a draft workforce strategy which will be aligned with work prioritisation.
- x) Commencing a review of the Council's insurance portfolio and exploring alternative risk transfer options.
- y) Upgrading our 118 older persons housing portfolio to meet Healthy Homes standards and other improved efficiencies which will save maintenance costs over the lifetime of building.

As we did not treat these initiatives as specific projects, we are unable to provide all cost saving estimates and some may not have directly contributed cost savings, but increased efficiencies or delivered better services to our communities and ratepayers.

Ngā mihi,



Andrew Pervan

Acting Group Manager Corporate Services
Te Kaihautū Ratonga Tōpū