



**Let's make a plan and  
build our future.**



**Consultation Document**



**WHANGANUI  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

# The future of Whanganui is in your hands

Every three years, the council must create a 10-year plan for the district that details our vision, where we aim to be in 10 years (by 2034), what we will need to do to get there and how much it will cost.



This consultation gives you the opportunity to provide feedback on our 10-year plan, which will provide council with clear direction as we make some big decisions over the next decade. If you'd like to understand the Long-Term Plan process in a little more detail, please refer to our dedicated webpage [www.whanganui.govt.nz/long-term-plan-2024](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/long-term-plan-2024)



## What we're consulting on

You will have the opportunity to provide feedback on:

- the best ways we can use rates to continue providing essential services
- what projects and investments you're most passionate about to make Whanganui a wonderful place to live

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# Developing the Long-Term Plan

## A story of two halves

**This Long-Term Plan is being developed in unique circumstances.**

We understand everyone around district is feeling the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis. We want to continue offering the best services to our communities, but we too need to take finances into consideration. That's why we're developing the Long-Term Plan with two main focuses in mind.

### Keeping rates affordable

Through the forecasting process for our 10-year plan, council understands the reality of how sharply costs have risen, whether it's for fuel, concrete, insurance, interest or other things we need to purchase to deliver services and facilities.

Despite these difficulties, Whanganui District Council is in a good position compared to other councils across the country. Our council has comparatively low debt, and over the years we've put a reasonable level of investment into maintaining assets, including our water infrastructure. This means we have a great foundation to build on to see our district prosper in the coming years.

To keep rates affordable, we're going to need to make some tough decisions, and we need your feedback to help shape what these decisions look like.

### Future-proofing our district

When we're looking ahead to the future, there are a number of things we are taking into consideration.

We are expecting our population to **grow to approximately 53,000 people by the year 2034** and we expect Whanganui to be made up of **21,500 households**.

That's a **growth of around 350 people per year**. Also, **22 percent of the people in our district are 65 years or older** and we believe that this will continue to **grow by an average of 1.8 percent per year until 2034**.

As our city grows, we'll continue working to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of our community, both in the present and for the future. Aspirational forward thinking is important, and through our [wellbeing survey](#) you told us we need to focus on local infrastructure, community togetherness, environmental stewardship and business development, amongst other things.

To future-proof our growing district we've listened to your feedback. We're now in the process of developing a new strategy that will guide the district and council for years to come (more information can be found on page 14).

## Striking a balance

We're in good shape economically and our population is growing as people realise this is an incredible place to live. Whanganui's future is bright – **we just have to get through this tough economic time together.**

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# What we're thinking about when planning for our future

When creating a 10-year plan, it's important to consider everything that might have an influence on our approach...

## Growing city

Whanganui is growing at a steady and manageable rate. Between now and 2034, our population will grow at a rate of around 0.8 percent per year, compared to 1.3 percent growth for the country as a whole.

We are expecting our population to grow from approximately

**49,000 to 53,000**  
people by the year 2034.

POPULATION GROWTH

 **0.8%**  
per year

## Households increasing

In the year 2023, Whanganui was made up of approximately 20,500 households. By the year 2034, we expect this to grow to 21,500. This will add approximately 1000 households to our rating base, increasing the number of ratepayers to spread the cost.

BY THE YEAR 2034, WE EXPECT HOUSEHOLDS IN WHANGANUI TO GROW TO

**21,500**



## Ageing population

Whanganui has an ageing population. In 2023, 22 percent of the people in our district were 65 years or older, compared to 16 percent for the rest of New Zealand. Infometrics projects this age group will continue to grow by 1.8 percent per year on average until 2034. By comparison, our working age group (15-64) will grow by only 0.3 percent per year.



AGEING POPULATION WILL CONTINUE TO GROW BY

**1.8%** per year on average

## Capacity for growth

Whanganui has adequate infrastructure and schooling capacity to support this level of growth. However, much like the rest of the country, we are facing a housing shortage.

We will need approximately 100 extra houses per year to accommodate the growth in our district between now and 2034. In 2021 and 2022, there were 180-195 building consents issued each year; however, this number is expected to start trending downward due to construction costs.

## Local government reforms

Local government is going through a period of transition, with a significant rethinking of the way our sector operates at the central government level. This includes the Future for Local Government review, water services and resource management, which are all evolving progressively and influenced by a new government composition established in late 2023.

## Three waters reform

The government recently passed legislation to repeal Three Waters legislation. This means that councils will retain full control of water services. This Long-Term Plan has been prepared in accordance with current legislation.



Find out more in the [Whanganui District Snapshot 2023](#).

## Climate change

Whanganui District Council is committed to mitigating the impacts of climate change on our district, as well as enabling our community and local economy to become better adapted and resilient in the face of climate change. Our response to climate change is guided by our [Climate Change Strategy](#) that was approved in 2021

# Message from the Mayor

## Kia ora koutou,

A huge amount of mahi has gone into formulating Whanganui District Council's draft Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 and we're really looking forward to hearing your thoughts on it. The Long-Term Plan is the council's most important strategic document, setting our direction and priorities for the next 10 years. By giving feedback, you'll be helping to shape the future of our amazing district for generations to come.

## Some context

Every three years the long-term plan is comprehensively reviewed so we can adjust our course as needed. This time around the draft plan very much reflects the times we find ourselves in. Many households are facing unrelenting cost-of-living pressures and we've had a keen awareness of this in the many meetings held to discuss a way forward.

Councils across the country are also feeling the strain due to significant cost escalations caused by inflation and interest and insurance rate hikes. In many cases, councils are discussing rates rises of over 20 percent.

Initially our council was facing an average residential rates rise of 17 percent from 1 July 2024, but with extra scrutiny and extensive discussion this has been brought down to a proposed 10.6 percent increase. We are aiming to try to minimise the effect this will have on council services and facilities. This works out to an extra \$8.50 a week for the average residential household. It's important at this point to note that this is an average – rates vary significantly from one household to the next.

## Our six-point plan

Difficult times call for bold measures, so the council has developed a six-point plan to keep costs down. It includes:

- growing the population base (so there are more people to pitch in on rates)
- improving efficiency (working smarter)
- exploring alternative funding for projects (such as central government and grant funding)
- cutting council services (such as closing facilities)
- selling assets (to repay debt)
- identifying sources of non-rates revenue (such as user pays products and services or increasing returns on our property portfolio).

**It's up to you, our community, to tell us how hard you want us to go with each of these measures – so make sure you get in there and have your say.**

Any long-term plan is about striking a balance between keeping rates affordable and investing in our district so people can thrive for generations to come. We want to know whether you think we're getting it right.





## Final thoughts

I know times are tough for many, particularly those on low incomes. If you're reading this with genuine concern about paying your rates in this era of unprecedented costs, I'd encourage you to get in touch with the council rates team sooner rather than later to make a plan. Phone 06 349 0001 or email [rates@whanganui.govt.nz](mailto:rates@whanganui.govt.nz)

Compared with councils across the country our debt is low, and we have been prudent in investing in maintaining our assets over the years, including water infrastructure. This means we have a solid foundation to build on to see Whanganui flourish in coming years.

When you look at the way things are tracking, our district is growing and going ahead. We predict our population will grow significantly in the next decade as more and more people realise Whanganui is a great place to live, work and play.

My primary focus since I took office has been listening to the community. I'm really looking forward to hearing your thoughts on our draft Long-Term Plan so that together we can balance keeping rates as low as possible with ensuring we are a growing, ambitious and energised district in the future.



Andrew Tripe  
Mayor of Whanganui



# Three years of progress

We're proud of what we've achieved over the past three years in partnership with our community.



Whanganui won recognition as an internationally significant UNESCO City of Design.



We established a strategic housing governance group with Kāinga Ora and Tupoho to help deliver new housing.

Almost 4.9km of new shared pathway sections have been constructed within the last three years. The wider pavements for shared use make it easier and safer for pedestrians and cyclists to move around the district.



Our Tākaro Play Trailer continues to be widely used by the community. It was booked 335 times and reached over 6700 tamariki since it was launched in November 2021.



We completed a number of upgrades to our piped infrastructure (water supply, stormwater and wastewater networks) to improve resilience. This included laying over 38km of new and replacement pipes over the past three years.

Our community climate action fund was launched.



In 2022/23 our libraries welcomed 300,000 visitors and issued nearly 570,000 items, including 115,000 digital items, to our 21,000 members.



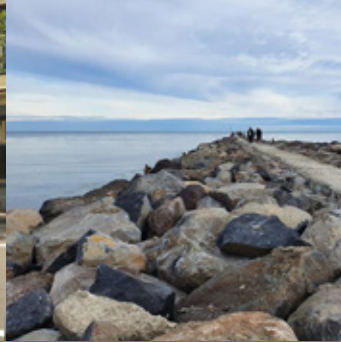
We revamped the Castlecliff Domain playground with an upgrade of the flying fox, a new slide, sun shelter, bins and accessible seating.



A new creative and vibrant streetscape was rolled out successfully in Drews Avenue. The project was majority funded by the Waka Kotahi Innovating Streets initiative



The project to replace our ageing **parking meters** in the town centre was completed, reducing the number of meters from 216 to 59. These now allow for card payments to be made.



A major construction phase of **Te Pūwaha, the Whanganui Port** revitalisation project, moved forward early in 2023 with tender documents being released for the Whanganui Port rebuild.



We continued to offer assistance to building owners to undertake **heritage enhancement** work. The heritage grant fund now covers the town centre and heritage projects throughout the Whanganui district that show substantial benefit to the wider community.

The operational management of our **aquatic centres** transitioned to Whanganui District Council in 2022.



**Earthquake strengthening** is now complete on the **Sarjeant Gallery** redevelopment project with the gallery projected to re-open in late 2024.



The **velodrome cycle track** was removed with a high-performance wooden accoya replacement which is warrantied for 50 years to withstand the elements.



As part of ongoing development at the **airport** and to ensure the facility's future viability, the runway was resurfaced and the airport terminal building gained a new roof.



The **Masters Games** were held at the War Memorial Centre in 2021 and 2023. **The War Memorial Centre** was shortlisted for Best Venue 2021 at the New Zealand Events Award.



We completed the 600m extension of **Fitzherbert Avenue to Mosston Road**, installing reticulation services, utilities, footpaths and roading.

# Keeping you up to date

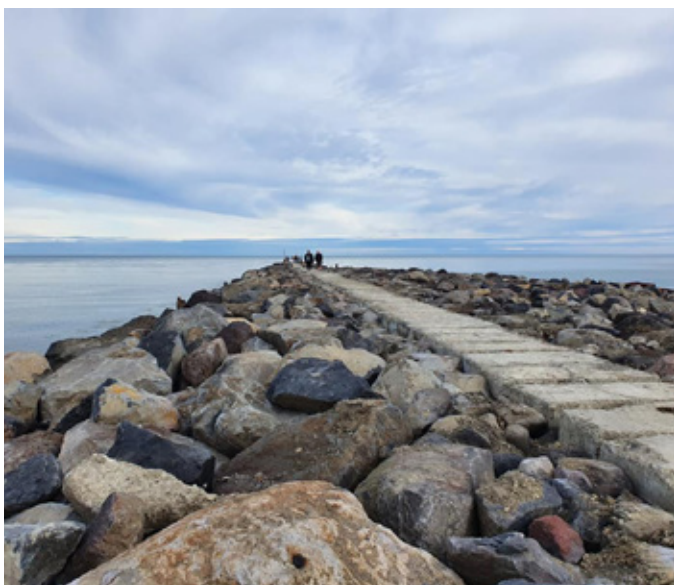
We've also got some large projects that are underway, so here's an update with how we're tracking...

## Whanganui Port

Whanganui Port commenced its revitalisation project in 2017 with the remediation of its primary wharf one. The revitalisation moved to focus on wharves two and three in 2022, which are currently undergoing significant remedial work as part of Te Pūwaha, the Whanganui Port revitalisation project. The purpose of Te Pūwaha is to create a modern, purpose-built marine precinct in the centre of wharves two and three that will be a community asset for the next 50 years and beyond.

In this Long-Term Plan, we have budgeted an additional \$19 million of council funding for the Whanganui Port Limited Partnership (owned by the Whanganui District Council) to complete Te Pūwaha. This will bring council's total contribution to over \$36 million towards the overall \$70 million-plus Te Pūwaha river project being undertaken in partnership with Hapū, the Crown, the Port, Q-West and Horizons Regional Council.

This additional funding is required because the wharves at the port have significantly deteriorated since 2018 when they were first assessed. The added expenditure also takes into account construction cost escalations that have been experienced across the country in the last three years. Council will seek additional financial support from the Crown as later stages of the project's costs become clearer.



## Kerbside recycling

Residential properties in the wider urban areas of Whanganui will soon enjoy a more convenient system of recycling, with council introducing a new rates funded kerbside recycling collection service from July this year.

The kerbside recycling service will initially be provided to residential properties in the wider urban areas of Whanganui, as well as some of our larger rural settlements including Mowhanau, Fordell and Marybank. Council intends to widen the service to other rural properties over the next few years, where we can.

Properties that will receive the service will be delivered their crates along with supporting information from mid-May this year. In the coming months, council will provide the community with detailed information on the new service, including the latest guidelines on what you can and can't recycle – and how to use the three-crate system.





## Sarjeant Gallery

The redevelopment of the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua Whanganui is a major capital project, which includes earthquake strengthening and restoration of the existing heritage building, and the addition of a new, modern wing joined to the rear face of the gallery. This new wing will honour the memory of Sir Te Atawhai Archie John Tairaoa, for his contribution to leadership in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, and will be known as Te Pātaka o Sir Te Atawhai Archie John Tairaoa.

The gallery is scheduled to open in the last quarter of 2024. With the gallery recently profiled as one of National Geographic's top 20 Best Cultural Spots in the World for 2024, the

opening is sure to attract significant interest throughout a season of events and celebrations.

The Sarjeant Gallery redevelopment project is a partnership between Whanganui District Council, Whanganui Iwi, central government, large and small private donors, and trusts.

The total cost for this project is estimated to be in a range between \$69.2 million and \$71.9 million. Contributions from central government, grants and donations have met more than 77 percent of the cost of the Sarjeant Gallery redevelopment, while Whanganui District Council's contribution to the project sits at \$15 million, which will be paid for over a period of 20 years. Fundraising for the project is ongoing.

# Promoting community wellbeing

We're committed to fulfilling our purpose under the Local Government Act to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of our community, both now and for the future.

To inform our thinking on wellbeing, last year we ran 16 community events, met with a range of community leaders and organisations, and conducted a wellbeing survey to better understand:

- What does wellbeing mean to our communities?
- What do people love about Whanganui? and;
- What are our communities' priorities for both present and future generations?



The survey attracted

**661 responses,**

predominantly from local residents to Whanganui.

## What you told us

What the survey told us is that our community love Whanganui, have a deep sense of connection to this place, and that they find Whanganui to be truly unique.

### Some of the stand-outs were:

The spirit of community, our artistic and inclusive atmosphere, Te Awa Tupua Whanganui – the River, our rich Māori culture, our enjoyably warm climate, our preserved heritage buildings, and our stand-out features such as the Durie Hill elevator and the Sarjeant Gallery.

The visions for the future you shared were far reaching - you want to see wellbeing for everyone in our community, backed by affordable housing, and the strengthening of social and cultural connections. You want to see care taken today to protect and restore Te Awa Tupua Whanganui, care for future generations and mokopuna, revealing a community-wide commitment to careful guardianship of Whanganui's unique environmental and rich cultural heritage.

# Across environmental, social, economic and cultural wellbeing areas, we heard that:

## Environmental wellbeing



was ranked as the most important of the four wellbeings and was underscored by the criticality of parks, open spaces, fresh air, fresh water, the coast, and Te Awa Tupua Whanganui. 82% said that parks and open spaces have a positive impact on wellbeing. This reflects a community that values the natural environment and is committed to its stewardship.

## Social wellbeing



emerged as an area where across the country we are facing challenges with social cohesion and inequity. The most important elements of peoples' social wellbeing were friendships, family, housing, recreation, leisure time, and the quality of local neighbourhoods.

## Economic wellbeing



was centred on housing, the strength of the local economy, income, and education and training opportunities, with 68% highlighting housing as a major concern. This indicates a focus on ensuring that residents have access to affordable housing and a stable, but growing economic environment supported by high-quality infrastructure.

## Cultural wellbeing



was tied to health and wellness activities, events, music, arts, heritage and sports, with more than 60% citing events, arts and music as crucial to their wellbeing. This suggests a community that values cultural expression and activities in many different forms. The importance of accessibility and providing opportunities and events for different ages and abilities is also key.

The full survey results can be viewed at: [www.whanganui.govt.nz/Vision-for-Whanganui](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/Vision-for-Whanganui)

## Where to from here?

Our priority has been completing the Long-Term Plan and ensuring we deliver the best outcomes we can in the current economic environment.

The four wellbeings listed above provide the basis of our Long-Term Plan 2024 – 2034. However, we realise we can't deliver on wellbeing alone, our success requires more than plans and policies – it requires a joint effort and working together with our whole community. We have committed to working in collaborative leadership with Hapū and the wider community to draft a long-term vision out to 2050 which reflects what wellbeing means for the district and provides a promise to future generations of a prosperous and sustainable future for Whanganui.

Our longer-term vision out to 2050 is still in development and we will be returning to the community for your feedback on this later.

# Help us with the big decisions

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# Part 1 - Keeping rates affordable

A combination of high inflation, rising interest and insurance costs has created a difficult environment for us all, including councils. Initially, we were facing a rates rise of more than **17 percent** for next year just to maintain the status quo, so during this tough economic climate, we're looking at ways to tighten the belt to keep rates affordable.

Council has worked hard to strike the right balance and bring rates down to an increase of **10.6 percent** for next year (from 1 July 2024). This option balances minimal impact to our services while reducing costs enough to keep rates as affordable as possible.

It is important to us that our core services (roading, infrastructure, etc.) continue to receive the investment they require to keep our community safe. We also recognise the importance and support that community facilities and services (libraries, community centres, etc.) provide, especially during these difficult times.



**HAVE  
YOUR SAY  
KŌRERO  
MAI**

**We want to know how you  
would strike this balance?**

Are you happy with our approach, would you increase investment to future-proof our city, or would you reduce investment to push the rates down further?

# To keep rates affordable, a six-point plan has been implemented so council can balance fiscal responsibility while being responsive to the situation that we're in.

Each of the following six points will have a direct impact on our rates:

## Six-Point Plan

### 1. Encouraging population growth over the next 10 years

We have committed to stimulating population growth within our district by ensuring we can meet the needs of a growing community. If more families, individuals and businesses move to Whanganui, we'll be able to spread the rating costs across more people helping to keep rates lower. Find out more in the [Whanganui District Snapshot 2023](#).

### 2. Increasing non-rates revenue

Although rates are our main source of income, we can also lean on other methods. For example, to make sure our fees and charges keep up with inflation, we are proposing to increase a number of user charges, including building and resource consents, trade and tankered waste, and swimming pools, amongst other things (Please see page 45 for more details).

### 3. Finding alternative funding sources

Council will always seek external funding where possible, such as through central government or grant funding. We've set a target to ensure that some projects will only go ahead if we can secure substantial funding from elsewhere, taking the strain off our ratepayers.

### 4. Finding efficiency savings

We're focused on working smarter and finding efficiencies where possible. To name a few, council has undergone a management restructure, postponed technology software projects and reduced the number of council vehicles.

### 5. Reducing levels of service

We have carefully identified services that could be cut or closed to keep costs down. You have the opportunity to provide feedback on which services you'd like to keep.

### 6. Selling assets to repay debt

The council owns many assets which could be sold to repay debt and reduce costs considerably. This would then be used to offset rates. We'd like to know how comfortable the community are with our proposal to sell assets.



We need your help with these points please

**Council is already working hard to implement several of these points - but we'd like to hear from you to create solutions that work for the whole community.**

# Selling assets to repay debt



To reduce the rates rise for next year to 10.6 percent we will need to make a minimum of **\$16 million of asset sales** by 30 June 2025, which may include land, buildings, reserves and other assets.

## What does this mean?


The council owns a portfolio of assets (for example, land, buildings and reserves), including some that are not used to their full potential and many that are passive. This means that they generate minimal or no revenue. For council and community to receive any income from these, we would need to sell this asset.

Council has the opportunity to sell some of our assets which will be used to repay debt and reduce costs considerably. This would then be used to offset rates.

**HAVE  
YOUR SAY  
KŌRERO  
MAI**

## We want to know how comfortable you are with council selling assets up to \$16 million

We know it's hard to agree with selling assets as a whole without any information on which specific assets may be sold. This step is about seeing if the community would consider selling assets and, if so, we'd come back to the community on **which specific assets may be sold**.

Our options for selling assets	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Sell \$16 million worth of assets to repay debt.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.  This is a \$400,000 or \$23 per property saving in year 1 and \$800,000 or \$43 per property saving from year 2 onward.	-\$16 million.  This is already included in our debt forecasts.	Will depend on the particular assets that are sold.
<b>OPTION 2:</b> No assets are sold to repay debt.	Add \$400,000 or \$23 per property in year 1 and \$800,000 or \$43 per year thereafter.	+\$16 million to what is currently proposed.	None

# Part 2 - How we're reducing services to reduce rates increases

To keep the rates rise to 10.6 percent, we will need to make at least \$2 million worth of cuts to council services. Cutting services has an immediate impact in reducing rates.

The council has carefully identified services that can be cut, balancing minimal impact to our services while achieving a sufficient reduction in costs to keep rates affordable.

Of the services identified, there are some changes we have already decided on to reach around \$1.5 million in savings. This includes reducing budgets for trees, shrubs and annuals, reducing the number of new library books purchased, disestablishing the Youth Council and associated work programme, discontinuing the digital strategy implementation resource and reducing maintenance of premier parks.

## Issue 1 - What services do you think we should keep?

**While we've made a start, we still need to make further cuts of at least \$500,000 to services to ensure that the average rates increase stays at 10.6 percent. Making decisions around services is never easy, and these are tough decisions – which is why we are bringing them to you, our community.**

We have set out below our preferred options to achieve the additional \$500,000 savings required to keep the rates at 10.6 percent. Let us know your thoughts on which services you want to see cut or retained. However, please be mindful that the more services we choose to keep, the higher the rates rise will be.


## Cuts have been proposed for the following services:

### Reducing the hours of operation and/or closing libraries

More than 100,000 books, magazines and DVDs are available within our district and can be borrowed from one of our library buildings or services. There are currently seven library facilities, four of which operate in partnership with local organisations alongside two mobile library vans, and access to a number of online research databases.

Due to the number of facilities and services we have to offer, there is an opportunity to reduce this down to save on costs. However, council recognises how important library facilities are to our community and how they serve as important community hubs. We want to ensure that we can maintain a service that works for everyone and to keep our libraries open.

Of the options provided, council **only** recommends closing the Davis Library for one day during the week, which will result in a cost saving of \$43,000 per year. We do not advise any further cuts to our library services, but you are given the opportunity to choose from the options provided below.

DAVIS LIBRARY	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Close Davis Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$43,000 or \$2.30 per property rates saving from prior year rates.	None	Reduction in days the Davis Library can be accessed per week. This will impact on residents who can only access the library on a certain day.
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Close Davis Library for one day on the weekend instead of a weekday.	Add \$16,000 or \$0.90 per property per year to what is currently proposed.	None	Reduction in days Davis Library can be accessed per weekend. This will impact on residents who can only access the library on a weekend.
<b>OPTION 3:</b> Keep the Davis Library days and hours as they are.	Add \$43,000 or \$2.30 per property per year to what is currently proposed.	None	None






## Close the Whanganui East Pool

The Whanganui East Pool first opened in 1926. This pool has provided a great space for the wider community to cool off, get active and spend some time together. However, multiple issues have been identified which will require a significant investment of over \$2 million to keep it operating. Issues include notable leaks, a filtration system that does not meet PoolSafe requirements, and old and tired structures posing multiple risk hazards. The pool costs around \$250,000 per year to operate and maintain.

**Our preferred option is to close the pool and complete a feasibility study for outdoor swimming options in Whanganui. Due to the significant investment required, it's a perfect time to look at broader options for outdoor swimming for Whanganui residents and developing a facility that is fit for the future.**


	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<p><b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred</p> <p>Close the Whanganui East Pool and complete a feasibility study for outdoor swimming in Whanganui.</p>	<p>Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.</p> <p>This is a \$250,000 or \$13.40 per property saving from prior year rates.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No opportunity for council-provided outdoor swimming due to the pool's closure.</p> <p>New level of service to be determined following the outcome of the feasibility study.</p>
<p><b>OPTION 2:</b></p> <p>Invest in the Whanganui East Pool upgrade and continue to operate the pool.</p>	<p>Add \$420,000 or \$22.40 per property per year to what is currently proposed.</p>	<p>+\$2.1 million</p>	<p>Temporary closure of the Whanganui East Pool to complete the required upgrades, with major improvements to the facilities upon re-opening.</p>

## Close and sell the Repertory Theatre

The Whanganui Repertory Theatre building has been standing since 1882, serving as the district's public library until 1933. The building is owned by council and utilised as a theatre by a group of enthusiasts, hosting four to six plays each year to a high professional standard. It's been recognised that the Repertory Theatre is no longer fit for purpose. It requires significant repairs to continue operating, including earthquake strengthening and a new roof, which is why maintaining the status quo isn't a feasible option for council. Another major concern is that the retaining bank behind the theatre requires permanent stabilisation which will cost around \$250,000. A full rebuild of the building would cost around \$2.6 million.



**Due to these high costs and the fact that there are alternative theatre buildings in Whanganui, council recommends that we close the theatre for demolition at a cost of around \$200,000. This will enable us to put more focus into the Royal Whanganui Opera House as discussed below.**

	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<p><b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred</p> <p>Close the theatre for demolition.</p>	<p>Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.</p> <p>This is a \$40,000 or \$2.10 per property increase over prior year rates.</p>	<p>\$200,000</p>	<p>Loss of a heritage building and reduced options for theatre venues. The theatre group will also need to find an alternative venue to continue to host shows.</p>
<p><b>OPTION 2:</b></p> <p>Invest in the permanent stabilisation of the retaining bank required so the building can be sold.</p> <p>Note - If a buyer is not found, we would revert to demolition</p>	<p>Add \$11,000 or \$0.60 per property per year to what is currently proposed.</p>	<p>+\$50,000 to what is currently proposed.</p>	<p>New level of service will be determined by the buyer.</p>
<p><b>OPTION 3:</b></p> <p>Invest in the stabilisation of the retaining bank, demolish the existing building and build a new theatre.</p>	<p>Add \$183,000 or \$10 per property per year to what is currently proposed.</p>	<p>+\$2.65 million to what is currently proposed.</p>	<p>Closure of the theatre to demolish the building and retain the bank, with major improvements to the facilities upon re-opening.</p>

## Close the aviary at Rotokawau Virginia Lake


The aviary is located at Rotokawau Virginia Lake. The aviary provides an opportunity to see a variety of birds up close. However, a recent zoologist report recommended it be improved to meet bird welfare standards.

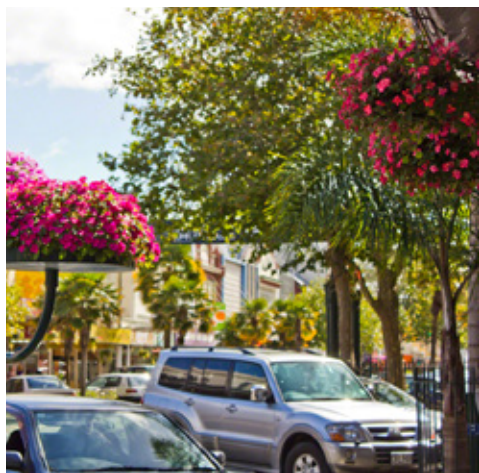
We consulted on this issue in our Annual Plan 2022/23 and asked if the aviary should be closed or kept, and if it was to be kept, what level of investment it should receive. Community feedback was in support of retaining and improving the aviary. Council

has since made improvements, including reducing bird numbers, changing feeding schedules, providing enrichment and improved veterinary services.

In the new context of increasing costs and our efforts to keep rates affordable, we are putting this option back on the table for the community to consider

**Because of these pressures, council recommends closing the aviary to save \$190,000 per year.**


	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Close the aviary.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$190,000 or \$10.20 per property saving from prior year rates.	None	Loss of an outdoor recreation facility that is available for community use in a premier park.
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Keep the aviary open.	Add \$190,000 or \$10.20 per property per year to what is currently proposed.	None	None



## Remove the Mainstreet hanging flower baskets

Hanging flower baskets are maintained throughout Whanganui's central business district by Mainstreet Whanganui. These baskets have provided a pop of colour and enhanced our cities atmosphere for 30 years, but they could be considered a nice-to-have as we find ways to reduce costs.

**Council recommends removing the hanging flower baskets to enable a saving of \$93,000 per year.**

	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Remove the hanging flower baskets.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$93,000 or \$5 per property saving from prior year rates.	None	Loss of street appeal in the CBD area.
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Keep the hanging flower baskets.	Add \$93,000 or \$5 per property per year to what is currently proposed.	None	None




## Cuts have not been proposed for the following services:

### New Zealand Glassworks

Te Whare Tuhua O Te Ao New Zealand Glassworks is a centre for art glass, located in Whanganui that has a rich history of glass spanning over 150 years. This facility showcases a number of glass artists and provides interactive exhibits, workshops, demonstrations and events. It is also a popular tourist attraction, bringing in around 37,000 visitors in 2022/23. The facility is topped up by rate funding of around \$192,000 per year.




Council **proposes to retain** New Zealand Glassworks but to seek a buyer that will operate the business into the future.

	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Keep New Zealand Glassworks, but seek a buyer.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None at this stage. In the future the new level of service will be determined by the buyer.
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Keep New Zealand Glassworks in council ownership.	Add \$0 to what is currently proposed. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
<b>OPTION 3:</b> Close New Zealand Glassworks.	Save \$192,000 per year or \$10.30 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	Closure of the facility will mean that the community lose a valuable facility and an arts and cultural venue, alongside the loss of a significant tourist attraction for Whanganui.

### Drop off points for rural rubbish

Council provides rate-funded drop off points for rural rubbish in the outer rural areas of the district like the Whanganui River Road, Mangamahu and the Kauarapaoa Valley at a cost of \$175,000 per annum. There are no private waste providers who are willing to service these areas as it is uneconomic.

Council **does not** recommend ceasing this service as it would mean the outer rural community has no alternative for rubbish disposal which may lead to further fly tipping and illegal dumping. Due to cost pressures, council is providing the community with an opportunity to submit on this.


	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Keep the drop off points for rural rubbish.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Close the drop off points for rural rubbish.	Save \$175,000 or \$9.50 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	No rubbish disposal options provided by council for the outer rural community, potential increase in fly tipping and increase in costs for clean up.

## Gonville Library

There are currently seven library facilities, four of which operate in partnership with local organisations alongside two mobile library vans, and access to a number of online research databases.

Due to the number of facilities and services we have to offer, there is an opportunity to reduce these down to save on costs. However, council recognises how important library facilities are to our community, libraries serve many functions including being important community hubs. We want to ensure that we can maintain a service that works for everyone and to keep our libraries open.

**Council does not recommend closing the Gonville library nor reducing its hours, but in the context of rising costs you are given the opportunity to choose from the options provided below.**


	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Keep Gonville Library days and hours as they are.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Close Gonville Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday.	Save \$21,000 or \$1.00 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	This will impact on residents who can only access the library on a certain day of the week.
<b>OPTION 3:</b> Close Gonville Library completely.	Save \$230,000 or \$12.50 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	This will significantly impact on residents who access the library and will remove the function of the library as a community hub in Gonville.



## Winter Gardens

The Winter Gardens are Art Deco-era gardens with tropical plants and themed gardens. They are a free attraction located at Rotokawau Virginia Lake and are open seven days a week. The Winter Gardens cost \$140,000 per year to run.


**Council does not recommend closing the Winter Gardens, but we are including the option to close this facility in the context of rising costs and our efforts to keep rates affordable.**

	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Do not close the Winter Gardens.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Close the Winter Gardens.	Save \$140,000 per year or \$7.50 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	Loss of an all-year-round attraction available for community use in a premier park.

## Level of community grant funding

Council provides community grants. This funding creates a partnership between council and organisations to provide services or events that focus on community health, safety and wellbeing. As indicated in the Annual Plan 2023/24, council is currently providing just over \$1.1 million in funding to initiatives across the district.

**Council recognises how important these grants are to our community, and such services and events are needed now more than ever. It's therefore recommended that we increase the community grant funding by \$100,000 to elevate the support we can provide to people throughout our district.** There is scope to reduce this amount, though, to keep rates affordable. We're interested to hear what you think.

	IMPACT ON RATES	IMPACT ON DEBT	IMPACT ON LEVEL OF SERVICE
<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Increase the community grant funding by \$100,000.	Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.  This is a \$100,000 or \$5.50 per property increase over prior year rates.	None	Increase in services and events provided by council-funded community organisations.
<b>OPTION 2:</b> Maintain the community grant funding at its current level.	Save \$100,000 or \$5.30 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	None
<b>OPTION 3:</b> Cut community grant funding by 10 percent or \$110,000.	Save \$210,000 or \$11.20 per property per year from what is currently proposed.	None	Reduction in services and events provided by council-funded community organisations.

# Part 3 – Projects not being funded at this time

While we'd like to, we can't do everything right now, especially in this economic climate. As a result, there are a number of projects which we have chosen not to fund at this stage in order to prioritise other areas of work. A few examples of these are outlined below.

## Redevelopment of Kowhai Park

Built in the 1950s, Kowhai Park has remained largely unchanged over the last 70 years. The location and longevity of the park gives it iconic status, being a source of fun family times through a number of generations.

There is growing sentiment in the community that modernisation of Kowhai Park is needed, as well as requirements to bring the playground up to modern safety standards. A budget of \$6.6 million is forecast for the full project.

At this stage, this project has not been funded due to its high costs. This project can be explored at a future Long-Term Plan cycle. Ongoing maintenance to Kowhai Park will continue as normal.

## Youth Hub

In the Long-Term Plan 2021 we consulted with the community on creating a Youth Hub for Whanganui. For this project, \$442,000 was budgeted over several years.

A feasibility study was undertaken on this project, however, the study's proposed moveable pop-up youth space exceeded the project's budget and was considered to be unsustainable by council officers. At this stage, this project will not be funded, although \$10,000 has been retained in the annual budget for youth engagement.

Opportunities for youth will continue to play an important role in our vision for Whanganui.

## Pukenamu Queen's Park architectural landscape plan

In the 2022/23 Annual Plan, we added an extra \$500,000 to the budget totalling \$1 million to deliver a refreshed architectural landscape plan for the Pukenamu Queen's Park area.

Based on a recent survey, it's been highlighted that current funding will not meet what's required to achieve the full scope of this project. Due to excessive costs and our shortfall in funding, the re-design is not considered a priority at this time. Therefore, attention has been refocused to make improvements to the immediate surrounds of the Sarjeant Gallery.

## Town Centre Regeneration Projects

Council's funding for town centre regeneration projects has been cut. Efforts are being refocused on the hotel project to support the town centre revitalisation and to bring in revenue for Whanganui. We have also been successful in securing third-party funding to continue to support the Streets For People projects.

In addition, the heritage grant fund continues to be available which provides financial assistance to building owners to undertake heritage enhancement work in Whanganui.

## The Tide Bus Service

From 1 July 2024, Whanganui District Council will no longer provide funding for the trial of the high-frequency bus route The Tide between Castlecliff and Aramoho.

**Horizons Regional Council have included this portion of the funding in their draft 2024-34 Long Term Plan.**

## Housing

In our previous Long-Term Plan we earmarked \$4.2 million as a placeholder for potential work in the housing space. We are now looking at alternative mechanisms to address social housing in Whanganui.

In our last Annual Plan, council also committed to providing additional emergency housing services and, at this stage, the project is not proceeding in the way that we had proposed.

As a brief update, a report to council highlighted that a single solution focusing on a bricks and mortar building is not the next best step. In order to provide positive

change, the issues and challenges are wider and its been identified that there is no short-term single solution. It will take dedication and proactive collaboration from all parties, including external organisations, to develop a long-term holistic strategy which is where attention has been refocused to.

Council continues to support ongoing housing work which is being provided through council's housing team, freedom camping and compliance staff, and through strong partnerships with Iwi, Kāinga Ora and social services.

Note – To access all community and internal project proposals, refer to [www.whanganui.govt.nz/Your-Council/Projects-and-Initiatives/Point-of-Entry-Business-Cases](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/Your-Council/Projects-and-Initiatives/Point-of-Entry-Business-Cases). A list of all projects that will and will not be funded for this Long-Term Plan is also available to view as a supporting document.

# Part 4 - Long-term investments to make our city more liveable

Long-term investments help to make our city more attractive, setting us up for financial stability over the long term. We have to balance these investments with the need to maintain services and keep any rate increases low. With a number of projects that we could invest in, we need the community to help us decide which investments we should proceed with to enhance our district.

## Issue 1 - Funding of core infrastructure - roading, footpaths and three waters

Council currently manages \$1.5 billion of roading, footpaths and three waters (water supply, stormwater and wastewater) assets. While this is a complex portfolio, we aim to balance keeping our assets maintained and up to appropriate standards with affordability for our ratepayers. We're mindful that costs, standards and regulations are increasing rapidly, so we need to determine what level of investment we should provide to our core infrastructure.

### What's the problem?

Historically, we've put a lot of focus and investment into taking care of our assets. Despite this, increased regulatory standards and inflation are pushing costs up substantially. Additionally, we want to be prepared for the impacts of climate change as we start to notice an increase in wet weather events throughout our district and the impacts this can have.

#### Below provides a summary of our key issues:

- Our roading pavements aren't in great shape and need significant repair.
- Our water supply network has traditionally met standards, but these standards are increasing and now we need to invest more to meet the new requirements.
- The performance of our stormwater and wastewater networks is being impacted by climate change.

The cost of replacing pipes and resealing roads has increased significantly more than the rate of inflation which has made it difficult for us to keep up. This means we need to invest more to maintain our core infrastructure at a reasonable level.

You can find more information on our key infrastructure issues and specific projects we have in the pipeline on pages 47 to 51 of this document.

Please refer to our Infrastructure Strategy for further details regarding our assets.

### What's required to maintain our assets?

A step change in the level of funding is required to maintain our roading, footpath and water networks, which includes:

- ongoing maintenance and repair work
- necessary improvements or replacements to our networks
- ability to meet ongoing compliance and increasing regulatory standards
- additional infrastructure to support growth.

### How much will it cost?

We estimate that we need to increase annual funding of our core infrastructure by \$10.5 million to improve the condition and performance of our assets. The impact of this can be achieved across a number of years to minimise the impact on ratepayers.

To avoid our assets deteriorating further, council proposes to increase the level of funding that's being invested to our core infrastructure to get us to a reasonable state in the future.



## OPTION 1: Preferred

Increase funding for our core infrastructure to get us to a reasonable state in the future.

### IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS

Very gradual improvement in the condition of our roads over time. Stormwater and wastewater system improvements to address climate change issues occur in a more timely fashion, reducing flooding and wet weather-related wastewater spillages over time.

### IMPACT ON DEBT

No change

### IMPACT ON RATES

Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.

This is a \$1.05 million per year increase in rates for the next 10 years, or an increase of \$56 per property per year for ten years.

Annual funding of our core infrastructure will increase by \$10.5 million per year or +\$560 per property per year by year 10.

## OPTION 2:

Significant increase of funding to bring our core infrastructure up to a reasonable state sooner.

### IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS

Quicker turnaround in the condition of our roads. Stormwater and wastewater system improvements to address climate change issues occur more quickly, reducing flooding and wet weather wastewater spillages sooner.

### IMPACT ON DEBT

No change

### IMPACT ON RATES

Add \$1.05 million or \$56 per property per year to what is currently proposed.

This is a \$2.1 million per year increase in rates for the next 5 years, or an increase of \$112 per property per year for five years.

Annual funding of our core infrastructure will increase by \$10.5 million per year or +\$560 per property per year by year 5.

## OPTION 3:

Maintain the current level of funding for our core infrastructure, which isn't enough to get us to where we need to be. Noting assets will deteriorate further.

### IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS

The condition of our roads will continue to go backwards. Improvements to our stormwater and wastewater networks to address climate change issues will roll out over a much longer timeframe, meaning higher risks of flooding and continued wet weather-related wastewater spillages in the meantime.

### IMPACT ON DEBT

No change

### IMPACT ON RATES

Save \$1.05 million or \$56 per property per year to what is currently proposed.

No changes in rates from prior year.

**Please note** – the following projects WILL NOT impact on next year’s rates rise. These are longer-term investments and will be incorporated into the budgets for future years.

## Issue 2 - Hotel and carpark

Whanganui has some ambitious goals, and one of them is to attract more events to the city. To do this we need more accommodation and parking available, as the lack of places to stay and limited covered parking is currently hindering our ability to host large-scale events. Whanganui has already shown what it is capable of through success of the Masters Games and Vintage Weekend, alongside many other events, and we’re keen to expand our potential.

Whanganui has long aspired to attract a hotel to the city with different options being explored, as well as attempts to entice hotel operators into town. With our commitment to stimulate growth within the district, it could be time we take matters into our own hands and take charge with the development of a hotel.

Similarly, if we’re attracting more visitors to our district with an overnight stay, it’s important that we have enough parking spaces available.

Council is proposing to take the lead with both of these projects by investing in the development of a suitable hotel and car parking facility.

Before we kick off with these projects, a detailed business case will be developed. The projects will only proceed if the business cases demonstrate that there is demand and the projects are financially viable i.e. that the hotel and carpark will be able to provide returns to offset rates by 2038/39. We will explore different operating models as part of the detailed business case.


### What are the benefits?

- A hotel will generate additional and new income and jobs, with an early assessment projecting the economic benefits to be in the vicinity of \$4 million per annum.
- The additional revenue from investing in these projects can help to reduce rates in the long term.
- New jobs will be created, visitors will have access to improved visitor experience through new accommodation facilities and we will improve our ability to attract new events and money to the city.
- The profile of Whanganui will potentially be elevated on a national scale by attracting more visitors and events to the city. These will provide enrichment opportunities and commercial benefit to the wider community.

The hotel is proposed to begin construction in 2025/26 and the car park in 2027/28.



## Our options for a new hotel facility

<p><b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred</p> <p>Whanganui District Council takes the lead with the development of a hotel and carpark, subject to the outcome of a detailed business case</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b></p> <p>Hotel and carpark owned by council will increase accommodation and parking options. More events will likely be hosted within the district as a result.</p>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$55 million</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$30 per property per year from 2025/26 through to 2038/39, after which the returns from the hotel and carpark will start to offset rates.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$55 million</p>
<p><b>OPTION 2:</b></p> <p>Seek an operator to develop a hotel and carpark for Whanganui.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b></p> <p>Hotel and carpark provided by an independent operator will increase accommodation and parking options. More events will likely be hosted within the district as a result.</p>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$0</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$0 per property</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$0</p>
<p><b>OPTION 3:</b></p> <p>Do nothing.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b></p> <p>Limited events within the district due to limited accommodation and parking options.</p>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$0</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$0 per property</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$0</p>





## Issue 3 – Royal Whanganui Opera House

The Royal Whanganui Opera House (RWOH) is a landmark cultural icon. It was built in 1899 and is the last wooden theatre operating in Australasia. While the theatre has seen a lot of love over the years, there are aspects of the building that no longer meet requirements. Significant investment is required to attract and retain touring and community shows.

### What's the problem?

In late 2022, a health and safety audit was conducted by Construction Health and Safety New Zealand which identified several risks that needed urgent attention. A future feasibility study was then initiated to understand what is required to keep this venue fully operational.

#### Key issues:

- Health and safety concerns need to be addressed.
- The theatrical flying system, which enables flying during performances, needs updating.
- The stagehouse, also known to be the engine room of the productions, is currently restricted and requires expansion.

It's important to highlight that RWOH attracts a multitude of diverse performers, each of which have different requirements when it comes to stage production, lighting and sound. So it's important we can provide a space that's suitable and safe for the majority.

Be sure to check out our supporting document for key definitions and more information.

### What's required to ensure that the Royal Whanganui Opera House is fit for purpose?

Four options have been explored following the feasibility study, which gives council a variety of ways we could address these issues. The option we choose to proceed with will determine the work that is undertaken and has been outlined against each option below.

#### How much will it cost?

The cost ranges from \$150,000 up to \$35 million, depending on what option we proceed with. External funding will be sought for options 2-4.

The council proposes moving ahead with option 3, to build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system at a cost of \$17.8 million. Funding opportunities will be investigated with an aim to obtain \$8.9 million from external sources.

The proposed option resolves all the health and safety items identified and provides a new flying system without encroaching on the stage dimensions.

This project is scheduled to begin construction in 2025/26.

## Our options to update The Royal Whanganui Opera House:

<p><b>OPTION 1:</b></p> <p>Do nothing – leave stagehouse as it is with scaffolding and restricted level of operation.</p>	<p><b>THIS OPTION INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• purchase of temporary scaffold structure</li> <li>• completes work on health and safety issues identified</li> <li>• retains the existing scaffold structure within existing stagehouse (no flying system)</li> <li>• establishes the loading capacity of the scaffold structure within existing stagehouse</li> <li>• retains existing theatrical systems infrastructure (e.g. light and sound equipment).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has minor impact on rates due to low associated cost</li> <li>• health and safety work is addressed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inability to host shows that require flying equipment or people limiting performances that will come to Whanganui</li> <li>• the venue will not provide the level of facility required for promoters, national companies and local productions</li> <li>• the scaffold will remain in place which restricts how the stage is utilised (i.e. limited wing space) and comes with an ongoing cost.</li> <li>• lack of a flying system will limit types of shows that can come to Whanganui and means there is no ability to have a stage curtain.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$150,000 to purchase scaffolding.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$3 per property per year for three years from 2024/25.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$150,000</p>
<p><b>OPTION 2:</b></p> <p>Implement a new counterweight flying system only within the existing stagehouse building structure.</p>	<p><b>THIS OPTION INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• purchase of temporary scaffold structure</li> <li>• completes work on health and safety issues identified</li> <li>• retains the existing stagehouse external envelope</li> <li>• provides new foundations and structure within the existing envelope to support flying system</li> <li>• provides vapour barrier, insulation and wall lining to stagehouse</li> <li>• provides new counterweight flying system with 51 line sets</li> <li>• retains existing theatrical systems infrastructure – modified to suit introduction of new flying system.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note – These upgrades will mostly happen behind the scenes, so it’s unlikely that these improvements will be noticed by the audience</b></p>	
<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new flying system broadens the venue’s ability to host shows and may attract more to the community</li> <li>• the counterweight theatrical flying system will have improved functionality, with greater load carrying capacity and ease of operation and safety.</li> <li>• scaffolding is no longer required.</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stagehouse is retained and does not provide comparative facilities with other theatres across New Zealand which could turn shows away</li> <li>• the new flying system would impact on the available functional area of the stage which could see a reduction in the shows that come to Whanganui</li> <li>• height restrictions for flying items</li> <li>• sight lines from auditorium may be impacted</li> <li>• new system will require two staff members to operate as opposed to one as the system will be installed on both sides of stage.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$14.7 million with \$4.4 million of this assumed to come from external funding sources (e.g. grants).</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$44 per property per year for 20 years from 2026/27.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$10.3 million</p>

## OPTION 3: Preferred

Build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system.

### THIS OPTION INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- purchase of temporary scaffold structure
- completes work on health and safety issues identified
- new larger stagehouse to replace existing stagehouse
- provides counterweight flying system with 60 line sets plus two panorama bars
- installs new and expanded theatrical systems infrastructure
- delivers a larger stagehouse enabling current spatial constraints to be addressed
- level of facility and amenity increased to attract larger productions and more users.

Note – These upgrades will mostly happen behind the scenes, so it’s unlikely that these improvements will be noticed by the audience

### PROS:

- new flying system and stagehouse improves the ability to meet the requirements for shows to perform at this venue
- improved sightlines from the gallery
- ability to attract larger shows
- system only requires one staff member to operate.

### CONS:

- larger cost with associated impact to rates.

### COST

\$17.8 million with \$8.9 million of this assumed to come from external funding sources (e.g. grants).

### IMPACT ON RATES

\$38 per property per year for 20 years from 2026/27

### IMPACT ON DEBT

\$8.9 million

## OPTION 4:

Full upgrade, including front of house improvements.

### THIS OPTION INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- includes all items listed under option 3
- ventilation – heating and cooling
- addresses scene dock, green room and storage issues
- orchestra pit – resolves health and safety issues and configuration
- building-wide issues – accessibility, fire egress/passive fire, sustainability
- dressing rooms – strengthen and upgrade
- auditorium - improve seismic level, noise ingress, lighting and seating
- front of house – amenities, hospitality areas, merchandise, access and ticketing.

### PROS:

- improvements to the venue will attract larger productions and more users
- flying system will be comparable with other theatres around New Zealand
- the audience will experience noticeable improvements throughout the venue, including food and beverage options, heating and ventilation.

### CONS:

- the largest cost of all options with associated impact to rates.

### COST

\$34.7 million with \$17.3 million of this assumed to come from external funding sources (e.g. grants).

### IMPACT ON RATES

\$74 per property per year for 20 years from 2027/28.

### IMPACT ON DEBT

\$17.3 million

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# Issue 4 – Marae development

## Kia maraetia te noho – living the Marae

The Whanganui district is home to nearly twenty Marae. As well as being a central part of Iwi and Hapū culture, Marae also perform other important roles. This includes helping our communities to connect and supporting civil defence and emergency management responses to natural hazards, amongst many other important roles.

### What’s the problem?

As part of the Three Waters reform process, council was given access to funding through the central government’s “Better Off Funding” scheme to improve community wellbeing.

Some of this funding has been used to support Marae to upgrade their buildings. This has included repairs such as replacing old roofs, building new septic tanks for toilets, and connecting Marae to the drinking water supply network.

Work is also underway to look at longer term plans with future upgrades for Marae and these would have been funded through this ongoing funding, however with the change of government this funding is no longer available. Alternative funding is now required to progress these plans.

### Broader Community Impacts


By supporting Marae, they can continue to perform the important role they play in facilitating social connection and outreach into the wider community. Marae host a wide range of community gatherings, local, regional and national hui, provide accommodation, wharekai (dining halls), and strengthen community cohesiveness and resilience. Marae are holders of historical narratives, whakapapa and traditional practices, and urupa (burial sites).

Marae also host a wide range of community workshops which are well used by organisations, government, and community groups. In addition, Marae within the

Whanganui district have been places of refuge during times of crisis and civil disaster. If we invest in upgrades such as back-up power generators and rainwater storage tanks then Marae can continue to play a critical role in helping and supporting our community respond to emergency events such as flooding or storms.

### How much will it cost?

Council has access to the “Better off Funding” which was provided by central government until 2027. It’s proposed that once this ends, in 2028, the council provides \$500,000 per year of grant funding for Marae upgrades until the end of the 10-year plan in 2034 – i.e. \$3.5 million in total over seven years.

<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Provide grant funding of \$3.5 million over the seven years (2028 to 2034) for Marae upgrades.	<b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b> Marae, Iwi and Hapū are stronger partners for responding to civil defence emergency events. Marae can better support community social wellbeing.	
	<b>COST</b> \$0.5 million per year.	<b>IMPACT ON RATES</b> There is no impact on rates in the next three years. \$27 per property per year from 2028 - 2034.

<b>OPTION 2:</b> Do not provide grant funding for Marae upgrades beyond 2027 when the central government funding ends.	<b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b> No improvement to levels of service.	
	<b>COST</b> \$0	<b>IMPACT ON RATES</b> \$0 per property

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# Issue 5 - Wanganui Surf Lifesaving Service

The Wanganui Surf Lifeguard Service Inc (WSLS) has been providing patrol and rescue services to the Whanganui coastline for over 115 years. WSLS provides a hub of water safety activities which includes patrolling, search and rescue operations as well as membership training for all ages, beach education programmes and competitive lifesaving sport.

The current lifesaving facility is at its end of its serviceable life and is a considerable barrier to training and development of lifesaving members, including junior surf members. The ability to facilitate critical water safety programmes is also significantly compromised.

To ensure the future of WSLS, a new facility is required to provide operational capability and effectiveness.

## What's the problem?

Surf Lifesaving NZ commissioned a preliminary feasibility study concluding that after 66 years the patrol building is at the end of its serviceable life.

It's been determined that the most efficient and cost-effective path forward will be to build a new facility due to:

- the deteriorated condition of the facility
- the significant work required to refurbish it
- a change in WSLS's operational requirements to function properly
- the opportunity to provide community spaces and facilities alongside the surf club facility.

This proposal was put forward by WSLS.

## Broader community opportunities

A new operations centre and tower facility will provide a base for Castlecliff and Kai Iwi beach patrolling alongside search and rescue services. There is also an opportunity to improve the Castlecliff Beach area and experience with a multi-use community facility and bookable spaces for community activities.

## How much will it cost?

WSLS is seeking \$5-7million for a rebuild which includes an upgrade to include community facilities.

Council proposes to provide \$1 million, and WSLS will seek the remainder from other sources. Funding would be provided from 1 July 2027 to align with council's plan to rejuvenate the Castlecliff Beach area. This may potentially include improved shading, picnic areas and the restoration of a protective foredune.

Our funding contribution is scheduled for 2027/28.





## OPTION 1: Preferred

Funding of \$1 million to WSLs as contribution to this project. WSLs will seek the remainder from other sources.

### IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS

Council investment into the new operations centre and tower facility will contribute to the WSLs to provide essential lifesaving services and search and rescue to the Whanganui and wider community. However, it is noted that funding will not be sufficient for the project. Other sources of funding must be secured for the project to proceed.

### COST

\$1 million

### IMPACT ON RATES

\$7 per property per year for 10 years from 2027/28.

### IMPACT ON DEBT

\$1 million

## OPTION 2:

Provide no funding to the project.

### IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS

Without a council contribution, there is a considerable risk that the project will not generate the required funds to replace the building. This will result in a significant impact on the lifeguarding and search and rescue services available to the community.

### COST

\$0

### IMPACT ON RATES

\$0 per property.

### IMPACT ON DEBT

\$0



# Issue 6 – Pākaitore Reserve paving and crossing



Pākaitore Reserve is a significant historic site. It is maintained as a public space by the Pākaitore Historic Reserve Board representing Crown, Iwi and council for the benefit of all Whanganui.

## What’s the problem?

Back in 2014, council began working on a proposal to develop a pavement and raised road crossing on Taupo Quay, between Bates Street and Market Place. This project has resurfaced with the aim to achieve the following:

- restoring the link between the land and the awa
- providing a clear entrance point to Pākaitore which can be viewed from the river
- safety benefits, with an established crossing for pedestrians.

This proposal was put forward by the Pākaitore Historic Reserve Board.

## How much will it cost?


The estimated cost of this project is upward of \$830,000. The project is unlikely to meet NZTA criteria for subsidisation so it would need to be entirely council funded.

We propose to construct a new raised pavement crossing between Pākaitore and the awa.

## Associated risks

Taupo Quay is an over dimension traffic route, and the initial proposal did not take this into consideration. Restricting these types of vehicles from using this path presents a risk. In addition, archaeological authority was not granted in the previous application. These issues would be addressed before proceeding with our preferred option.

Design and planning for this project will begin in 2027/28 with construction scheduled for 2029/30.

<b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred Construct new raised pavement crossing between Pākaitore and the awa.	<b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b> Improved connectivity between Pākaitore and the awa and reduced vehicle speeds.	
	<b>COST</b> \$830,000	<b>IMPACT ON RATES</b> \$6 per property per year for 10 years from 2029/30.

<b>OPTION 2:</b> No changes to existing road layout in this location.	<b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b> None.	
	<b>COST</b> \$0	<b>IMPACT ON RATES</b> \$0 per property

# Issue 7 - Rapanui Road trail

Rapanui Road is the long stretch that connects State Highway 3 past Westmere to Kai Iwi Beach (Mowhanau). This road is shared by motor vehicles, walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders with a speed limit of 100km/hr.

## What's the problem?

With approximately 200 residents along Rapanui Road and 170 permanent residents in Mowhanau village and an increasing number of holiday homes, traffic flows along this route are getting busier. It's also common to find visitors travelling to significant sites situated throughout the area, with travellers enjoying the Bason Botanical Gardens or a trip to Kai Iwi Beach (Mowhanau) on a nice sunny day.

Rapanui Road is narrow in width, and for 8km it does not have a shoulder. This makes the road unsafe to use unless using a motor vehicle.

This proposal was put forward by Kai Iwi Community Group

## How can we improve safety along Rapanui Road?


A wide grass verge currently runs adjacent to the road for much of the way along Rapanui Road. It has been identified as an ideal location for the establishment of a shell rock trail.

Not only would this trail improve safety for its users, but it will also encourage the community to get active and enjoy Whanganui's surrounding areas.

## How much will it cost?

Subject to a feasibility study being conducted, it's proposed that this project will occur in three stages, requiring a total of \$2.4 million. Funding will also be pursued to further reduce impacts on rates.

Design and planning for this project will begin in 2030/31 with construction scheduled for 2032-34.

<p><b>OPTION 1:</b>  Preferred</p> <p>Provide full funding for this project at \$2.4 million, provided that a feasibility study is conducted.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b></p> <p>Improved safety on Rapanui Road, recreational benefits, improved connectivity between Kai Iwi Beach (Mowhanau) and the city.</p>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$2.4 million</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$12.50 per property per year for 15 years from 2032/33</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$2.4 million</p>
<p><b>OPTION 2:</b></p> <p>Do nothing and focus on road safety improvements.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON SERVICE LEVELS</b></p> <p>No improvement in safety or recreational benefits.</p>	
<p><b>COST</b></p> <p>\$0</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON RATES</b></p> <p>\$0 per property</p>	<p><b>IMPACT ON DEBT</b></p> <p>\$0</p>



# Community initiatives

In the planning stages of this Long-Term Plan, community members and groups were invited to submit proposals to progress initiatives that address an identified issue or opportunity within our district. These were evaluated alongside internally proposed council projects to determine which of these will be funded over the next 10 years. Through careful consideration, the following summarises the proposed outcome of this for community initiatives.

We're asking you for your thoughts on the ones **highlighted**, so be sure to let us know if you agree with our proposal.

## Community initiatives proposed to be funded:

**Pākaitore Reserve paving and crossing** - a pavement and raised road crossing on Taupo Quay, between Bates Street and Market Place.

**Rapanui Road trail** - a trail connecting State Highway 3 past Westmere to Kai Iwi Beach.

**Putiki emergency response** - resourcing and training for a Putiki community-based emergency response group.

**Power up the Park** - a project to bring lights, art and Wi-Fi to the Castlecliff Domain.

**Wanganui Surf Lifesaving Service building** - funding contribution to a replacement building for the surf lifesaving club at Castlecliff Beach.

**Putiki climate adaptation** - this project will address the ongoing risks of flooding in the wider Putiki catchment and develop climate change adaptation plans in partnership with Hapū and community.

**Aramoho riverbank enhancement project** - allowing safe access to the water for rowers and public users alongside addressing erosion concerns of the riverbank.

**Wembley Park development plan** - a plan to develop areas of Wembley Park to cater for the growth in football and to make the sport self-sufficient.

**Hakeke Street Library** - to enable additional staff members that will provide the community with extended opening hours.

**Rural Halls Trust** - to increase the annual grant provided.

Note – To access all community and internal project proposals, refer to [www.whanganui.govt.nz/Your-Council/Projects-and-Initiatives/Point-of-Entry-Business-Cases](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/Your-Council/Projects-and-Initiatives/Point-of-Entry-Business-Cases)

## Initiatives not proposed for funding at this time:

**Management planning for Waitahinga Block** - a management plan to ensure usability and sustainability of this area and its trails to the community.

**William Birch Pool** - restoration and maintenance of the William Birch Pool area.

**New facility for Men's Shed and others** - creation of a new permanent building for Men's Shed and other community groups at the old Handley Street outdoor bowling club.

**Fordell Hall earthquake strengthening and upgrades** - strengthening, redecoration and upgrades to the Fordell Hall.

**Matipo Park entrance** - a feasibility study into options and design for a new entrance to Matipo Park.

**Repertory Theatre regeneration project** - earthquake strengthening and bank stabilisation at the Repertory Theatre.

**Special Olympics** - redeveloping the site of the former St John's Bowling Club to provide sporting facilities and a base for the Special Olympians.

**Durie Hill elevator building project** - to make improvements to the Durie Hill elevator building and entry area, including the Duncan fence, in line with the improvements made to the Anzac Parade elevator entranceway.

**Bushy Park Tarpuruhi Trust** - for an education programme and to support an additional ranger position that will be part-funded by Forest and Bird NZ.

**Sustainable Whanganui Trust** - to provide the Whanganui community with an enhanced Enviro Hub.

**The Community Led Development (TCLD)** - funding for maintaining and operating the River Valley Community Hub.



# Other consultation topics

As part of our efforts to keep rates low, we are also proposing some changes to how we fund council activities. We are seeking feedback on the below documents separately from this Long-Term Plan:

## Revenue and Financing Policy / Fees and charges 2024/25

Our Revenue and Financing Policy identifies how council activities should be funded, and our fees and charges document lays out our schedule of fees. We are proposing to increase a number of user fees and charges in 2024/25 due to increasing costs and to keep up with inflation. Fees with proposed increases include building and resource consents, trade and tankered waste, health registration, swimming pools, cemetery fees and the charges to hire venues.

## Parking Bylaw and controls review

We are also proposing an increase to parking tariffs in the town centre. Any revenue from the proposed increases would be used to help offset general rates. Improvements are also proposed to parking, such as increasing mobility parking and extending the Super Gold Card parking hours on Saturday.

## Development Contributions Policy review

We have reviewed this policy, which currently only applies to the Springvale urban and Otamatea West areas. We are proposing to extend the policy to cover the whole district, as well as update growth-related projects and their costs. These proposed updates ensure people undertaking development are making a fair contribution to growth-related infrastructure projects, helping to reduce the ratepayer's contribution towards any new infrastructure which is needed.




We are also consulting separately on our **Rates Postponement, Rates Remission and Rates Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land** policies. We are proposing a few small changes to these policies to reflect council support for Māori retaining and developing land.

We are also proposing some changes to our **Performance Framework** (Key Performance Indicators) which can be viewed in the supporting information.


Please visit our [have your say page at www.whanganui.govt.nz/HaveYourSay](https://www.whanganui.govt.nz/HaveYourSay) for more information and to make a submission on any of these supporting consultations.

# Looking ahead Our assets at a glance

## Roading and footpaths



**862km**  
of roads



**345km**  
of footpaths

**6,400**  
street lights

**72**  
bridges

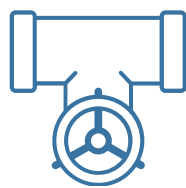
**14 sets**  
of traffic signals



## Stormwater

**174km** of pipeline

**18km** of waterways



## Wastewater

**2** treatment plants

**38** pump stations

**285km** of pipeline

## Transportation

Whanganui Airport  
Durie Hill elevator  
Whanganui Port



## Water supply

**8** bores

**540km** of pipelines

**25,000m<sup>3</sup>** of water supplied per day on average

## Community places and facilities

**149** parks

**5** cemeteries

**2** aquatic centres

**7** library facilities

**2** mobile library vans

**5** community venues



4 operated in partnership with local organisations



# Infrastructure key issues

Our Infrastructure Strategy 2024-2054 identifies five key issues that are impacting on our core infrastructure:

1. 

## Changing legislative requirements and environmental standards

New standards and legislative changes are creating pressure on our budgets.

2. 

## Sustainably looking after our assets

Managing a \$1.5 billion portfolio of long-term assets is a complex business.

3. 

## Managing increasing costs and affordability

High inflation means we now get much less “bang for our buck” than we did a few years ago.

4. 

## Climate change and resilience

Climate change is impacting on the performance of our stormwater and wastewater networks and causing damage to our roading network.

5. 

## Growth, demographic and land use changes

We are expecting Whanganui to grow at around 100 – 130 new dwellings per annum. Our population is ageing.

[You can view the Infrastructure Strategy here.](#)

# Projecting the next 10 years



## Wastewater

**\$61.8 million**  
will be invested in wastewater.

We will embark on a new \$30 million-plus long-term programme of major network improvements to increase wet weather performance and reduce wastewater spillages, including a major upgrade to the Jones Street pump station.

We'll also run a pipeline to connect Mowhanau's wastewater system to the city wastewater network for \$6.1 million.

Our ocean outfall discharge consents will be up for renewal in 2026.

And we'll need to sort a long-term plan for the dried sludge from our wastewater treatment plant. We're looking into incineration as an option.

## Stormwater

**\$38.3 million**  
will be invested in stormwater.

This includes continuing our long-term stormwater performance improvement programme to reduce flooding from increasing wet weather events (although we're slowing up the programme for a couple of years early in this plan due to affordability).

We're also preparing for the possibility that we might need to pump stormwater from the Heads Road area if the sea level rises in the future.

## Water supply

**\$29.5 million**  
will be invested in water supply projects.

This includes adding UV disinfection to our supplies to meet new drinking water standards and investigating a new water source (bore) on the south side of the Whanganui River.

We'll continue our spiral welded pipe replacement programme through to its completion in 2028.

We've allowed for installing back-up power supply to our critical water supply sites.

And we're planning to extend our network to connect to some Marae on the edges of the city.





## Roading, footpaths and transportation

### \$233 million

will be invested into our roading and footpaths to gradually improve their condition.

We've started the business case for replacement of Dublin Street Bridge around 2028/29 at an estimated cost of \$69 million. We'll seek NZTA Waka Kotahi funding of 62 percent.

\*If we are not able to receive the forecasted funding then we will need to reassess the project. For more detail of different options, refer to page 25 and 26 of our infrastructure strategy.

\$3.3 million is budgeted to enhance our tram infrastructure.

More information on our Three Waters and roading & footpaths infrastructure can be found in the Infrastructure Strategy supporting document.



## Venues, events and facilities

### \$1.6 million

is budgeted to enhance the **Splash Centre**, including gym refurbishment and pool retiling.

### \$1.4 million

will be spent at **Cooks Gardens** to replace the running track, improve field drainage and replace the lighting towers.

### \$840,000

is being spent on **Whanganui Regional Museum** to replace the cladding and repaint.

### \$17.8 million

is currently budgeted to upgrade the **Royal Opera House** stagehouse and flying system.

We'll extend the **Davis Library** at a cost of **\$2.8 million.**



## Community places and open spaces

### \$4.1 million

will be spent on **playground replacements.**

### We'll fund \$2.8 million

on **public toilet upgrades and replacements.**

### \$1.1 million

will be invested to maintain and improve our **parks and reserves.**

### \$1.1 million

has been set aside to implement the **coastal action plan.**

We'll extend the **Davis Library** at a cost of **\$2.8 million.**

We've put **\$1.6 million** of council funding aside for the **rejuvenation of the North Mole area**, including a new carpark, coastal foredune and amenities. This will add to the almost \$900,000 of external funding that has been secured for the project.

### \$15.6 million

will be invested to maintain our **buildings and housing portfolio.**

## Investments

**\$23.1 million**

will be invested in an **advanced aviation hub**.

**\$12.4 million**

is provided for **GasNet business development** to future-proof our investment.

## Economic development

A **hotel and carpark** is proposed to be created in the town centre. As well as providing an economic boost for the city, in the medium to long term these assets will provide returns to offset rates.

We'll invest another **\$19 million of equity into the port revitalisation project**. This will bring council's total contribution to over \$36 million towards the overall \$70 million+ Te Pūwaha river project being undertaken in partnership with Hapū, the Crown, the Port, Q-West and Horizons Regional Council.

We will develop an **airport master plan**. We have set aside **\$2.1 million** to put in place recommendations from the plan.

We've budgeted **\$7 million** to create a **parallel taxiway at the airport** (half of this will be funded by the Crown).

## Community support

We'll provide **Marae funding of \$500,000 per annum** from years 4–10.

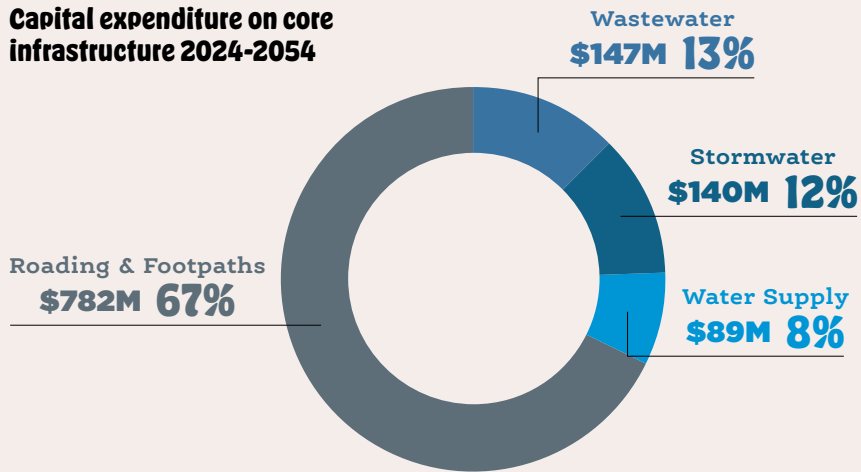


# Projecting even further over the next 30 years

Our Infrastructure Strategy projects the investment needed into our core assets (roading, footpaths and three waters) over the next 30 years.

Two-thirds of the value of the 30-year capital programme forecast relates to roading and footpaths, with one-third for the three waters networks. The roading and footpaths work programme is 62% subsidised by NZTA.

## Capital expenditure on core infrastructure 2024-2054



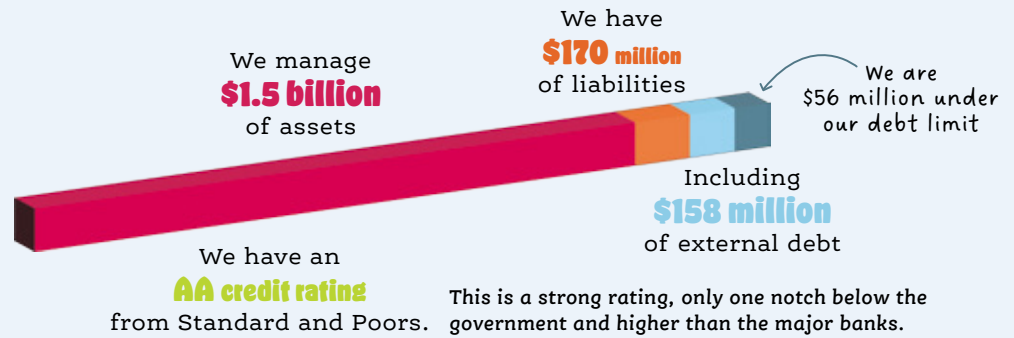
# What's our plan with money?

Our Financial Strategy outlines council's approach to planning and managing its finances in a way that is sustainable over the long term. A key part of the Financial Strategy is setting limits on rates increases and debt to guide council's decision-making.

Despite our positive financial position, there are some major factors that are influencing our costs now and into the future. We need to understand how these will impact us and the trade-offs we might have to make.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, cost inflation has been running significantly higher than normal. We know that households are feeling pressure from these cost increases on a day-to-day basis, and we are too. Many of the items we buy to operate our services have been increasing at a rate that's much higher than the Consumer Price Index. As an example, the cost per kilometre to reseal roads has more than doubled over the past six years. Our insurance costs have doubled (up \$1.9 million per year) since our last Long-Term Plan three years ago. Interest rates have increased from 3.8 percent in the first year of the last Long-Term Plan to 5.4 percent in this Long-Term Plan, driving up our interest costs by \$1.6 million per year.

As we embark on this Long-Term Plan 2024-2034, we are in a stable financial position.



On top of this, new standards and legislative changes are creating pressure on our budgets. An example of this is the introduction of the Water Services Act 2021 which has resulted in a step change in what is required to operate a water supply safely. This has led to additional operating costs, more resourcing demands and the requirement for new water treatment assets.

Climate change is having an impact on our infrastructure with more intense and frequent wet weather events affecting our roading, stormwater and wastewater networks. We are continuing to invest in upgrading our stormwater system to better cope with these events. We are also proposing to begin a significant wastewater upgrade programme to reduce wet weather spillages.

Our six-point plan on page 8 outlines our key strategies to respond to these challenges and ensure we are in a sustainable financial situation into the future.

## Operational efficiencies

Council has committed to an ongoing programme of pursuing operational efficiencies and has incorporated savings in its operating budgets, where we have reduced operational budgets in year one of the LTP by \$1 million and then included approximately an additional \$1 million efficiency gains to each subsequent year's budgets. As these savings are retained through the duration of this Long-Term Plan 2024-34 this results in an approximate total cost saving of \$51 million. It is our intention that these savings can, and will, be achieved without impacting the quality or level of services the community receives. To the extent that such savings are not achieved this will impact on the future debt levels, service levels and/or rate rises.

## Asset sales

Council has currently forecasted to sell \$16 million worth of assets to repay debt to help reduce the rates rises. We are currently consulting on this matter (refer to page 19) with our preferred option being to sell. If the asset sales go ahead, there is a high level of uncertainty whether all of these sales will be able to occur in year 1 of the Long-Term Plan 2024-34 as a separate consultation will take place over the specific assets to be sold. To the extent that assets are not all sold in year 1, this will impact on the timing of expected future debt levels reductions, service levels and/or rate rises.

## Where our funding comes from

Our largest revenue source is rates, funding around 60 percent of our operations.

Other funding comes from:

- fees and charges
- subsidies (such as NZTA roading subsidies)
- investment income
- development contributions (developers contributing toward growth-related capital projects)
- external funding (such as donations and grants)
- loans (to fund our large capital projects).

# Managing our debt

Borrowing money is an important way we fund some of the big-ticket items, in the same way that a household borrows money to buy a house. Debt helps spread the cost of high-cost items over time and means that everyone who benefits now and into the future helps to pay for it.

**We have traditionally taken a conservative approach to our work programme and debt, focusing on essentials like infrastructure and limiting the nice-to-haves.**

**As a result, our debt is relatively low at \$158 million or 148 percent of total revenue as we embark on this Long-Term Plan 2024-2034. This is \$56 million under our current debt limit.**

During the period of this plan we will need to replace the Dublin Street bridge. We expect this to cost \$69 million, of which we expect to fund \$26.2 million over 2028-30.

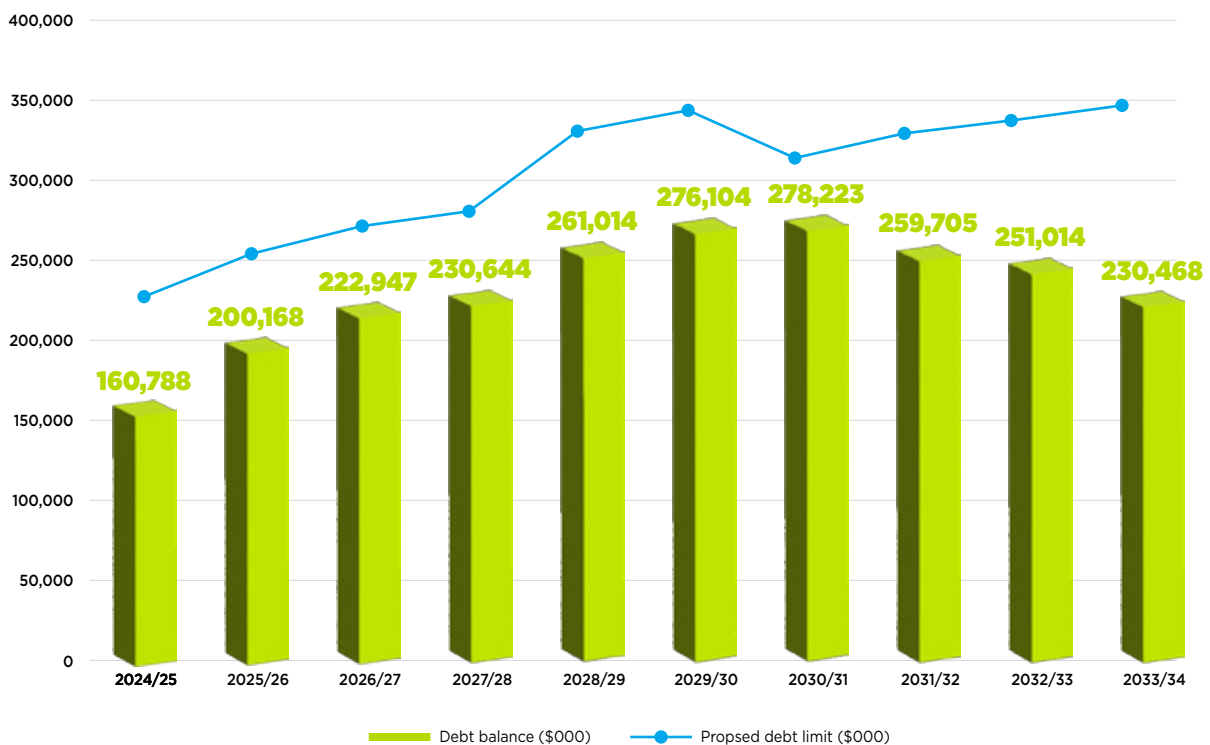
We also have a number of aspirational capital projects in the later years of this Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 to contribute to Whanganui’s liveability and attractiveness. These include developing a hotel and carpark, investment into an advanced aviation hub, GasNet business development, tram infrastructure and the Rapanui Road trail.

We are proposing to keep our debt limit at 200 percent of total revenue over the period of this Long-Term Plan 2024-2034. We believe this is prudent for our community and balances our aspirations for Whanganui with prudent financial management and affordability.

We are expecting debt will peak at \$278 million in 2030/31 and then begin to reduce. This still leaves us with plenty of debt headroom should anything unexpected crop up in the future.

Council is in the process of undertaking a review of its CCOs (Council Controlled Organisations and Council Controlled Trading Organisations). One possible outcome from the review could be that the operations of a CCO is brought in-house to Council. This outcome would likely result in the CCO being closed with its assets and liabilities transferred to Council. If this were to happen then the forecast debt levels outlined in the graph below would increase by \$10 million, however would still remain within Council’s overall debt limit of 200% of total revenue.

**Forecast debt in relation to proposed debt limit (200% of total revenue)**



# Keeping rates affordable

Rates are forecast to increase by an average of 4.5 percent annually over the period of this Long-Term Plan 2024-2034. Our rates increase for 2024/25 is higher than average at 10.6%.

We are proposing to change our self-imposed limit for rates increases in this Long-Term Plan.

Our previous rates increase limit was the Local Government Cost Index (LGCI) plus 2 percent, after accounting for growth. In the current environment this rates limit is too low for us to be able to deliver our services to the standards that are required in the short to medium term, even after implementing our six-point plan to reduce rates.

**We propose our new rates increase limits to be:**

**11%**  
FOR  
2024/25

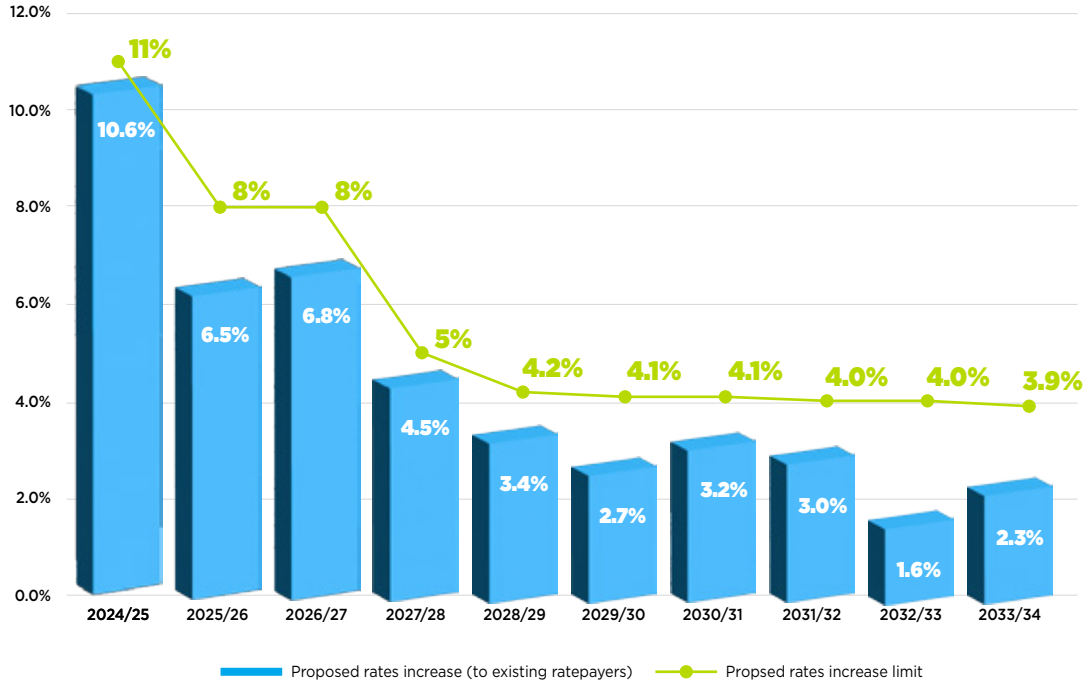
**8%**  
FOR  
2025/26 and  
2026/27

**5%**  
FOR  
2027/28

**LGCI PLUS  
2%**  
FOR  
2028/29 and  
beyond

This will allow us to navigate this time of substantial legislative change, increasing standards and high inflation as well as the start of the new kerbside recycling and food scraps services, while retaining our long-term aspiration for rates increases no higher than the LGCI plus 2 percent.

**Forecast rates increases in relation to proposed rates increase limits**

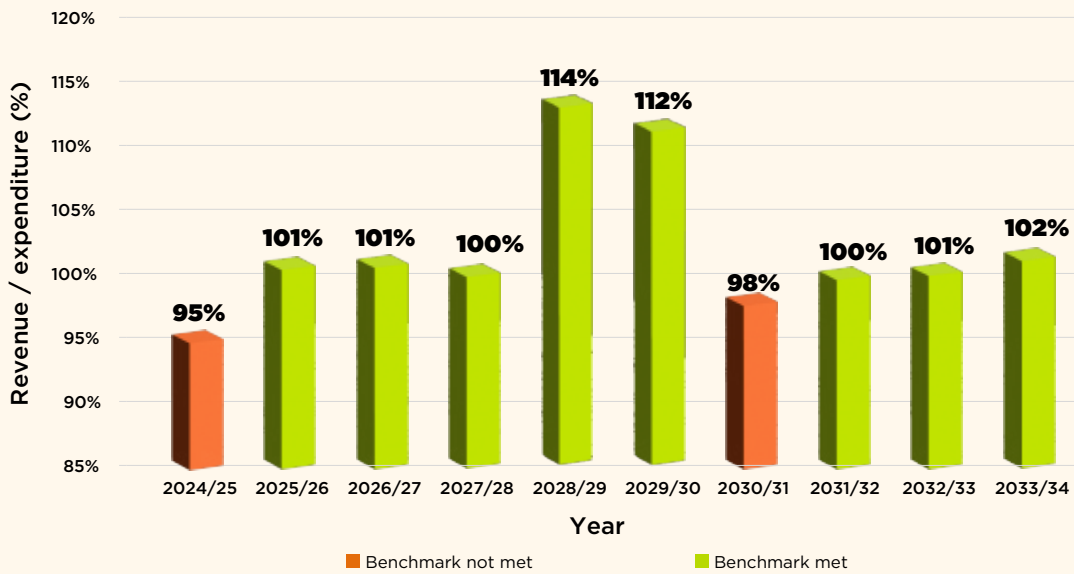


# Balancing our books

We are forecasting an unbalanced budget for 2024/25 and 2030/31.

Due to substantial inflation, forecast depreciation for our infrastructure assets has increased by \$4.7 million in the three years since our last Long-Term Plan, affecting our balanced budget in year one of the plan. We believe this is prudent because we are stepping up funding for our core infrastructure in a staged fashion over the period of this plan because of due to affordability concerns for our ratepayers.

Our balanced budget exceeds requirements in 2028/29 and 2030/31 due to substantial forecast NZTA subsidies for the Dublin Street bridge replacement. We have a slightly unbalanced budget in 2030/31 as we start to depreciate the new Dublin Street bridge. We believe this is prudent as the new bridge will not require any significant maintenance for some time.



# What does this mean for my rates for 2024/25?

THE AVERAGE RATES INCREASE FOR 2024/25 IS

**10.6%**

THE AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL RATE FOR 2024/25 IS

**\$3,838**  
or \$74 per week.

To put this in context, the average weekly household expenditure on other common household expenses is:

- Phone and internet \$46<sup>1</sup>
- Electricity \$47<sup>2</sup>
- Food \$308<sup>3</sup>

The average rates increases for each sector for 2024/25 are as follows:

	AVERAGE LAND VALUE	AVERAGE CAPITAL RATES	AVERAGE 2024/25 RATES	\$ INCREASE	% INCREASE
RESIDENTIAL	\$255,000	\$538,000	\$3,838	<b>\$435</b>	<b>12.8%</b>
LIFESTYLE	\$507,000	\$914,000	\$3,153	<b>\$179</b>	<b>6.0%</b>
FARMING	\$1,910,000	\$2,258,000	\$6,101	<b>\$478</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
COMMERCIAL	\$605,000	\$1,849,000	\$12,737	<b>\$310</b>	<b>2.5%</b>
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>\$362,000</b>	<b>\$720,000</b>	<b>\$4,450</b>	<b>\$426</b>	<b>10.6%</b>

Below are a range of sample properties and their proposed rates increases for 2024/25 based on this proposed plan. You can look at the proposed rates for 2024/25 for your own specific property by going to our website at [www.whanganui.govt.nz/Property/Rates/Property-Rating-Search](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/Property/Rates/Property-Rating-Search)



SC - Stormwater Connected  
SS - Stormwater Serviceable

	RESIDENTIAL					
	(SC)					(SS)
	\$405,000	\$440,000	\$490,000	\$680,000	\$890,000	\$325,000
LAND VALUE	\$205,000	\$250,000	\$235,000	\$250,000	\$345,000	\$215,000
2024/25 TOTAL RATES	\$3,601	\$3,892	\$3,875	\$4,205	\$4,996	\$3,492
\$ INCREASE	+\$448	+\$468	+\$468	+\$495	+\$551	+\$436
% INCREASE	14.20%	13.70%	13.70%	13.30%	12.40%	14.3%
WEEKLY CHANGE	<b>+\$8.62</b>	<b>+\$9.00</b>	<b>+\$9.00</b>	<b>+\$9.52</b>	<b>+\$10.60</b>	<b>+\$8.39</b>



# What do your rates pay for?

The average weekly residential rate of \$74 funds the following council services:

## Rates are complex

The effects on rates of this proposed plan will be different for every property depending on the type of property, its land and capital value, its land area and what council services it has (e.g. whether you are connected to the wastewater system or receive the kerbside recycling service).



LIFESTYLE	FARMING			EXOTIC FORESTRY		COMMERCIAL		
\$1,150,000	\$1,660,000	\$3,350,000	\$4,570,000	\$700,000	\$2,090,000	\$610,000	\$1,250,000	\$3,360,000
\$560,000	\$1,210,000	\$2,750,000	\$3,580,000	\$660,000	\$1,930,000	\$260,000	\$710,000	\$790,000
\$3,816	\$4,180	\$7,997	\$10,408	\$4,136	\$10,709	\$5,179	\$11,765	\$16,904
+\$184	+\$205	+\$438	+\$585	+\$1,015	+\$3,026	+\$199	+\$329	+\$686
5.10%	5.20%	5.80%	6.00%	32.50%	39.40%	4.00%	2.90%	4.20%
+\$3.54	+\$3.95	+\$8.43	+\$11.24	+\$19.51	+\$58.19	+\$3.83	+\$6.33	+\$13.20

# Changes to rates

We are continually reviewing our funding structure to make sure it is equitable and works for our community.

We are consulting on our draft Revenue and Financing Policy, fees and charges 2024/25, and our Development Contributions Policy alongside this Long-Term Plan 2024-2034. You can view these documents and provide feedback on our website at [www.whanganui.govt.nz/HaveYourSay](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/HaveYourSay)

We are also proposing some changes to our rating structure which are outlined below.

## Changes to the forestry targeted roading rate

In 2018, we consulted with the community on implementing a targeted rate for exotic forestry properties to contribute towards fixing damages to roads. The rate was set to collect \$135,000 per annum. We indicated that the rate would likely increase from 2024/25 because many of the forests would be reaching maturity for harvest at that time and we expected roading related costs to increase. As indicated, we are recommending that we increase the rate from \$135,000 per annum to \$287,000 per annum from 1 July 2024.

## Implementation of the new kerbside recycling and food scraps rate

The new kerbside recycling service is due to start in July 2024, with kerbside food scraps collection to follow in July 2025. We are proposing to implement a new targeted rate from 1 July 2024 for kerbside recycling. This rate will apply to all residential households in the serviced residential areas – Whanganui city, Mowhanau, Marybank and Fordell. Maps showing the service areas can be found at [www.whanganui.govt.nz](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz). The rate is expected to be \$143.20 per separately used or inhabited part of a rating unit (SUIP) for the 2024/25 year for kerbside recycling, and to increase to around \$240 per year from 2025/26 when the food scraps service is added.

## Mowhanau wastewater

Following the proposed connection of the Mowhanau wastewater system to the city wastewater network (scheduled in years 1 and 2 of the plan), Mowhanau wastewater ratepayers will be switched over to the city wastewater rate.



# Help us build a better future

This is your opportunity to contribute and have your say on all the matters outlined in this document.

**All feedback must be submitted by 5pm, Thursday 2nd May 2024.**

## Making a submission is easy



Make a submission online:

[www.whanganui.govt.nz/HaveYourSay](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/HaveYourSay)



### Pick up a hard copy

from 101 Guyton Street, the Davis Library or Gonville Library and return it back to one of these locations

### You can also:

**Email your submission to:**  
[policysubmissions@whanganui.govt.nz](mailto:policysubmissions@whanganui.govt.nz)

**Gives us a call on:**  
**(06) 349 0001**

**Post your submission to:**  
**Whanganui District Council**  
**PO Box 637, Whanganui 4541**

You will also be given the opportunity to speak to councillors directly about your feedback at a council hearing.

We will be consulting from Tuesday 2 April until Thursday 2 May 2024. Throughout this time, you can also find us at the following locations:

<p><b>Friday, 5th April</b> 9:30am - 11:30am</p> <p><b>Davis Central City Library</b> 1 Pukenamu Drive, Pukenamu Queens Park</p>	<p><b>Thursday, 11th April</b> 2:00pm – 4:00pm</p> <p><b>Hakeke Street Community Centre</b> 65 Hakeke Street, Whanganui East</p>	<p><b>Saturday, 13th April</b> 11:00am – 2:00pm</p> <p><b>Lorenzdale Park</b> 70 Swiss Avenue, Gonville</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 16th April</b> 11:00am – 1:00pm</p> <p><b>Splash Centre</b> 220 London Street, Springvale</p>	<p><b>Friday, 19th April</b> 10:00am – 12:00pm</p> <p><b>Castlecliff Community Hub &amp; Library</b> 10 Rangiora Street, Castlecliff</p>	<p><b>Wednesday, 24th April</b> 11:00am – 1:00pm</p> <p><b>Majestic Square</b> 98 Victoria Avenue</p>

## To the reader:

### **Independent auditor's report on Whanganui District Council's consultation document for its proposed 2024-34 Long-Term Plan**

I am the Auditor-General's appointed auditor for Whanganui District Council (the Council). The Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) requires the Council to prepare a consultation document when developing its long-term plan. Section 93C of the Act sets out the content requirements of the consultation document and the Council requested me to audit the consultation document. I have carried out this audit using the staff and resources of Audit New Zealand. We completed our audit on 26 March 2024.

## **Opinion**

In our opinion:

- the consultation document provides an effective basis for public participation in the Council's decisions about the proposed content of its 2024-34 long-term plan, because it:
  - fairly represents the matters proposed for inclusion in the long-term plan; and
  - identifies and explains the main issues and choices facing the Council and district, and the consequences of those choices; and
- the information and assumptions underlying the information in the consultation document are reasonable.

## **Emphasis of matters**

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to the following disclosures.

### **Uncertainty over cost savings**

Page 52 outlines the Council's financial strategy to keep rates affordable. To achieve this, the Council is planning cost savings within the operational budget over the next 10 years. As the operational efficiencies from years 2 to 10 have not yet been identified and the proposal to sell assets is at the initial consultation stage, there is a high level of uncertainty over the amount of cost savings and when it will be achieved. To the extent that the Council does not achieve the planned savings, future debt levels, service levels and/or rates rises could be affected.

### **Uncertainty over the cost to develop a hotel and carpark**

Pages 32 and 33 outline the Council's plan to develop a hotel and carpark in order to attract large-scale events to the city. The \$55 million estimated cost of the Council's preferred option is highly uncertain because a detailed business case is yet to be developed. The risks associated with the project are however reduced because the Council will only proceed if the business case demonstrates that there is demand and the projects are financially viable.

### **Uncertainty over external funding of the Royal Opera House**

Pages 34 to 37 outline the Council's proposals to keep the Royal Whanganui Opera House operational and fit for purpose. The Council's preferred option assumes that external funding contributions of \$8.9 million will be obtained to build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system. The external funding sources are currently uncertain because funding agreements are not in place. If the level of external funding is not achieved the project may be delayed or significantly changed.

## **Basis of opinion**

We carried out our work in accordance with the International Standard on Assurance Engagements (New Zealand) 3000 (Revised) Assurance Engagements Other Than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information. In meeting the requirements of this standard, we took into account particular elements of the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards and the International Standard on Assurance Engagements 3400 The Examination of Prospective Financial Information that were consistent with those requirements.

We assessed the evidence the Council has to support the information and disclosures in the consultation document. To select appropriate procedures, we assessed the risk of material misstatement and the Council's systems and processes applying to the preparation of the consultation document.

We did not evaluate the security and controls over the publication of the consultation document.

## **Responsibilities of the Council and auditor**

The Council is responsible for:

- meeting all legal requirements relating to its procedures, decisions, consultation, disclosures, and other actions associated with preparing and publishing the consultation document and long-term plan, whether in printed or electronic form;
- having systems and processes in place to provide the supporting information and analysis the Council needs to be able to prepare a consultation document and long-term plan that meet the purposes set out in the Act; and
- ensuring that any forecast financial information being presented has been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice in New Zealand.

We are responsible for reporting on the consultation document, as required by section 93C of the Act. We do not express an opinion on the merits of any policy content of the consultation document.

## **Independence and quality management**

We have complied with the Auditor-General's independence and other ethical requirements, which incorporate the requirements of Professional and Ethical Standard 1 International Code of Ethics for Assurance Practitioners (including International Independence Standards) (New Zealand) (PES 1) issued by the New Zealand Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. PES 1 is founded on the fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour.

We have also complied with the Auditor-General's quality management requirements, which incorporate the requirements of Professional and Ethical Standard 3 Quality Management for Firms that Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Statements, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements (PES 3) issued by the New Zealand Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. PES 3 requires our firm to design, implement and operate a system of quality management including policies or procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In addition to this audit and our report on the Council's 2022-23 annual report, we have carried out an engagement in the area of a limited assurance engagement related to the Council's debenture trust deed, which is compatible with those independence requirements. Other than these engagements we have no relationship with or interests in the Council or any of its subsidiaries.



Chris Webby  
Audit New Zealand

On behalf of the Auditor-General, Palmerston North, New Zealand

# Notes

# Supporting documents

This document has been prepared with a number of supporting documents which are all available to view on our website – [www.whanganui.govt.nz/long-term-plan-2024](http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/long-term-plan-2024)  
Alternatively, call (06) 349 0001 to request a copy.

- Infrastructure Strategy
- Financial Strategy
- Forecasting assumptions
- Full financial statements
- Capital expenditure projects by area
- Funding impact statement
- Revenue and Financing Policy
- Development Contributions Policy
- Fees and charges
- Performance management framework
- Significance and Engagement Policy
- Rates Remission Policy
- Rates Postponement Policy
- Policy on the Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land
- Opera House upgrade – supporting information document
- Whanganui District Snapshot

**Let's make a plan and  
build our future.**



**Consultation Document**



**WHANGANUI  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui