



Decisions on rates and key issues

Horowhenua District Council has just completed the Long Term Plan 2021-2041 Amendment and Annual Plan 2023/24.

This included making decisions on the future of the Levin Landfill, the Rates Review, key water infrastructure projects and the rates for 2023/24.

Council asked for your feedback on options for each of these earlier this year and this brochure sets out the feedback we received and the decisions Council made.



Your rates explained

There are two parts to this: the model used to set the rates, and how much funding was needed from rates.

Rates Review

Our community has raised concerns about the affordability of rates with Council over several years and we know rates are a large expense for some households in our community. The purpose of the rates review was to see whether rates could be distributed more fairly across the district by changing the model used to set rates.

We asked for feedback on three options: keep using land value to calculate the general rate; use capital value instead of land value; or use capital value and have a 20% discount (differential) for rural ratepayers.

Council identified using capital value as the preferred option (we have to choose one). At the start of consultation we sent a letter to all ratepayers about the rates review, showing what the new rate for the property would be if Council adopted the preferred option.

This is an important issue and as expected, it generated a lot of interest. We received 332 submissions on the rates review

topic: 235 submitters in favour of keeping land value; 74 in favour of capital value; and 23 in favour of capital value with the discount. After a long debate, and consideration of all the evidence and submissions, Council decided to leave the rating system as it currently is, using land value.

Rates increase for 2023/24

Council spent a lot of time discussing ways to reduce this year's rates increase to make them more affordable, especially as Council, like many households, are facing higher costs. Council got the average rates increase down to 7.9% and consulted on that figure. After feedback and revisiting Council's budget, Council agreed to a lower average rates increase of 7.0% for the 2023/2024 financial year by reducing Council's operating costs.

Impact on rates invoices

These decisions mean that soon a number of our ratepayers will soon receive a rates invoice that is different, and for many, higher than they may be expecting. Council has also asked staff to review the Rates Remissions and Rates Postponement policies to look at additional ways to help people with the cost of rates. If you find yourself unable to fully pay your rates please contact Council to discuss your options.



Community and Engagement sessions

Council is always seeking to improve engagement with our community. We want to ensure our community was heard, show that decision-making is transparent, not pre-determined, and to make it easy to take part. To reach as many people as possible we used a range of new and old channels including meetings, Facebook live sessions,

Citizens Panels (more below), radio, social media posts, a new engagement website, and a tour of Levin Landfill, Water Treatment Plant, and Wastewater Treatment Plant. This made sure we reached as many people as possible.

The number and range of submissions received makes us confident that we are on the right track to increasing our engagement with our community. Council will continue looking to increase and improve engagement with the community.

350 PEOPLE ENGAGED

Approximately **350 people engaged** with council at **22 in person events** over the month of engagement.

350 CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS HANDED OUT

Council handed out **350 hard copies of the consultation document** and over 500 hard copies of the submission form, with the online versions used as well.

302 FACEBOOK LIVE ENGAGEMENTS

302 people engaged with Council through the **Facebook Live Events** hosted over the same time.

418 FORMAL SUBMISSIONS

All up, Council received **418 formal submissions**, 25 from groups such as Iwi, Hapu, community groups and organisations.

Submissions came from all **over the district**, and from a range of age groups.

Many more people also provided **informal feedback** through Facebook.

Landfill

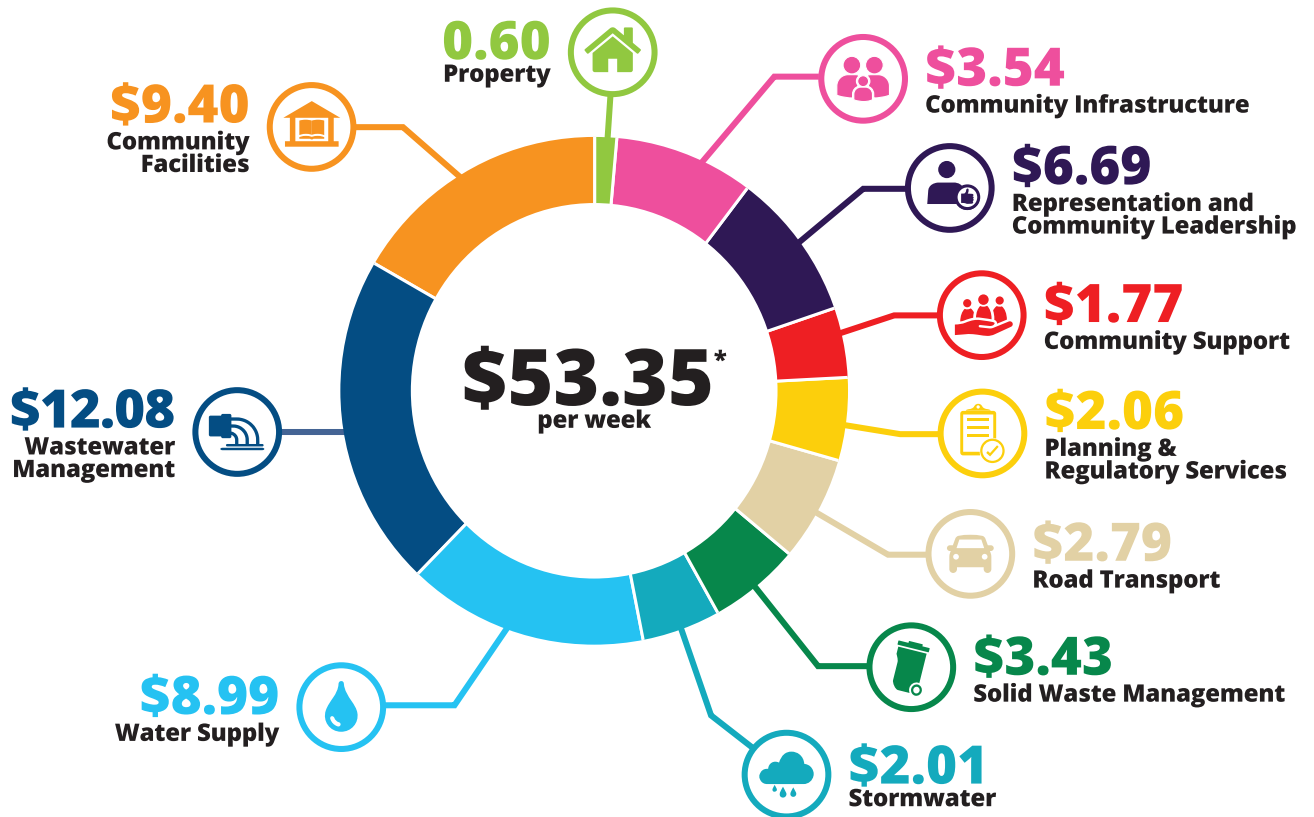
A decision on the Future of the Levin Landfill has been a long time coming for many within our community. Council is pleased to let our community know that the Levin Landfill has been officially closed for good.

Council consulted on the future of the Levin Landfill with 3 options: Close the landfill with no future use; keep the Levin landfill closed and generate revenue from alternative site use(s); or to reopen the landfill. The second option had the most support from the community and was the option that Council unanimously agreed to.

Keep an eye out for info about the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan we will be developing alongside the Long Term Plan 2024. We will be seeking feedback on what that should include and what our community wants to use the Levin Landfill site for in the future.

Where your rates go

Based on a Land Value of \$180,000 and Capital Value of \$400,000 for a Levin Residential property (Please note rates are charged based on the rateable value of your property. The market value for this example property is approximately \$600,000).



Annual Plan

Fees and charges

Council has changed some of our fees to rebalance the split between what ratepayers pay and what the users pay. Submissions also asked for a separate fee for owners of multiple stock dogs. Council agreed to this so from this year there is a new registration class for dogs with a \$10 discount per dog for people who own four or more stock dogs.

Foxton Beach Freeholding Account

Council asked the community if there was support to use \$500,000 from the Foxton Beach Freeholding Account for the Foxton Pools Redevelopment Project. Council acknowledged that this would breach the Foxton Beach Freeholding Account Policy, however this will have no legal consequences. After considering the feedback, from Foxton and Foxton Beach particularly, Council decided to use this money as proposed and noted the policy is being reviewed.

Other proposals raised in submissions

The community made several other proposals for Council to consider and Council has agreed to the following:

- Include the Ohau Shared Path proposal in Council's application to the next National Land Transport Programme.
- In response to a request to support a mountain bike park in Target Reserve, develop a plan for Target Reserve within the next year that considers all recreational activities that the site could be used for.
- Council committed to spending up to \$15,000 for a cost-effective fibreglass single pan long drop wilderness toilet unit at the Tokomaru Shelter site along the Awaroa Trail.
- Continue conversations with interested parties about finding for improvements to the Manakau Domain.
- Provide interested parties support to investigate the possibility of developing a privately funded Skid Pad or other motorsport facility.
- Consider implementing a living wage for all staff during the Long Term Plan 2024.



Key Water Infrastructure

This has been a key issue for our community and Council increased funding for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater in the LTP 2021. To keep costs to ratepayers down, Council decided to spread this work over the 20 years. However, changes were needed to the budget because work is needed sooner as we reach capacity and infrastructure wears out faster than expected - and, just like many other things, the costs have increased significantly.

Council asked whether people supported increasing the budget to pay for key projects and install water meters district wide to detect leaks; reduce work to fit the current budget and introduce water meters district-wide; or either of those options without water meters. The first option had the most support and Council agreed unanimously to adopt this option. This means Council will invest an additional \$75m over the next 10 years on the water infrastructure

our district needs to meet the demand, provide the needed upgrades and improve resilience by increasing Levin's water storage capacity from the current less than one day to 30 days.

Development Contributions

Alongside this Council asked whether people supported increasing development contribution payments to help meet the increased costs of the water infrastructure programme upgrade. Development contributions are charged by Council to developers for any new dwelling or development that increases demand on Councils infrastructure.

A majority of submissions on this point supported the increase. Council agreed to the increase in development contributions. Increasing development contributions means that developers will be covering the cost of the additional demand on our infrastructure, rather than this cost falling on ratepayers.

Citizens Panel

To make it easier and more fun to engage with Council we introduced a Citizens Panel. We asked people if they'd like to be involved and had 120 people say yes they'd like to, so we held 3 focus groups that approx. 40 people attended.

People were asked their views on Horowhenua's strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. They sorted through 24 projects to prioritise and discussed them. We also asked for alternative ideas of how Council could generate revenue and participants had a bit of fun when asked to personify the Council brand. Mayor Bernie also talked about the key topics in the LTP Amendment, Council's preferred options and why they were Council's preferred options. We had a live illustrator draw the outcomes of the last session.

We're excited to continue this approach with future community engagements.



Easy ways to pay



**Internet Banking
(including POLi)**



**Credit or Debit
Card Payment**



Direct Debit



Mail



**In Person at Council
offices or Post Shop**

