

# Our plan. Together.

## Message from the Mayor

Kia ora.

There's so much to love and enjoy in this beautiful place we all call home.

That's why we're deeply committed to ensuring that our rohe thrives, not just for today, but for generations to come. Our Long Term Plan is more than a document - it's our picture of what we will strive to achieve for our community and the mahi needed to build a future we can all be proud of.

Our plan focuses on the essentials, striking a careful balance between delivering the critical infrastructure to ensure we all have things like clean drinking water and safe roads, and the things that make our District a place where we can build healthy communities where people can live good, fulfilling lives, such as libraries, swimming pools and playgrounds.

However, achieving this has required us to make some tough decisions in the light of the difficult economic conditions and rising costs.

Finding ways to cut costs without compromising services is always a challenge. Repairing damage from severe weather, upgrading our roads, adhering to higher legislated standards for water assets, and providing quality facilities all come at a significant cost.

We've had to reduce some key areas of what we do as a Council, such as big cuts to our cycleway budget and stopping the Town Centre Development Fund to prioritise what's most important. In the first year, these decisions mean a rates increase of 13.47 per cent,

which is largely driven by unavoidable increases in the cost of providing and maintaining our roading, water supply and wastewater activities, as well as other cost increases such as for insurance.

We are also committed to completing some significant, necessary and long-awaited infrastructure kaupapa like the permanent replacement for the bridge on No.4 Road in Te Puke, the new library, service centre and hub in Waihi Beach, upgrades to the Dave Hume Pool in Katikati to make it better for users and extend its life, and prioritised major stormwater upgrades in Waihi Beach.

Just like the images throughout this document of what people love about our rohe, this is our place too, and so we're always listening to you and making decisions that reflect our collective vision.

While this plan outlines our vision for the next decade, it's important to remember that this is not set in stone. We will review this plan in three years, and by then, the economic climate could be different - and hopefully more positive.

For now, our focus is on helping everyone out and keeping more money in your pockets.

We're committed to listening to our people and doing the right thing for the right reasons. During the consultation period, we received almost 600 submissions from individuals, organisations, and businesses.

Your feedback shaped the final plan, leading to significant changes that reflect your priorities and giving comfort to us as decision-makers that we were on the right track with our key proposals.

These included increasing the roading rate differential, continue the temporary ban on Te Puna Station Road (and progressing mitigation of the effects of this), pushing out the timing of the future Community Facilities Fund to enable more time for further community kōrero and stopping the Pukehina Development Rate.

Amid shifting government policies and evolving expectations - such as reforms in water management, resource management, climate change, and the future of local government - we are navigating these changes with financial prudence, and careful planning to ensure our District continues to prosper and grow.

There's always mahi to do, but we're confident that we have the potential and commitment to achieve great things through this plan.

Let's continue to work together to make our District an even better place for ourselves, our tamariki, and our future generations.

Mā tō tātou iwi. For our people.

Ngā mihi nui,

Mayor James Denyer

