

Waikato Regional Council – WRC Chair, **Pamela Storey**, presented to the committee:

The Waikato Regional Council (WRC) Annual Plan opens for consultation today and closes Wednesday 30 April.

- The Annual Plan comes into effect 1 July 2025, and this is our opportunity to give feedback to the council. Go to the Waikato Regional Council website and search for “Your Voice Matters”. There is a link through to 2025/26 Annual Plan for you to have your say.
- The plan introduces a **Regional Public Transport Rate** which varies according to where you live.
- A 5.9% rate rise has been proposed. This increase is less than forecast due to a **variety of reasons, including** central government funding being available.

The main issues being consulted on are:

- **Regional **Public Transport Rate**** – this is the preferred rating system following strong feedback from ratepayers.
 - It recognizes fairness and that public transport is a public “good”.
 - There are 5 different rate levels with Tamahere falling in the Central Transport Zone/ unserviced. This reflects a greater degree of regular service and is divided into a “serviced rate” and an “unserviced rate”. Tamahere will initially be rated at the unserviced rate of \$38.35/property.
 - To find out what rate your property will incur please go to the consultation page on the WRC website and enter your residential address.
 - The Regional Public Transport rate supports public bus services as well as Community Transport and Total Mobility. Trusts that provide community transport services can apply for Community Transport funding.
- **Wharekawa Coast rating** – this does not affect Tamahere other than through the General Rate proportion, which equates to just 2 cents per \$100,000 of property value annually.
 - This is a new targeted rate to provide **river and catchment management to the Wharekawa Coast** area.
- **Primary Industry Compliance Rate remission policy** – this is a new remission policy relating to native bush set aside on primary industry land. It only applies to properties 20ha or greater. Landowners are encouraged to engage with the WRC team for further information.
- **Prior year fund surplus** – feedback is requested on how ratepayers would like the Council’s surplus funds to be used e.g. hold for civil emergency or something else.
- **Fees and charges** – review has been made, and charges have been set for regulatory services and information gathering. Feedback on these changes is requested.

Other Discussion Issues:

I. Cr Keir raised the issue of the WRC costs attached to their **consent process** when it relates to community projects such as gully restoration. Gully restoration always has the objective of clearing the area of invasive plants. This is a job that WRC wants to have happen. **[Additional commentary in email]**

- He suggested the consent process needs to be streamlined to recognize these community projects which normally operate with minimal funding and reliant on free community labour.
- Cr Storey stated **late last year, she had been on a site visit at** the gully restoration project currently led by TMRT and see if she can assist in any way.
- Cr Storey also responded with the observation that the current Resource Management Reform is looking for a regional spatial plan so that one plan covers all aspects of the **region's resource management activities**.

II. **SNA's**: When SNA's became a consideration, WRC had a database which it shared details of with Councils for areas that could potentially be SNA's using its maps. District Councils were then required to "ground truth" these proposed areas. The concern expressed by our Committee is that SNA's now appear to affect private property owners "property rights and use", something never raised when the SNA issue commenced.

- SNA's are not flagged on WRC maps as they are a District Council responsibility. Some Councils have done work in this area and others have not.
- There are many SNA's that have not been truthed and it is not clear where this project currently sits given the current Government reforms underway.

III. **Plan Change 1 (PC1)**: This was a controversial proposal with a large number of submitters. It primarily relates to how WRC, in the Waikato & Waipa catchments, manage our environment so freshwater bodies of the Waikato can be enjoyed for generations.

- It is still in front of the Environment Court with the Judge continuing to pursue discussions with Appellants to try and come to resolution.
- No final resolution date has been set.
- The Resource Management Reform is **unlikely to have effect on the PC 1 outcome, however we have not seen what the legislation will look like yet so this is still to be determined.**