

Waikato District Council

# 2025

## **Pre-election Report**

Puurongo Toomua Koowhiringa Pooti



## What is a Pre-election Report?

Every three years, before local council elections, we publish a Pre-election Report (PER). This report is required by law (under the Local Government Act 2002) and is designed to help you understand the key issues the council is facing and encourage discussion about them.

We want you to understand what we do and what we deliver for our community. This PER outlines the challenges we face and the actions we are already taking to address them, helping you make informed decisions. It will also help you decide whether you might like to run for Council, or guide you in choosing who to vote for. We encourage you to think about the candidates and ask them how they would respond to these important issues.

## Elected member expectations

Being an elected member on Council isn't something you do on the side or just during office hours - it's a full-time commitment. It's a demanding public service position that requires ongoing dedication, flexibility, and responsiveness to the needs of the community. This means you may often be working evenings, weekends, and stepping up whenever your community needs you for the three year term.

If you're thinking of standing for election you'll need to consider what it takes to meet the full-time demands of public service. Similarly, when deciding who to vote for, ask yourself how prepared the candidate is to take on the responsibility of being available whenever the community needs them, including evenings, weekends, and in times of urgency.

There are also a number of other representation opportunities within the Waikato District. You could choose to be a member of a Community Board or volunteer on one of our Community Committees in the district. These roles require less of a time commitment, but attendance is still needed at regular meetings and workshops to provide feedback to Council on behalf of your community.

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## Disclaimer

This Pre-election Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002 and provides a high-level summary of Waikato District Council's financial and service performance leading up to the 2025 local elections.

The financial disclosures contained in this report, review the previous three years, provide an update on the current year's results and look at what is on the horizon for the coming three years. This report is based on information available as at the date of publication. The disclosures are intended to support transparency and accountability but do not constitute audited financial statements. They may include projections and assumptions that are subject to change and should not be relied upon as definitive forecasts of future performance.

During July 2025, it is anticipated that the Department of Internal Affairs will release a nationally consistent set of metrics for local government, enabling comparison across councils. Waikato District Council will be grouped under the "small urban and large provincial" category, which includes councils serving populations between 30,000 and 100,000. While this release provides a valuable snapshot, the Pre-election Report offers more comprehensive and up-to-date insights, including multi-year trends and context specific to our district's communities, geography, and local priorities.

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Throughout this document, you may see varying spelling in some te reo Maaori. The Waikato dialect refers to a regional preference of te reo Maaori, where double vowels are used to represent long vowel sounds. This reflects local language practices of this region. However, macrons may still be used in some instances where names, including brand names, personal names, or place names, where the official spelling includes a macron. This is to maintain consistency and respect individual or organisational preferences.



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# Message from Chief Executive

He karere naa te Tumu  
Whakarae

## Teenaa koutou katoa,

**The past three years have been a time of significant progress — not only for local government, but for the Waikato district and the communities we serve. As Chief Executive, I'm proud of how we've responded to uncertainty with resilience and delivered the core services our communities rely on every day, while also preparing our district for long-term growth and change.**

As the newly appointed Chief Executive, I want to acknowledge my predecessor Gavin Ion, who led Council through a period of substantial improvement, innovation and change. I've spent my first few months getting to know our people, our projects and the opportunities ahead of us. My focus now is on how we deliver even greater outcomes — more effectively and efficiently — while staying true to our vision of creating liveable, thriving, and connected communities.

That work is made possible by the quality of our kaimahi. Our Council staff are dedicated, passionate, and skilled — and it shows in the scale and complexity of what we deliver across the district every day.

Since the 2022 local elections, Council has made significant progress across key areas — upgrading our critical water infrastructure, enhancing community resilience, and growing our capacity to plan and respond to climate, growth, and economic change.

The completion of major projects in Te Kauwhata and Whaaingaroa/Raglan reflects our commitment to long-term outcomes that reflect environmental, cultural, and community values.

This year, voters will also be asked to have their say in a referendum on Maaori wards in conjunction with the local elections — a significant decision for our district to determine the future of Maaori representation within our Council. We remain committed to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and working in true partnership with mana whenua.

We've taken big steps forward through our partnership with Waikato-Tainui. The launch of Takitini, our refreshed economic development brand, reflects who we are and how we work — grounded in relationships and focused on shared prosperity. This kaupapa captures our future direction: working collectively to unlock local opportunity, champion innovation, and support sustainable growth across the rohe.

At the same time, we've remained grounded in the day-to-day — maintaining over 2,500km of roads, collecting one million bins each year, and keeping our parks, libraries, and services running smoothly. Our six strategic priorities — from improving responsiveness to supporting connectivity and community wellbeing — continue to guide how we prioritise and deliver. This supports our role in Future Proof, a sub-regional partnership with iwi, local government and central government agencies working together to provide better outcomes for the community.

We know the needs of our rural and urban communities are different, and we will continue to work hard to serve both equitably. From Otaua to Meremere, Huntly to Raglan, our people deserve services that reflect their local realities, and Council will continue to work hard to deliver reflective services.

But we're also preparing for what lies ahead. Our population is projected to grow by nearly 37% over the next 30 years. We're seeing increasing demand on infrastructure, rising operational costs, and the early stages of major government reform across water services, resource management, and housing. Each brings complexity — but also an opportunity to reimagine how we deliver greater outcomes for our district.

Elected members play a vital role in that future. Being a mayor or councillor requires commitment — it takes time, preparation and a deep understanding of your community's needs. You'll be responsible for making decisions that affect the daily lives of our communities, and for navigating complex issues that don't always have easy answers. It requires balancing competing priorities and being accountable to the people you represent. This report shows the scale — and the opportunity — of that responsibility.

This Pre-election Report also provides a transparent view of our current financial position, our major projects, and the key challenges we'll face in the coming triennium. Council has limited revenue streams. Our income comes from central government grants, fees and charges, development contributions and in the main, rates. For those considering standing for Council, voting in the 2025 elections, or simply taking a greater interest in how we operate — this report offers insight into the work ahead.

As Council's role continues to evolve, our focus remains firm; we remain committed to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi, strengthening our partnerships, and shaping a district that is liveable, thriving, and connected — not just today, but for generations to come.



Ngaa mihi nui,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig'.

**Craig Hobbs**  
Chief Executive  
**Waikato District Council**

# He karere naa te Tumu Whakarae

## Message from Chief Executive

**Teenaa koutou katoa,**

He nui ngaa whanaketanga i roto i ngaa tau e toru kua hori — kua noa moo ngaa kaunihera, engari tonu moo te takiwaa o Waikato me ngaa hapori e haapai nei e maatou. Teenei au te Tumu Whakarae, e poho kereruu ana ki taa maatou nei manawa tiitii, manawanui hoki ki te tuku i ngaa ratonga matua e tika tonu ai ngaa mahi o te ia raa a oo maatou hapori, me te anga whakamua a te takiwaa ki ngaa panonitanga me ngaa whanaketanga pae tawhiti, ahakoa ngaa taumahatanga o te waa.

Hei tauhou ki teenei tuuranga Tumu Whakarae, e tika ana kia mihia taku toomua a Gavin Ion, naanaa te Kaunihera i arataki ki teetahi taumata e pai haere, e auaha ake, e panoni haere ngaa mahi. Kua pau aku marama toomua nei i ngaa mahi whakaratarata ki ngaa iwi, ki ngaa kookiritanga me ngaa whai waahitanga kei mua i te aroaro. Ko taaku e aro nei i teenei waa, ko te peewhea o te eke tonu ki teetahi taumata kee atu o te tutukihanga wawe, whai hua tonu i raro i taa tatou whakakitenga o te whakatupu i ngaa hapori tauoranga pai, tauoranga momoho, tauoranga honohono.

Kei taa te kounga o ngaa kaimahi e taea ai eeraa mahi. Aa maatou kaimahi Kaunihera, he ngaakau titikaha, he ngaakau nui, he puukenga nui — he maarama te kite i roto i te matatini o ngaa tutukihanga ia raa puta noa i te takiwaa.

Mai i ngaa pootitanga o te 2022, kua nui ngaa whanaketanga a te Kaunihera puta noa i ngaa waahanga matua – te whakahou i ngaa hanganga wai, te whakapakari i te manahau hapori, me te whakatupu i te aahei ki te whakamahere me te whakatika e ai ki te aahuarangi, te tupu me ngaa nekehanga ohaoha.

E kitea ana i roto i te tutukihanga o ngaa kookiritanga nui, o roto i Te Kauwhata me Whaaingarua, too maatou uu ki ngaa whaainga pae tawhiti e whakaatu ana i ngaa maataapono taiao, ahurea, hapori.

Kei teenei tau, ka paataihia hoki te hunga pooti ki te whai waahi atu ki teetahi taapaetanga pooti moo ngaa Waari Maaori ngaatahi nei ki ngaa pootitanga kaunihera — he whakataunga nui moo too taatou takiwaa moo te taha ki te aapoopoo o te maangai Maaori ki too taatou Kaunihera. E noho here tonu ana maatou ki te whakauu i Te Tiriti o Waitangi me te mahi ngaatahi ki ngaa mana whenua.

Kua koke whakamua maatou maa roto i te hononga ki a Waikato Tainui. Te whakarewatanga o Takitini, too maatou tohu ohaoha hou, e whakaatu nei ko wai maatou, he peewhea hoki te mahi i aa maatou mahi – whakauungia ana ki ngaa honohononga, aropuu ana ki te toonuitanga a te katoa. Kei roto kei teenei kaupapa te ahunga

whakamua: te mahi tahi ki te whakatuwhera i ngaa whiriwhiringa, te kookiri i te auahatanga, me te tautoko i te toiora puta noa i te rohe.

Kei roto hoki ko te whakauu tonu i te ia raa – te tiaki i ngaa rori e 2,500 kiromita, te koha i te kotahi miriona ipupara ia tau, me te tiaki hoki i ngaa paaka, ngaa whare pukapukra me ngaa ratonga, kia rere pai ai ngaa mahi. Ko ngaa whaainga matua e ono – mai i te whakapakari i te uruparetanga me ngaa paatuitanga tae noa ki te oranga hapori — he aata kite i te whakaraupapa me te whakatutuki. He mea haapai teenei i aa maatou mahi ki a Future Proof, he kaupapa paatuitanga aa-rohe ki ngaa lwi, me ngaa roopuu whakahaere o ngaa tari kawanatanga aa-rohe, aa-motu anoo hoki, e mahi tahi ana kia tutuki ko ngaa tino whaainga aa te hapori.

E moohio ana maatou he rerekee ngaa hiahia o te hunga noho tuawhenua me te hunga noho taone, ka mutu ka ihu oneone tonu maatou ki te haapai i ngaa hunga e rua i runga i te matatika. Mai i Otaua ki Meremere, Raahui Pookeka ki Whaaingaroa, me whiwhi ratonga whai hua ngaa iwi moo raatou ake, ka mutu ko taa te Kaunihera mahi nui, he tuku i aua ratonga e tika ana.

Heoi e whakarite hoki ana maatou moo ngaa mea kei mua. Ko te whakakitenga ka tupu te taupori o te takiwaa maa te 37% i roto i ngaa tau 30 nei. E kitea ana te taumaha ki ngaa hanganga, te pikinga utu whakahaere, me ngaa whakahaerenga toomua ki ngaa hanganga hou a te kaawanatanga moo te taha ki ngaa ratonga wai, penapena rawa, me te hanga whare. Kei ia toona ake matatinitanga — engari kei reira hoki ko te whai waahitanga ki te waananga i te peewhea o te eke ki taumata kee atu o ngaa whaainga moo too taatou takiwaa.

He mahi nui taa ngaa mema kua whakatuuria, ki taua aapoopoo. Me ngaakau uu te Koromatua, te Kaikaunihera raanei – me whakapau waa, me whakapau kaha, me whai whakaaro ki ngaa hiahia o too hapori. Ka riro i a koe te kawenga ki te whakatau i ngaa whakatau paanga nui ki te ia raa o ngaa hapori, ka mutu moo te wherawhera i ngaa take nui, take e kore pea teetahi huarahi ngaawari e kitea. Me aata kimi i te papatahitanga ki ngaa mea matua e tukituki ana kia noho maataamua, me te noho haepapa ki te hunga e waha nei koe. Kei teenei puurongo te whakapuakitanga o te rahi – me te whai waahitanga o taua kawenga.

Ko taa teenei puurongo moo mua i te Pooti he whakapuaki kehoheho nei i te aahua o te puutea, i a maatou kookiritanga matua, me ngaa taunahua kei roto kei ngaa tau e toru e haere ake nei, he taaparepare ngaa huarahi whiwhi puutea a te Kaunihera. Riro ai te puutea i ngaa tuku puutea a te kaawanatanga, ngaa utu, ngaa tukunga whakawhanake me te mea matua, ngaa taake kaunihera. Koutou e whakaaro ana ki te tuu hei mema kaunihera, ki te pooti ki ngaa pootitanga 2025, ki te moohio raanei ki ngaa mahi a te Kaunihera — kei teenei puurongo eetahi maaramatanga ki ngaa mahi kei mua.

I a ngaa mahi a te Kaunihera e tupu ana, e uu tonu ana te aronga; e noho here tonu maatou ki te whakauu i Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te whakapakari i ngaa paatuitanga, me te taarai i teetahi takiwaa, tauoranga pai, tauoranga momoho, tauoranga honohono – kaua anahe moo teenei raa, engari moo Ngai Aapoopoo.



Ngaa mihi nui,

**Craig Hobbs**  
Tumu Whakarae  
**Te Kaunihera aa Takiwaa o Waikato**







# Our vision for Waikato district

## Oo taatou moemoeaa mo te takiwaa o Waikato

Our vision and community outcomes reflect our aspirations for the Waikato district and outline how we aim to enhance the cultural, economic, environmental, and social wellbeing of our communities.

### Our vision is:

**liveable, thriving, and  
connected communities.**

He noohanga aahuru, he iwi  
whai ora, he hapori tuuhono tahi.

To help bring our vision to life, we spent time in 2023, engaging with the community to understand what matters most to them. From this feedback, we developed our community outcomes, which can be explored on our website at [waikatodistrict.co.nz/vision](https://waikatodistrict.co.nz/vision).

## What we deliver daily

While we continue to make improvements to our services and evolve our digital and self-service offerings, we continue to ensure that our core services are running every day and that our customers and communities can engage with us daily.





# Strategic priorities

## Ngaa rautaki whakaarotau

Our six strategic priorities, reviewed in June 2023, have been central in guiding our investment decisions and ensuring we meet the immediate needs of our communities. When Council moved from developing the 2024–2034 Long Term Plan (LTP) to preparing the 2024/25 Enhanced Annual Plan, these priorities helped us stay focused on what mattered most.



### Consistent delivery of core services

Te tuku tonu i ngaa ratonga maataamua



### Improving Council responsiveness

Te whakawhanake i te urupare a te Kaunihera



### Building community resilience

Te whakatupu i te manawaroa aa-hapori



### Building relationships

Te whakatupu whanaungatanga



### Improving connectivity

Te whakawhanake aaheinga

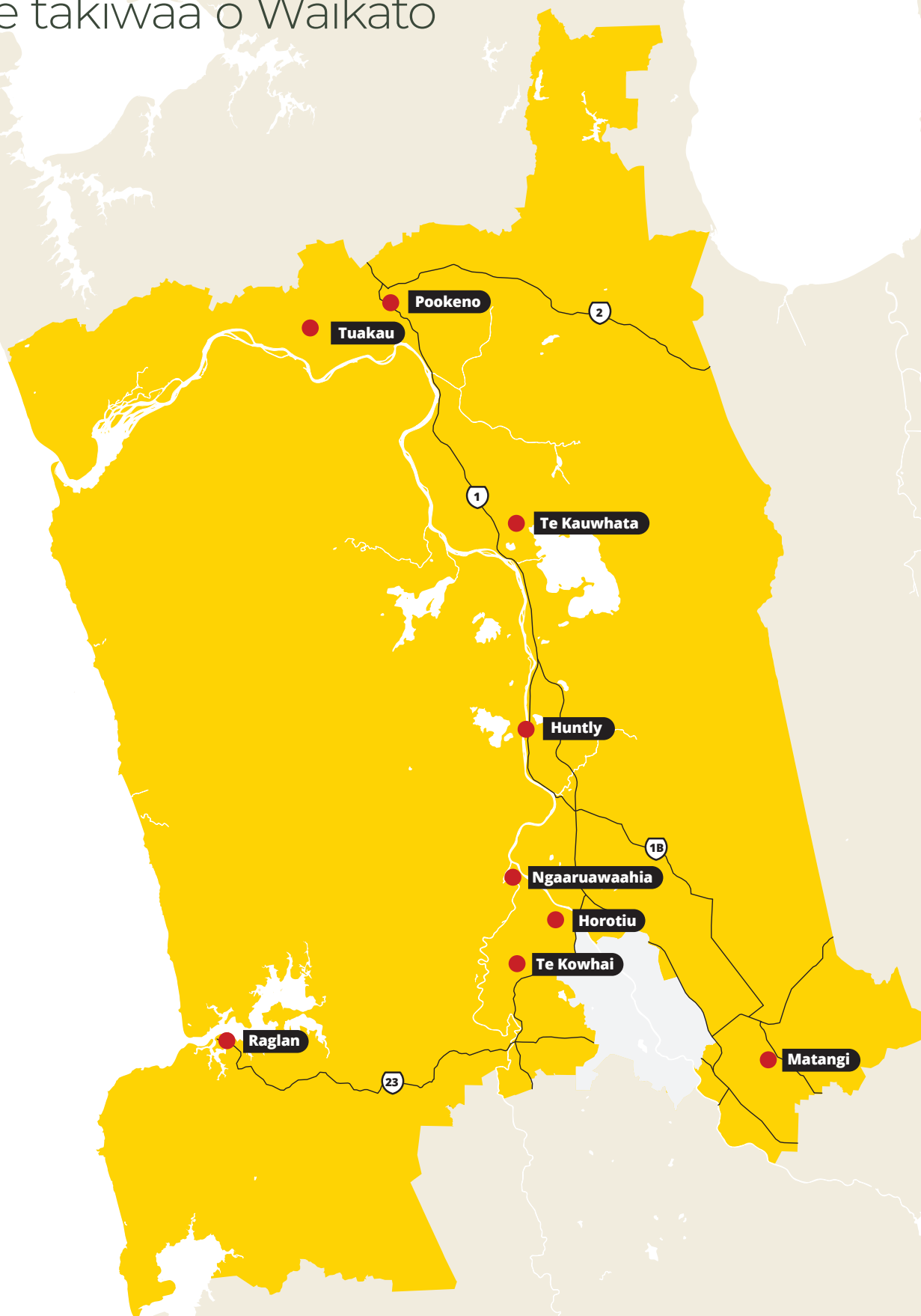


### Supporting sustainable growth

Te tautoko i te whanaketanga toituu

# Waikato district area

Te takiwaa o Waikato



# Snapshot of the district

Ka tiro mawhiti ki te takiwaa

Our district  
is home to  
**92,500**  
people



Diverse population:

**77%** European  
**26%** Maaori  
**6%** Asian  
**4%** Pasifika and  
**2%** other ethnicities



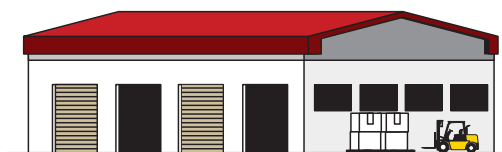
**51% male** and  
**49% female**  
with an average age of  
**37 years old**

**400,000 ha**

which makes us one of the largest  
councils geographically



and has **25,514** urban,  
rural or residential properties



**3,519** business properties and  
**3,569** farmland properties

**42**  
Community  
centres and  
town halls



Six (6) Council  
libraries with over  
**85,000** books



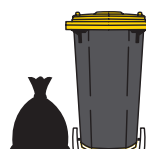
**2,178 ha**  
of reserves and  
**17,387**  
trees



**229 ha**  
of sports and  
recreation areas



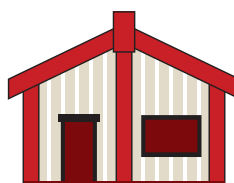
Council maintains over  
**2,520kms** of sealed  
and unsealed roads



**1 million**  
individual rubbish  
and recycling  
collections per year



**Over 1,100kms**  
of pipes either supply, drain  
or remove water through our  
residential towns



Waikato is the  
principal iwi in the  
district, we also have  
**27** hapuu and  
**40** marae

# Key challenges, changes and opportunities

Ngaa tino wero, ngaa nekehanga, me ngaa aaheinga



Expected population increase of **36.7% by 2054** meaning more people to plan and build for

**\$2 billion** of ageing infrastructure assets



Finding a sustainable **water services delivery model**

**Limited** economies of scale



**Increased operational costs** outside the Council's control from inflation and rising interest rates

**Small rating base** relative to the large geographic area of our district



**Increasing compliance requirements** from central government

**Increasing frequency** of extreme weather event

**Affordability** of construction, ageing assets and evolving priorities





## Local Water Done Well

[Learn more about Local Water Done Well here.](#)

Across New Zealand, all councils have been directed by government to consider how they can better and more cost effectively provide water services in the future. As part of these changes, all councils must provide a Water Services Delivery Plan to the government by September 2025.

Through our 2025-2034 Long Term Plan we asked our communities how they wanted water services delivered in the future and the response showed overwhelming support to set up a joint water company with Hamilton City Council. The joint water company was established on 1 July 2025 and will be fully operational by 1 July 2026.

### **This joint Council Controlled Organisation (CCO) now named IAWAI Flowing Waters will:**

- Own the drinking water infrastructure and wastewater assets (and take on all water-related debt).
- Will deliver drinking water and wastewater services to all homes in the Waikato district and Hamilton City.

- Contract to both the councils to manage stormwater systems (the stormwater assets).
- Be governed by independent, professional directors and must meet clear expectations set by shareholders.

### **What this means for you and our environment:**

- Better for the Waikato River (150 kilometres of river managed between the two councils).
- Much more strategic in terms of large water infrastructure investments. Will allow both councils to support growth.
- Removes complex barriers to working across boundaries for Waikato's two high-growth councils.
- Gives us more debt headroom (than available to individual councils). Debt can be spread more fairly, over generations.
- More affordable for ratepayers over the long-term. Costs will still increase, but at a lesser rate.
- Can invest in the water infrastructure critically needed.
- Greater resilience in natural disasters.

## Growth

Growth is a key factor with more people wanting to live in the Waikato thanks to our district's natural beauty and assets. As the population grows, the demand on infrastructure increases, potentially requiring expanded services and enhancements or new developments to accommodate future needs. We must ensure there are sufficient services, land and facilities to meet the increased demand while considering rates affordability.

One of the biggest challenges we're facing is growth. By 2034, our district is projected to have 34,548 households, all of which need access to essential services and infrastructure, such as roads, water, open spaces, and community facilities.

Having a large geographic area with a small rating base creates challenges because the costs of maintaining infrastructure and delivering services are spread across fewer people. This can make it harder to fund necessary projects, keep up with maintenance, and invest in improvements, even though the needs across the district remain significant. While most assets such as roads, parks, and playgrounds, are paid for by the whole district, water infrastructure is funded solely by those who use it, approximately 15,000 households, which presents a massive challenge.

### Growth projection

Our population is expected to grow by

**36.7%** between now and 2054,  
from 92,500 to 126,454



24 per cent of the population is projected to be aged **65+** up from 12.5 per cent in 2018

The population aged **0-14 years** is expected to decline from **23 per cent** in **2018** to **19 per cent** in **2048**

Urban areas will continue to grow, requiring new or upgraded infrastructure



## Infrastructure

Infrastructure assets will be impacted by growth, and our district may need additional services and new or updated infrastructure to manage increased demand. We will continue to work with local developers to make sure the right infrastructure is in place, projects proceed in a smooth and seamless way, including through the consenting process, and that developers contribute towards their share of the cost.

Looking after our community assets: our roads, water systems, parks, public buildings and other vital infrastructure need regular maintenance to stay safe, reliable and efficient. Just like maintaining a home, looking after these assets helps prevent bigger problems and higher costs down the track. We're committed to keeping our community assets in good condition so they continue to serve everyone, both now and into the future.

A lot of our infrastructure is ageing and we have had to put work into keeping it safe and up to date through essential maintenance, renewals, and upgrades. To enhance our core services, build resilient communities, improve connectivity, and support sustainable growth, there is still a lot of work ahead of us to expand, maintain and manage our infrastructure.

In our rapidly growing district, there are several challenges we face, including where and when to invest and enable growth, the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, the vast size of the district, limited economies of scale, affordability of construction, ageing assets and evolving priorities.

In addition to the challenges with day-to-day management, we also have some more significant decisions to make over the next decade.

- Replacing worn out assets and prioritising asset renewals.
- Community infrastructure in growth areas – building communities not just houses.
- Ageing assets – significant infrastructure coming to the end of its life.
- Ensure existing asset depreciation is adequately funded to guarantee replacement is well planned and adequate budget is available.
- Funding roading projects – increasing investment beyond government subsidies.

- Water services – following the establishment of the CCO, water services will be excluded from Council services and transferred to the CCO from the 2026/27 financial year onwards. These decisions have impacted rates and/or the quality of service we provide to our community.

Moving forward, it is critical we have a well-planned infrastructure network. With a holistic, long-term view, we will continue to make evidence-based decisions, remaining resilient to the challenges we face while continuing to build liveable, thriving, connected communities.

## Our key infrastructure includes:

**334km** of footpaths, cycleways and walkways



**2,520km of roads**

**402** bridges and **6,173** street lights

**6** closed landfills, **3** leachate pump stations, **109** pump stations and **2** roadside drop offs



**7** water treatment plants,  
**9** wastewater treatment plants  
and **27** water reservoirs

All water mains, stormwater drains and wastewater pipes

**2,178 ha**  
of reserves and  
**17,387**  
trees



**229 ha**  
of sports and  
recreation  
areas



**6** libraries, **3** pool complexes  
and **36** community halls



**63** playgrounds and **2** campgrounds



**40**  
boat ramps

**22**  
cemeteries

**51**  
public toilets

4 housing for the  
elderly complexes

Dozens of Council-  
owned properties

## Rising operational costs

Like many councils across New Zealand, in recent years Waikato District Council has faced rising operational costs largely driven by factors beyond our control. These include, but are not limited to, inflation, higher interest rates and new, more complex compliance requirements from central government. The rising cost of essentials like electricity, fuel and construction materials – for example, higher power bills to run treatment plants and increased petrol costs for maintenance fleets - have added further pressure. These same pressures are also driving up capital costs, making it more expensive to deliver infrastructure projects and renewals, and placing further strain on Council's ability to invest in long-term assets.

Underpinning these changes are several significant government reforms which will change the way we work as a Council. Responding to these unprecedented levels of government reforms is a key challenge for Council because it creates uncertainty, increases the complexity of our work, and often requires significant changes to the way we plan and deliver services. Keeping up with these reforms demands time, resources, and adaptability, all while continuing to meet the ongoing needs of our community.

To respond to these challenges, Council is taking a careful and considered approach to managing our finances. We are focusing on controlling what we can by reducing discretionary spending, finding efficiencies, and prioritising essential services and critical infrastructure projects. Our strong financial management is reflected in our AA+ credit rating - the highest of any local government in New Zealand, which helps us secure lower interest rates and reduce the overall cost of borrowing.

Currently, we are reviewing opportunities to identify savings, negotiating better terms with suppliers, and working closely with our partners to deliver services more efficiently. We are also continuing to invest in digital tools and smarter processes to reduce long-term operating costs, while improving the levels of service our communities expect.



## Evolving our customer service experience

Ensuring that our customers and communities have greater visibility over the services we provide remains a key challenge for Council, particularly as expectations for transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness continue to evolve. We are committed to maintaining and improving the ways people can interact with us whether that's face-to-face, over the phone, or through increasingly sophisticated real-time digital service channels.

However, keeping pace with rapid technological change while also maintaining a strong physical presence across diverse communities places ongoing pressure on our resources and strategic priorities. Striking the right balance between optimising our existing service offerings and investing in new, more efficient or accessible service delivery methods is complex. It involves not only financial considerations but also ensuring equitable access and consistent quality of service across both digital and in-person touchpoints. This balancing act requires thoughtful planning, prioritisation, and adaptability to meet the varied needs of our communities, now and into the future.

Building meaningful partnerships with Maaori and other cultural communities is essential but not without challenges. Council often face resourcing constraints, including limited staffing, cultural capability, and time to engage in genuine, ongoing relationship-building.

There can also be perceived or real barriers such as differing expectations, historical mistrust, and a lack of shared understanding of governance roles and decision-making processes. Additionally, navigating multiple iwi, hapuu, and cultural groups each with distinct priorities and tikanga, requires tailored engagement approaches, which can be time-intensive and complex.

Despite these challenges, Council has a responsibility to foster respectful, inclusive, and collaborative relationships that honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and reflect the growing diversity of our communities.



# **Success stories from across the district**

He koorero whaihua  
huri noa i te takiwaa



## Takitini

Waikato District Council, in partnership with Waikato Tainui, has launched Takitini, a refreshed economic development brand that reflects a shared commitment to innovation, resilience, and collective prosperity. Introduced at a crucial time for economic recovery, Takitini positions the district as a place to live, work, and thrive by fostering meaningful partnerships with iwi, businesses, and stakeholders. More than just a brand, it is a call to action encouraging collaboration, community involvement, and support for local enterprise to unlock new opportunities and shape a stronger economic future together.



***Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini***  
**Success is not the work of one, but of many.**



## Te Kauwhata Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) & Water Reservoirs

The successful upgrade of the Te Kauwhata wastewater treatment plant marks a major milestone for the community, introducing advanced membrane technology that enhances water quality and supports future growth. By integrating this system with existing ponds and wetlands, the project boosts resilience, manages storm events more effectively, and significantly reduces nutrient discharge to help protect Lake Waikare from algal blooms. Designed with sustainability, cultural values, and long-term adaptability in mind, the upgrade includes plans for expanded treatment capacity and a new solids handling facility. Delivered on time and within budget, the project reflects strong collaboration with local communities and iwi, and sets a solid foundation for environmentally and culturally responsible growth.

## Raahui Pookeka /Huntly Museum Restoration

The Huntly Museum project marks a significant milestone in preserving the town's rich heritage. In collaboration with the Waikato District Council, the Huntly Museum Committee has successfully restored the historic 1939 railway station building, which had suffered damage from an arson attack in 2023. Community efforts raised approximately \$350,000 for the renovation, demonstrating strong local support. The restored building was officially handed over to the Museum Committee in October 2024, and the museum is scheduled to open in 2025. This initiative not only safeguards Huntly's historical architecture but also provides a cultural hub for residents and visitors alike.





## Ngaaruawaahia War Memorial Hall upgrade

The recent completion of upgrades to the Ngaaruawaahia War Memorial Hall marks a significant enhancement to this cherished community venue. Undertaken by Council, the project focused on improving comfort, safety, and accessibility. Key improvements include the installation of a cost-effective heating and cooling system, new LED lighting in key areas, accessible toilets, updated fire systems, and emergency lighting. To enhance functionality, the kitchen layout was refreshed, dedicated storage for hall chairs was created, and hot water was installed in both the kitchen and toilet facilities. Additional upgrades encompassed replacing the asbestos switchboard, installing 3-phase main power to support the new systems, and adding non-slip flooring at the entranceway. Completed within budget and on schedule, these enhancements ensure the hall remains a safe, welcoming, and versatile space for community gatherings and events.



## Pookeno Projects

The completion of the Pookeno Project marks an exciting milestone for the growing township, bringing significant improvements to the heart of the community. The redevelopment of the main street has revitalised the town centre with upgraded footpaths, streetscaping, and safer pedestrian access, creating a more welcoming and functional public space. The installation of a modern, accessible public toilet replaces outdated facilities and better meets the needs of residents and visitors. At the northern gateway, the new roundabout at Great South Road and Pookeno Road has greatly improved traffic flow and safety, addressing long-standing congestion issues. Together, these upgrades reflect a strong investment in Pookeno's future, supporting its growth while enhancing the every day quality of life for locals and travellers alike.

## Raglan Wastewater Treatment Plant Design and build programme

The Raglan/Whaaingarua wastewater treatment upgrade is nearing completion, representing a significant environmental and community milestone. Prompted by the expiry of the existing discharge consent and the need to meet stricter environmental standards, the project was developed in close collaboration with mana whenua and community stakeholders to reflect shared cultural values and sustainability goals. The modernised facility, capable of processing up to 6,000m<sup>3</sup> of wastewater daily using advanced membrane technology, supports both environmental protection and population growth. Key improvements include solar-powered, energy-efficient systems, enhanced resilience to heavy rainfall, and upgraded digital and physical infrastructure. With a new discharge consent application underway, the upgrade ensures a more sustainable, reliable future for Raglan/Whaaingarua.



# Groups of Activities (GOA)

## Ngaa huinga kaupapa

### What we do

#### **Governance:**

##### **These activities include:**

- Council and Democracy
- Cultural Partnerships

This group of activities is dedicated to promoting local democracy, supporting elected officials, and managing local elections. Our commitment extends to working with whanau, hapuu, marae, iwi and Maaori communities to develop and maintain meaningful partnerships and provide opportunities for participation in decision-making, as well as upholding Te Ao Maaori, and ensuring Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles are embedded across the organisation.

#### **Sustainable Communities:**

##### **These activities include:**

- Economic and Community Development
- Open Spaces
- Property and Community Facilities
- Community Resilience
- Customer Experience

These activities focus on supporting our communities through the provision of leisure options and by strengthening community resilience and protecting the enduring nature of our communities. Additionally, we support economic development in our district to enrich people's lives through fostering local employment opportunities and improved quality of life.

#### **Sustainable Environment:**

##### **These activities include:**

- Regulatory services
- Consenting
- Strategic and spatial planning
- Waste management

These activities are all about improving environmental outcomes and public health and safety. Within these activities we plan, regulate, monitor, and consent, with a strategic focus on providing an integrated approach to delivering sustainable, attractive, affordable, and safe living options. We also manage and minimise waste in the district, as well as managing land use, growth and support our regional partnerships.

#### **Transport:**

The transport activity provides a well-designed and fit-for-purpose transport network that gives people choices about how they move around our district. This includes urban and rural roads, footpaths, cycleways, and safe crossings within the roading corridor. This activity also supports the development of the public transport network.

#### **Waters:**

Through this activity, until 30 June 2026, we are responsible for efficiently operating and maintaining of all three waters infrastructure – drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater. This includes managing Council's existing stormwater infrastructure to protect the environment from storm damage and runoff. We also plan for the renewal of existing assets and deliver new infrastructure to support growth.

From 1 July 2026, following the establishment of IAIAI Flowing Waters the Council Controlled Organisation (CCO), our responsibility will be limited to stormwater services.

A significant risk facing Council relates to the long-term financial sustainability of stormwater infrastructure and services. As part of the three waters reform transition, Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Council are required to develop and agree on a strategy to ensure financial sustainability for stormwater by 30 June 2028. Failure to address this requirement in a timely and robust manner could have serious implications for our ability to maintain service levels, meet environmental and compliance obligations, and fund necessary renewals and growth infrastructure. This risk will require focused governance attention, strategic planning, and close collaboration with key stakeholders to mitigate effectively.

#### **Organisational Support:**

##### **These activities include:**

- Communications, marketing, and engagement
- Projects and innovation
- People and capability
- Corporate Planning and Strategy
- Finance, Legal, Procurement, and Contracts
- Information Management

This activity is at the core of Council's operations. These internal facing teams work together behind the scenes to enable our external facing teams to deliver their services to our community. These activities play a key role in moving both the Council and the district forward, making services more efficient and cost effective for ratepayers, and fostering continuous improvement.



# Government Reforms

## Ngaa whakahoutanga a te kawanatanga

**Government Reform** refers to the process of making changes to the structure, policies, and practices of government institutions to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the public sector. These reforms can take various forms, including legislative changes, bureaucratic restructuring, digital transformation, and regulatory simplification.

### Resource Management System Reform (RMA)

[Learn more about the Resource Management System Reform here.](#)

**What it is:** The government has committed to a complete reform of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) following concerns that it has not consistently delivered intended environmental or development outcomes, nor given full effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The reform is being delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1 – Complete: The repeal of the Natural and Built Environment Act and the Spatial Planning Act in December 2025.
- Phase 2 – Underway: Progress includes the introduction of the Fast-Track Approvals Bill (establishing a permanent fast-track process for key projects), targeted amendments to the RMA (to support infrastructure, housing, farming, and resilience), and a major overhaul of National Direction through updates to National Policy Statements and Environmental Standards.
- Phase 3 – In Progress: The full replacement of the RMA with two new Acts; the Natural Environment Act and the Planning Act, focusing separately on environmental management and enabling development. The Government accepted the Expert Advisory Group's recommendations, and legislation is expected to be passed by mid-2026.

#### **What we've done/how we've responded:**

Waikato District Council recognises that the RMA reform represents a major opportunity for systemic change in how we manage environmental effects and enable sustainable development. Council is actively engaging with the reform process through our involvement with Taituarā and Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), advocating for a system that is practical, fit for purpose, and mindful of the compliance costs and resourcing impacts on local government. We are monitoring the proposed legislative changes closely, preparing for implementation, and ensuring that the unique needs and aspirations of our communities are represented throughout consultation processes.

### Building Act

[Learn more about reform of the building consent system here.](#)

**What it is:** The Government is considering significant reform of the building consent system, with the goal of making it easier and faster to build while maintaining safety and quality standards. Councils' Building Consent Authorities (BCAs) play a critical role in ensuring compliance with legislation and the Building Code, safeguarding structural integrity, fire safety, accessibility, and energy efficiency. The proposed reforms are investigating options such as voluntary consolidation of BCAs to create larger, regional entities; establishing a single point of contact for building consent submissions; and allowing building inspections to be contracted out. The focus is on creating a more consistent, streamlined national approach while still ensuring robust checks that protect homeowners and the wider public.

#### **What we've done/how we've responded:**

Waikato District Council recognises the vital role BCAs play in ensuring safe, compliant, and high-quality buildings in our communities. We are actively monitoring the Government's proposals and engaging in discussions to ensure that any changes maintain the critical protections currently provided through local oversight. Council is assessing potential impacts on our services and preparing for how we might need to adapt, while also advocating through sector groups to ensure that local voice, expertise, and community needs are considered in any move toward regionalisation or other structural changes.



## Going for Housing Growth (development contributions/levies)

[Learn more about development levies here.](#)

**What it is:** As part of “Pillar 2” of the Government’s Going for Housing Growth initiative, major changes are being introduced to infrastructure funding and financing tools to better support housing development. A key component of this reform is replacing the existing Development Contributions system, which has been in place for over 20 years, with a new Development Levy system. The new framework is intended to provide a clearer and more efficient way for councils to recover the actual costs of growth, ensuring developers contribute a proportionate share of the capital expenditure required for new infrastructure. The Government has committed to these changes through the Infrastructure Funding and Financing Amendment Bill, expected to be introduced to Parliament in September 2025, with the new Development Levy structure to be rolled out between 1 July 2027 and 1 July 2030.

### What do developers contribute to?



**Roads and pathways**



**Street lighting**



**Parks and playgrounds**



**Drinking water infrastructure**



**Sewerage systems**



**Stormwater networks**

**Plus other essential infrastructure that benefits the community.**

### What we’ve done/how we’ve responded:

Waikato District Council acknowledges the significant impact this reform will have on how growth is funded and managed. We are closely tracking the proposed legislation and preparing to transition from the existing Development Contributions system to the new Development Levy framework. Council is assessing the likely implications for our infrastructure planning, funding strategies, and policy development. Once more detailed guidance is released, we will develop a new Development Levy Policy and any supporting documents needed for implementation. We are also advocating for clear, practical transition arrangements to ensure fairness for both councils and developers, and to minimise disruption to planned growth programmes.

### Local Water Done Well

As part of nationwide reforms, Waikato District Council and Hamilton City Council have formed IAWAI Flowing Waters a joint Council Controlled Organisation (CCO) to deliver drinking water and wastewater services, which will be fully operational by July 2026. This new entity will own and manage water infrastructure and debt, while also contracting to manage stormwater systems. The joint approach will improve affordability, enable smarter investment in infrastructure, support growth, and enhance environmental outcomes, particularly for the Waikato River, while also increasing resilience and removing cross-boundary barriers between the two councils.

More detail on this topic is provided under the Key Challenges section.

# Let's look at the numbers

## Kia tirohia ngaa tatauranga

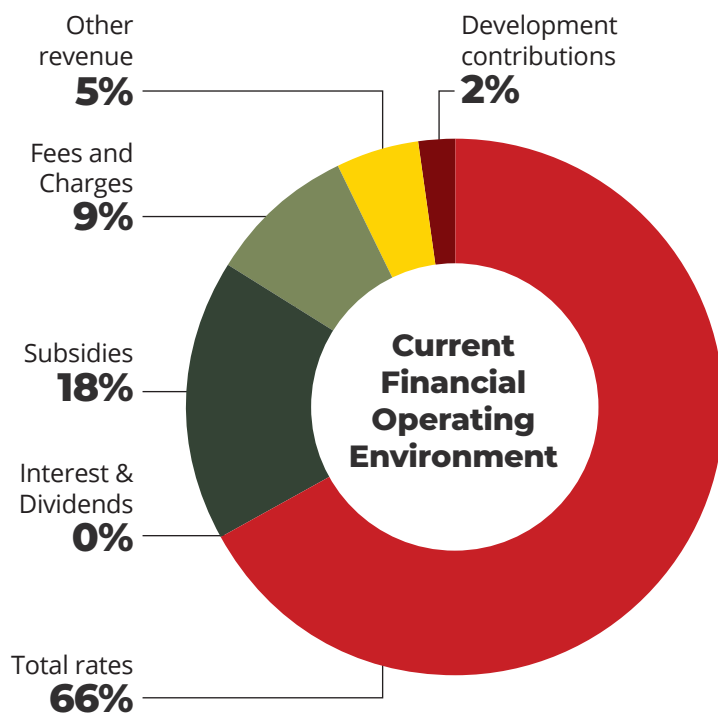


Figure 1 – shows the breakdown of revenue sources.

**Revenue:** We fund our activities through a range of sources. The way in which activities are funded is set out in our Revenue and Financing Policy.

**Operating Expenditure:** The total operating expenditure over the 2025-2034 LTP period is forecast to be \$1.5 billion.

**Capital Expenditure:** A capital expenditure programme of \$809.9 million has been developed for the nine years of the 2025-2034 LTP.

As part of our commitment to ensuring that growth pays for growth, a significant portion of our capital expenditure on new infrastructure such as roads, water, and wastewater networks in high-growth areas is funded through development contributions, meaning the cost is largely covered by developers rather than existing ratepayers.

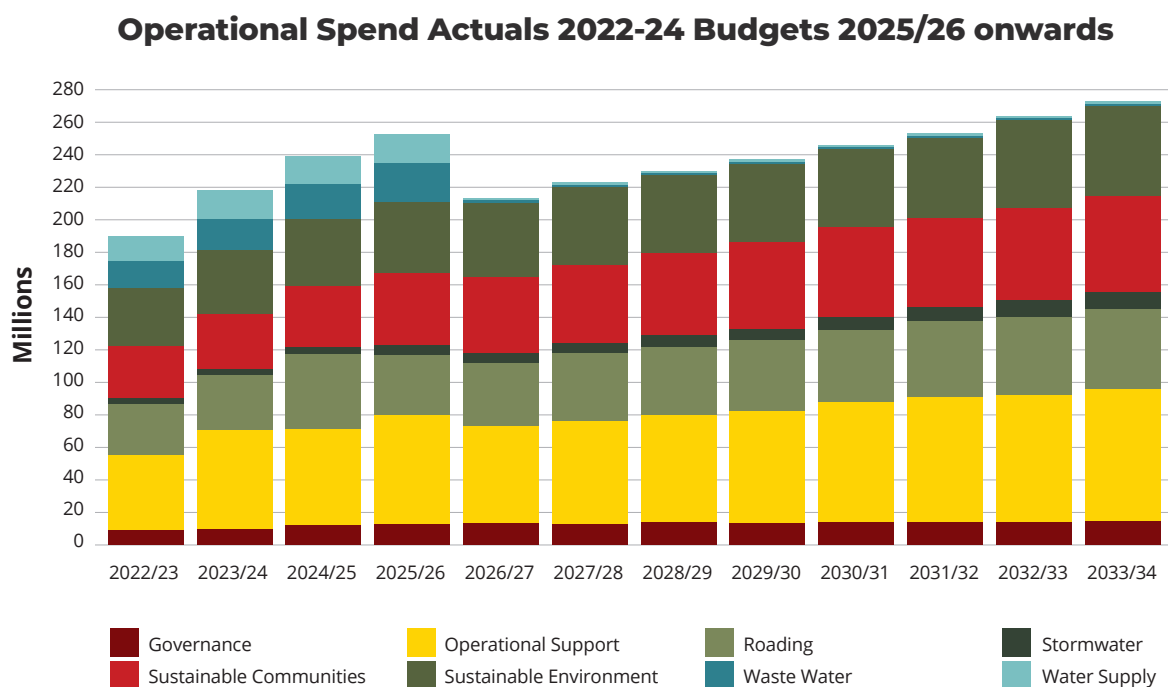


Figure 2 - shows the expected total operational expenditure across the next nine years.

## 10 year Capital Spend Actuals 2022-24 Budgets 2025/26 onwards

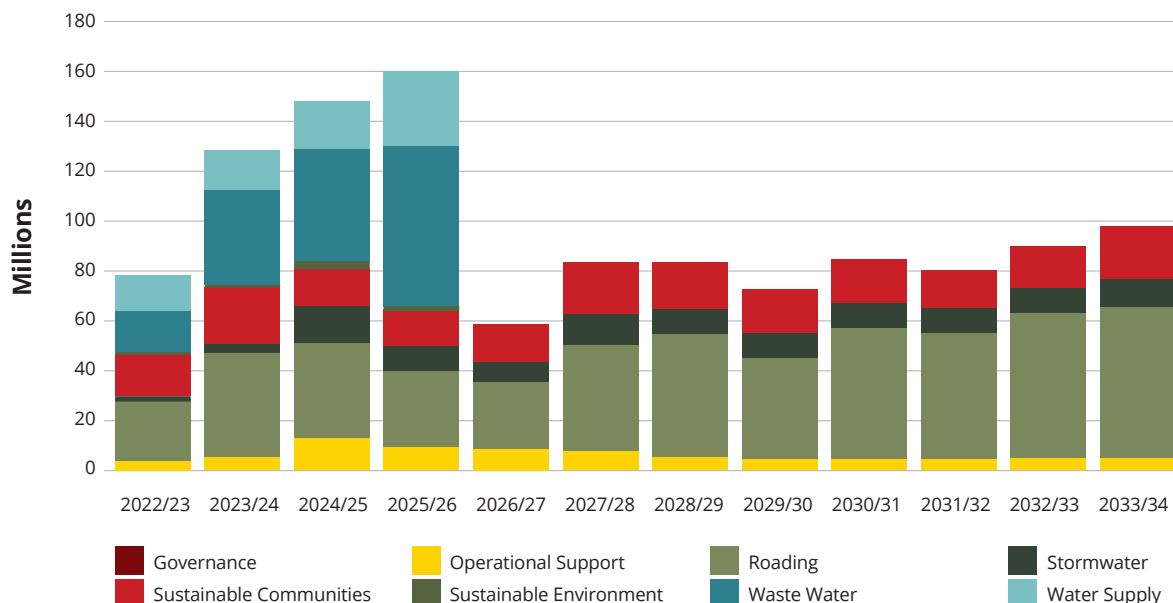


Figure 3 – shows the expected total capital expenditure across the next nine years.

**Debt:** The increased investment over the nine-year plan in growth, renewals and service levels has the consequence of increasing debt (see Figure 4). Debt is at its peak in 2025/26 with waters included, however, this reduces significantly from year two once the CCO is operational. Council maintains a financially sustainable debt-to-revenue debt ratio with this being well below the 175% debt cap creating sufficient headroom facility. Council will repay this debt over a rolling 10-year period.

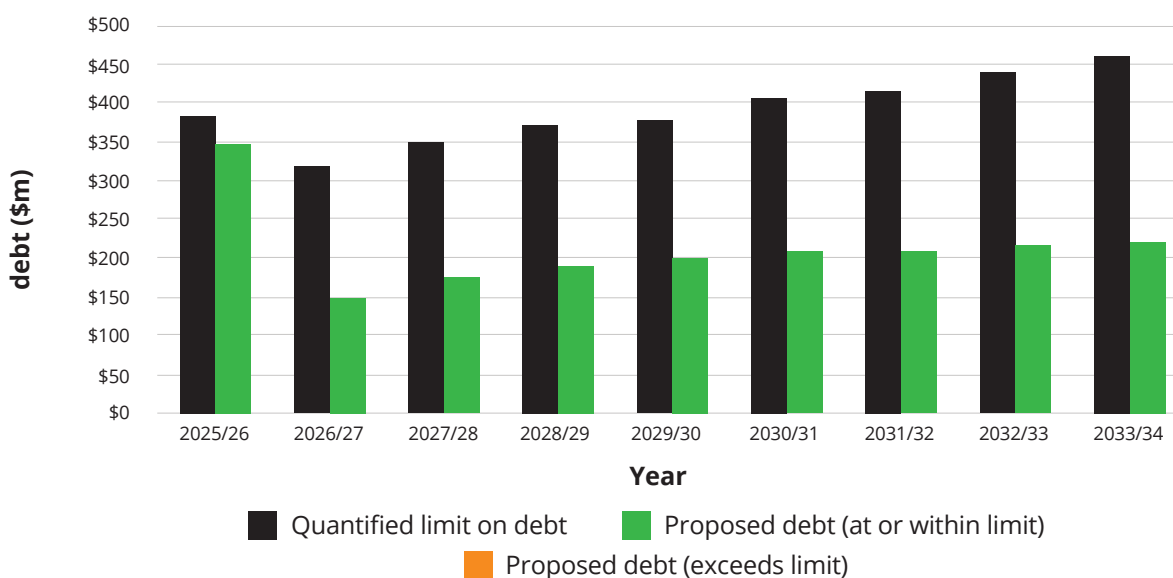


Figure 4 - Debt levels (\$million) and debt limits. This graph shows our debt levels at the end of each year and how they fit with our prudent debt limits.

## Credit Rating: AA+

This is the highest credit rating a local council can get in New Zealand, putting Waikato District Council among the top performers. It means we'll pay less when borrowing money which is great news, especially with interest rates climbing and a big infrastructure programme on the horizon.



## Major projects

We fund activities through a range of sources. The way in which activities are funded is set out in our Revenue and Financing Policy. Large amounts of money for projects go through a careful assessment and prioritisation process based on needs. We are investing in critical infrastructure projects to support growth and improve services. At the same time, we have deferred some projects and are focused on making our business more efficient.

Council's largest investment is in infrastructure that supports our everyday services. Of this, \$414.8 million is allocated to the roading and footpaths network. The examples noted below have been planned for and budgeted through the current and previous Long Term Plans.

## Forward focus

Over the next nine years, it will cost \$2.4 billion to grow and run our district. Infrastructure will account for 64 per cent of our daily operational budget and 93 per cent of our capital (projects) budget. That's a huge investment of ratepayer dollars, so it is important this money is spent in the context of a well-considered financial strategy.

Our finance strategy outlines how we will plan and manage money to achieve our vision, community outcomes and strategic priorities in a sustainable way. It is a key part of our Long Term Plan, ensuring that we manage our finances responsibly and appropriately for the benefit of everyone.

[Read the full strategy here.](#)

## Sustainable Communities

### District wide walkways

\$4.6 million over nine years.

### District wide parks and reserves renewals

\$28 million over nine years.

### Communities' aquatic services

Upgrades \$1.6 million.

## Sustainable Environment

### Waste Management

including a new resource recovery centre, renewals and upgrades.  
\$3.5 million over nine years.

### Transport

Road resurfacing  
\$5.3 million per year for nine years.

## Organisational Support

### IT system improvements

and data quality to improve your customer experience.

## Funding Impact Statements (FIS)

	2022/23 Actual NZ \$'000	2023/24 Actual NZ \$'000	2024/25 Draft Actual NZ \$'000
<b>Sources of operating funding</b>			
General rates, uniform annual general charges, rates penalties	81,043	88,939	93,769
Targeted rates	36,516	42,211	44,284
Subsidies and grants for operating purposes	13,840	13,926	10,762
Fees and charges	15,956	13,378	13,878
Interest and dividends from investments	1,595	3,257	3,251
Local authorities fuel tax, fines, infringement fees, and other receipts	10,747	10,099	12,150
<b>Total operating funding</b>	<b>159,697</b>	<b>171,810</b>	<b>178,094</b>
<b>Applications of operating funding</b>			
Payments to staff and suppliers	127,068	141,073	128,335
Finance costs	5,105	9,727	11,722
Other operating funding applications	3,741	4,197	4,638
<b>Total applications of operating funding</b>	<b>135,914</b>	<b>154,997</b>	<b>144,695</b>
<b>Surplus (deficit) of operating funding</b>	<b>23,783</b>	<b>16,813</b>	<b>33,399</b>
<b>Sources of capital funding</b>			
Subsidies and grants for capital expenditure	11,346	17,672	14,090
Development and financial contributions	12,051	7,425	14,855
Increase (decrease) in debt	26,966	87,701	30,000
Gross proceeds from sale of assets	115	3,146	291
Lump sum contributions	-	-	-
Other dedicated capital funding	2,981	5,816	2,721
<b>Total sources of capital funding</b>	<b>53,459</b>	<b>121,760</b>	<b>61,957</b>
<b>Applications of capital funding</b>			
Capital expenditure			
- to meet additional demand	14,935	32,508	19,421
- to improve the level of service	24,003	37,585	25,840
- to replace existing assets	39,098	57,585	41,963
Increase (decrease) in reserves	(5,267)	(2,140)	1,625
Increase (decrease) of investments	4,473	13,035	6,514
<b>Total applications of capital funding</b>	<b>77,242</b>	<b>138,573</b>	<b>95,363</b>
<b>Surplus (deficit) of capital funding</b>	<b>(23,783)</b>	<b>(16,813)</b>	<b>(33,399)</b>
<b>Funding balance</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>



2023/24 Annual Plan NZ \$'000	2024/25 Enhanced Annual Plan NZ \$'000	2025/26 Draft LTP Budget NZ \$'000	2026/27 Draft LTP Budget NZ \$'000	2027/28 Draft LTP Budget NZ \$'000
86,383	97,366	105,161	110,118	114,881
40,360	45,299	52,781	14,294	16,253
10,566	16,471	13,635	16,849	17,406
17,857	19,815	25,105	18,573	18,845
180	660	660	660	660
10,978	10,535	10,550	11,058	10,747
<b>166,324</b>	<b>190,146</b>	<b>207,892</b>	<b>171,552</b>	<b>178,792</b>
132,533	158,198	159,042	135,008	138,692
5,950	9,346	11,469	5,627	6,535
3,409	6,834	8,272	6,186	6,486
<b>141,892</b>	<b>174,378</b>	<b>178,783</b>	<b>146,821</b>	<b>151,713</b>
<b>24,432</b>	<b>15,768</b>	<b>29,109</b>	<b>24,731</b>	<b>27,079</b>
14,632	23,409	15,896	14,159	22,410
8,134	11,614	7,049	3,402	3,661
68,649	111,139	109,402	(205,736)	29,332
564	200	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-
216	216	222	-	-
<b>92,195</b>	<b>146,578</b>	<b>132,569</b>	<b>(188,175)</b>	<b>55,403</b>
36,632	36,041	38,367	3,107	10,509
26,278	43,408	51,915	16,748	31,490
45,710	65,230	69,158	38,678	41,336
6,492	14,165	(429)	(216,960)	(1,568)
1,515	3,502	2,668	(5,018)	715
<b>116,627</b>	<b>162,346</b>	<b>161,679</b>	<b>(163,445)</b>	<b>82,482</b>
<b>(24,432)</b>	<b>(15,768)</b>	<b>(29,109)</b>	<b>(24,731)</b>	<b>(27,079)</b>
-	-	-	-	-

Note: All year-to-date (YTD) updated as at 31 May 2025.

## Summary Statement of Financial position

	2022/23 Actual NZ \$'000	2023/24 Actual NZ \$'000	2024/25 Draft Actual NZ \$'000	2023/24 Annual Plan NZ \$'000	2024/25 Enhanced Annual Plan NZ \$'000	2025/26 Draft LTP Budget NZ \$'000	2026/27 Draft LTP Budget NZ \$'000	2027/28 Draft LTP Budget NZ \$'000
<b>Assets</b>								
Financial assets	98,452	117,363	118,677	79,328	85,196	82,084	493,512	495,886
Other assets	2,307,439	2,659,407	2,699,290	2,472,135	2,674,835	3,011,323	2,429,589	2,534,666
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>2,405,891</b>	<b>2,776,770</b>	<b>2,817,967</b>	<b>2,551,463</b>	<b>2,760,031</b>	<b>3,093,407</b>	<b>2,923,101</b>	<b>3,030,552</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
Public debt	125,607	213,308	243,308	186,443	286,272	371,848	166,112	195,444
Other liabilities	38,440	52,552	47,400	43,731	49,955	59,803	52,199	53,857
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>164,047</b>	<b>265,860</b>	<b>290,708</b>	<b>230,174</b>	<b>336,227</b>	<b>431,651</b>	<b>218,311</b>	<b>249,301</b>
<b>Net assets</b>								
Net assets/ equity	2,241,844	2,510,910	2,527,259	2,321,289	2,423,804	2,661,756	2,704,790	2,781,251
<b>Total net assets/equity</b>	<b>2,241,844</b>	<b>2,510,910</b>	<b>2,527,259</b>	<b>2,321,289</b>	<b>2,423,804</b>	<b>2,661,756</b>	<b>2,704,790</b>	<b>2,781,251</b>

Note: All YTD updated as at 31 May 2025.



# Statement of Compliance

## Tauaakii Tuutohu Ture

### Rates affordability

Council has set a limit on total rates for each year of the Long Term Plan (LTP). Total rates will not exceed 0.7% of the total capital value of the district.

The 2024 Enhanced Annual Plan also set a limit on average annual rate increases, to existing ratepayers, of 11% for 2024/25.

The 2025/34 LTP also set a limit on average annual rate increases of 11% in the 2025/26 year, reducing to 8% from 2026/27.

Years ending 30 June:	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Draft
<b>Limit on total rates income (\$'000)</b>		AP 24	
Limit	\$265,427	\$263,245	\$264,043
Actual/Planned	\$132,449	\$147,622	\$160,891
<b>Limit on rates increases</b>			
Limit	8%	8%	8%
Actual/Planned	7%	12%	11%
<b>Limit on net debt (\$ million) *</b>			
Limit	175%	175%	175%
Actual/Planned	70%	106%	131%

Note: As at 31 May 2025.

### Returns on Investment

Council has financial, property and equity investments which are managed in accordance with the Treasury Risk Management Policy.

Years ending 30 June:	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Draft
<b>Return on financial investments</b>			
Limit	5.55%	5.55%	5.55%
Actual/Planned	5.40%	5.57%	7.00%
<b>Return on property investments</b>			
Limit	11.00%	11.00%	11.00%
Actual/Planned	6.96%	7.19%	8.0%
<b>Return on equity investments</b>			
Waikato Regional Airport Limited			
Limit	0%	0%	0%
Actual/Planned	0%	0%	0%
Waikato Local Authority Shared Services Limited			
Limit	0%	0%	0%
Actual/Planned	0%	0%	0%
Civic Financial Services Limited			
Limit	0%	0%	0%
Actual/Planned	0%	0%	0%

Note: As at 31 May 2025.

# The future of Maaori wards

## Te anamata o ngaa waari Maaori

**Maaori ward(s) were introduced for the 2022 local elections, through an amendment to the Local Government Act, to enable councils to introduce them without undertaking a poll of residents.**

The current government recently changed the legislation back and believes the community should have the say on whether or not Maaori Wards are kept in place. Therefore, you get to determine if we keep Maaori representation by voting in the referendum being held alongside the 2025 council elections.

You'll vote on whether to keep or remove the Maaori Wards in our district.

- Tai Raro Takiwaa – encompasses the northern area of our district.
- Tai Runga Takiwaa - encompasses the southern area of our district.

### What is a Maaori ward?

Maaori wards work in the same way as general wards but allow those on the Maaori electoral roll to elect dedicated representatives to be the voice of their interests in the community. Maaori wards offer a direct, democratic pathway to increase Maaori participation in local government.

The aim of Maaori wards is to ensure Maaori are represented in local government decision making with a Te Ao Maaori view, in line with our obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi. Note, voters on the Maaori roll cannot vote in the general wards.

Bringing Maaori perspectives to the table enriches our understanding of issues like environmental sustainability, housing, cultural wellbeing, and economic development. It allows maatauranga Maaori (Indigenous knowledge) to inform our planning and build more holistic, future-focused outcomes.

Representation also strengthens trust between councils and Maaori communities, enabling stronger partnerships and more effective service delivery. This representation is fully supported by one of our key partners (Waikato-Tainui), with whom we have a Joint Management Agreement to ensure the sustainable management of our Awa.

### Referendum results

During the upcoming elections, Waikato district will still have Maaori wards with two Maaori ward councillors in place until at least 2028.

Councils must follow the referendum results. The outcome of the referendum will affect the Waikato District Council elections in 2028 and 2031.

If the public opts to keep the Maaori wards, they will remain in place until 2028.

If the public opts to remove the wards, there will be no Maaori wards option in the elections in 2028 or 2031.

### Representation review

Every six-years, councils are required to undertake a representation review, which Waikato District Council has scheduled for 2026-2027. This requires Council to review the electoral boundaries for wards to ensure fair representation.

This review will also be dependent on the outcome of the Maaori Wards referendum, as well as the growth of the district to ensure councillors represent a similar number of residents in each of their wards. Council currently has ten general wards and two Maaori wards.

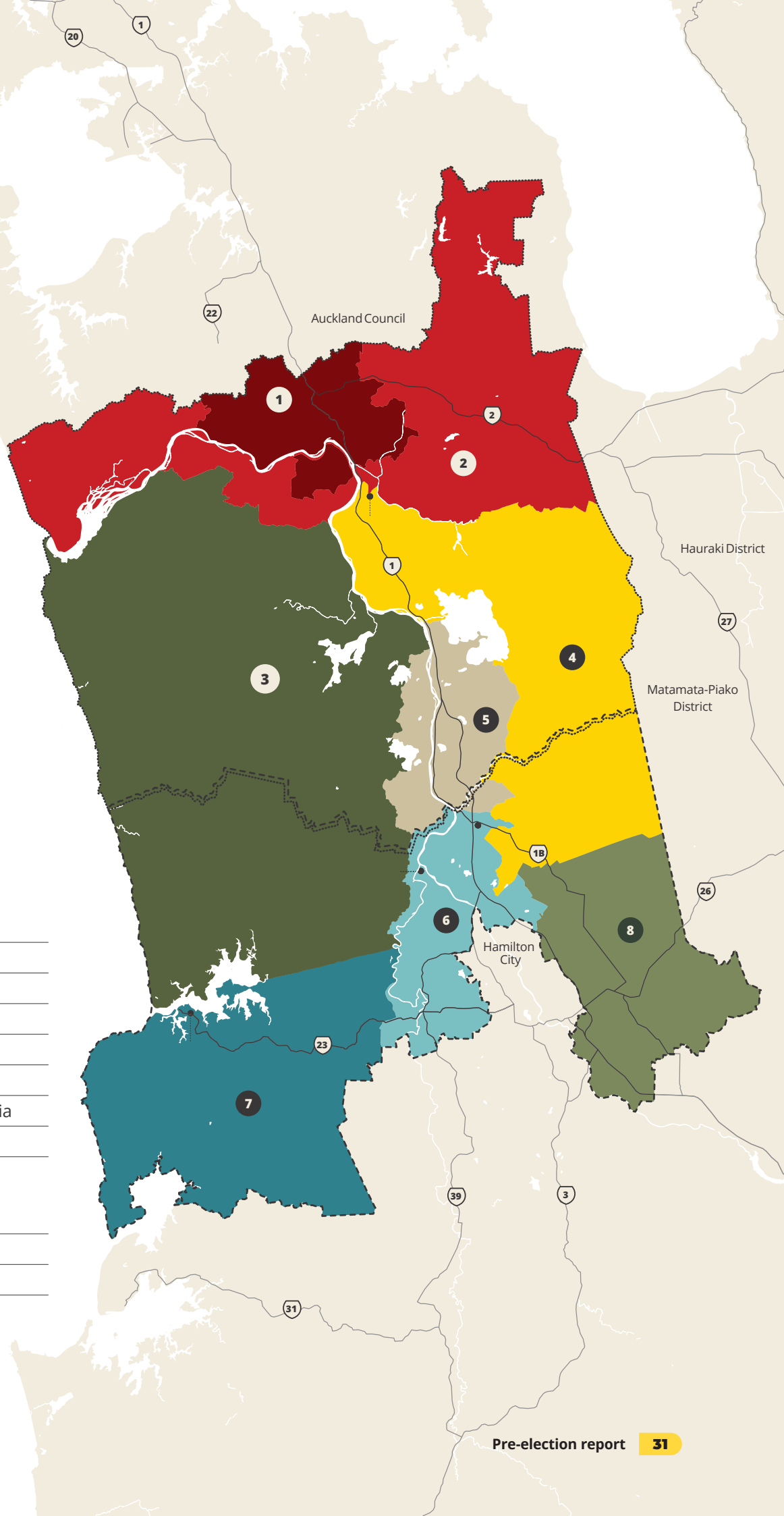
# Waikato District Council wards

## General Wards

- 1 Tuakau-Pōkeno
- 2 Awaroa-Maramarua
- 3 Western Districts
- 4 Waerenga-Whitikahu
- 5 Huntly
- 6 Newcastle-Ngāruawāhia
- 7 Whāingaroa
- 8 Tamahere-Woodlands

## Māori Wards

- .... Tai Raro Takiwā
- Tai Runga Takiwā





# Elected member(s)

## (Ngaa) mema kaunihera

### What is an elected member?

Waikato District Council's governance arm is made up of 46 elected members, comprising of the mayor, 13 councillors and 32 community board members. Candidates fill all these roles based on community votes, and all roles exist to serve the communities to which they have been elected. These are paid roles and the salaries for each role is set by the Remuneration Authority and differ dependent on the level of responsibility and representation.

However, there are some distinct differences in the functions and responsibilities of each role.

### What does the mayor do?

The mayor is elected to lead the Waikato district for a three-year term, helping to shape the direction of the community during that time. Under the Local Government Act 2002, the mayor's role is to provide leadership to fellow elected members, represent the community, and take on important civic duties.

This includes guiding the development of key Council plans like the Annual Plan and the Long Term Plan.

The mayor also has some specific powers, they can appoint the deputy mayor, set up council committees, choose who chairs them, and take part in any committee as a member.

### What does a councillor do?

Councillors are elected for a three-year term to represent and lead their communities. There's no formal job description, but the role is all about big-picture thinking - setting policies, making important decisions, and keeping an eye on how the council is performing.

While councillors are elected from specific wards, once they're at the council table, their main responsibility is to do what's best for the whole Waikato district, not just their local area.

### What does a community board member do?

Community board members are elected to represent local interests and act as a bridge between the community and the Council. These boards were set up to make sure local voices are heard and people have a say on the issues that matter most to them.

If you're thinking about standing in the local elections but aren't quite ready to take on the full role of a councillor, running for your local community board is a great way to get involved and make a real difference.

For more information, please refer to the [Candidate Information Handbook](#).

To be an effective Local Government Elected Member, several key skills and qualities are essential:

- **Community involvement:** It's essential to actively connect with community members and accurately reflect their perspectives. This means engaging with residents, listening to their input, and gaining a clear understanding of their concerns and priorities.
- **Effective communication:** Clear and confident speaking and writing abilities are key for conveying decisions, policies, and community concerns in a way that resonates with various audiences.
- **Teamwork and collaboration:** It's important to work constructively with fellow Council members, staff, and local organisations, finding common ground among differing viewpoints to achieve shared objectives.
- **Sound decision-making:** Elected representatives must evaluate complex information, including financial data, to make well-informed choices on diverse and often challenging issues.
- **Local government knowledge:** A solid grasp of how local councils operate covering areas like governance, strategic planning, asset oversight, and legal responsibilities is crucial.
- **Cultural awareness:** Appreciating the values and practices of local iwi, te ao Maaori, and tikanga enriches engagement and supports the Council's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, fostering stronger relationships with Maaori communities.
- **Flexibility and lifelong learning:** Remaining open to change and committed to personal growth is vital. Initiatives such as Ākona offer tailored development opportunities that help elected officials build their skills over time.

These skills help ensure that elected members can effectively serve their communities and contribute to the governance and development of their local areas.



# 2025 Elections

## Koowhiringa pooti 2025

### Key milestones

Candidate nominations open:  
**4 July 2025.**

Nomination day/time of closing:  
**1 August 2025 at 12noon.**

Delivery of voting papers:  
**9-22 September 2025.**

Last day for posting votes by mail:  
**7 October 2025.**

(After this date, votes must be returned to Council's secured ballot boxes).

Election day/time of closing:  
**11 October 2025 at 12noon.**

Declaration of results:  
**16-22 October 2025.**

**Head office** 15 Galileo Street, Ngaaruawaahia, 3720

**Freepost** Waikato District Council, Private Bag 544,  
Ngaaruawaahia 3742, New Zealand

**Email** [info@waipadc.govt.nz](mailto:info@waipadc.govt.nz)

0800 492 452  
[www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz](http://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz)

