

Long Term Plan 2024-2034 Deliberations Report

4 June 2024

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is for the council to consider all submissions and make decisions to be incorporated into the final Long-Term Plan 2024-2034.
2. Note that any additional information to assist Elected Members in their deliberations will be provided as an attachment to this report and/or tabled at the deliberations meeting on 5-7 June 2024.

Background Context

3. Council has now completed consultation on its proposed Long-Term Plan (LTP) 2024-2034.
4. Public submissions were open from 2 April – 2 May 2024 and we received an unprecedented total of 1608 submissions¹. 270 of these were submitted in a hardcopy format. 111 submitters presented on the Long-Term Plan items only at the hearings on 14 – 16 and 22 May 2024.
5. An electronic volume of all submissions has been supplied to Elected Members and is available on the council's website.
6. A broad range of channels and promotional techniques were used to engage the public in this year's LTP process, as outlined further below.
7. For each consultation item this report provides:
 - The options presented to the community
 - How the community responded through the survey and the themes that emerged through the comments
 - Stakeholder views
 - Other considerations/further information
 - The costs of the options
 - Recommendations.
2. Elected Members must now review all the submissions and the information available to them and make their final decisions at the deliberations from 5-7 June.
3. Their final decisions will then be incorporated into the final Long-Term Plan and presented for adoption on 16 July.

¹ In the previous LTP cycles, the number of submissions received were: 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan: 608 submissions; 2018 - 2028 Long-Term Plan: 121 submissions; 2015 - 2025 Long-Term Plan: 257 submissions

Options Assessment

4. The available options are:
 1. Accept the proposed Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 as consulted on with the community without any amendments.
 2. Make amendments to the proposed Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 for adoption by Council on 16 July 2024 (*preferred*).
 3. Make no decisions at this time and refer the proposed Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 back to officers for further work.
5. Refer to the 'Options Assessment' later in this report for more information.

Risk

6. The recommended decisions have a moderate degree of risk.
 - *For further information, refer to the 'Risk assessment' section of this report.*

Recommended option

7. Officers recommend that Council proceed with option 2 - make amendments to the proposed Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 for adoption by Council on 16 July 2024.

Recommendations

That Council:

- a) Considers the submissions and feedback on the proposed Long-Term Plan 2024-2034.
- b) Incorporates all decisions and resolutions made during the deliberations into the final Long-Term Plan 2024-2034, for formal adoption by Council on 16 July 2024.
- c) Grants the Chief Executive financial delegations based on the draft 2024-2034 Long-Term Plan budgets from 1 July 2024 until adoption of the Long-Term Plan.

Long-Term Plan Consultation

8. A consultation document and other feedback channels were used to seek views from the public on this year's draft Long-Term Plan (LTP).
9. This LTP was shaped in response to the difficult economic environment we face, the pressure on costs to provide council services, and the need to keep rates affordable for the community. A six-point plan was therefore developed to keep costs down.
10. The six points are:
 - (a) Encouraging population growth
 - (b) Increasing non-rates revenue

- (c) Finding alternative funding sources
 - (d) Finding efficiency savings
 - (e) Reducing levels of service
 - (f) Selling assets to repay debt.
8. Prior to consultation, Council had already established internal efficiency savings including:
- A management restructure to reduce the number of executive and senior managers.
 - Reducing the vehicle fleet size.
 - Deferring ICT projects and various other means.
 - A vacancy management programme with a 6% saving target from total salary budgets.
 - A two year pay freeze for the Chief Executive.
11. This year's draft Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 consultation document outlined the following:
- An explanation as to how the LTP was shaped.
 - An outline of the six-point plan approach that was used to keep costs down.
 - The opportunity to provide feedback on comfort levels with selling assets to repay debt.
 - Proposed service cuts and the opportunity to provide feedback on the options provided. Options included:
 - The hours of operation of libraries – Davis Library
 - The Whanganui East Pool
 - The Repertory Theatre
 - The Aviary at Rotokawau Virginia Lake
 - Mainstreet hanging flower baskets
 - New Zealand Glassworks
 - Drop off points for rural rubbish
 - The hours of operation of libraries – Gonville Library
 - The Winter Gardens
 - Level of community grant funding
 - Proposed Long-term investment to make our city more liveable and attractive to businesses with the opportunity to provide feedback on the options provided. Items included:
 - Funding of core infrastructure – roading, footpaths, drinking water, wastewater & storm waters
 - Hotel and carpark

- Royal Whanganui Opera House
 - Whanganui Surf Lifesaving Service patrol building
 - Pākaitore Reserve paving and crossing
 - Rapanui Road trail
 - Marae development.
 - A description of community initiatives that are proposed/not proposed to be funded, achievements over the past 3 years and key project updates across council's work programme.
 - The proposed average rates increase of 10.6% for the 2024/25 financial year.
12. Of the 1603 submitters (excluding late submissions), a diverse range of people within our community took part in the consultation. Details are as outlined below – noting the demographic questions were not compulsory so do not represent all submitters:
- The majority of responders were female (64%), in comparison to males (35%), with 1% selecting other gender.
 - A good spread of responses was received across all age brackets as summarised below. Reaching those under 18 has always proved relatively difficult, though we've achieved a good response to those in the 18-29 compared to previous consultations.
 - Under 18 years (2%)
 - 18 – 29 (7%)
 - 30-39 (14%)
 - 40-49 (16%)
 - 50-59 (17%)
 - 60-69 (22%)
 - 70-79 (17%)
 - 80+ (4%).
13. For ethnicity, this question was also not compulsory, for those who responded to the question: (82%) selected Pākehā; (12%) Māori + (4%) Māori/Pākehā; and fewer than 3% of responders were Asian, Pacific Peoples, Middle Eastern, African or Latin American combined.
14. The majority of responders were located in Gonville (14%), followed by Whanganui East (13%), St. Johns Hill (12%) and Aramoho/Whanganui Central (both 10%).
15. Submitters were asked how they were connected to Whanganui which has been summarised below – noting that submitters could select multiple options:
- I live in Whanganui – 94%
 - I am a local ratepayer – 53%
 - I work in Whanganui – 40%

- I whakapapa to Whanganui – 9%
- I own a business or am a developer – 12%
- I am a visitor to Whanganui – 1%
- Something else – 4% (a common response was retired).

Feedback to submitters

16. All submitters that had indicated they wished to speak were contacted directly ahead of the hearings.
17. All submitters were contacted prior to deliberations to keep them informed of the process and next steps. Staff have also liaised with submitters where urgent requests for information have been made.
18. Each submitter will be sent a resolution letter advising them of the council's decision on the points made in their submission after the final Long-Term Plan is adopted by council on 16 July.

Late adoption of the Long-Term Plan

19. Due to the large number of submissions, alongside the complexity and number of issues we are consulting on, deliberations were rescheduled to take place from 5-7 June (previously listed as 28-29 May).
20. This shift in the deliberations date creates a knock-on effect for the second audit and the adoption of the Long-Term Plan (LTP). The second audit will now occur from 24 June – 5 July. The adoption of the LTP will now occur from 16 July.
21. With Government's repeal of Three Waters, Cabinet agreed to repeal the bill with modifications to local government legislation, based on the impact it will have to LTP's. This allowed for the statutory deadline of the LTP adoption (originally 30 June 2024) to be extended by up to three months to 30 September 2024. Therefore, there are no legislative risks associated with this change.
22. Despite this, as adoption occurs beyond the start of the new financial year, from 1 July 2024, and until adoption, Council will not have an approved budget in place to provide the Chief Executive financial delegations to continue the operations of Council.
23. To bridge this time-gap, officers are recommending Council pass the recommended resolution to enable Council to continue to function prior to the approval of budgets via the adoption of the LTP.
24. If the resolution is not passed the Chief Executive will not have financial delegations to continue to fund the operations of Council.
25. The risk is that Council will commit to expenditure, which is in the draft budgets, that is later changed when the LTP is adopted. This risk is assessed as very low.

Analysis and Advice – Striking the Balance

26. Initially, Council was facing a rates rise of more than 17% for next year just to maintain the status quo. Given the current tough economic climate, Council looked at ways to tighten the belt to keep rates affordable.
27. Council worked hard to ‘strike the balance’, bringing the rates increase down to 10.6% for next year (from 1 July 2024) which balanced minimal impact to our services while reducing costs enough to keep rates as affordable as possible.
28. The survey asked the community how they would ‘strike the balance’ for service cuts and long-term investments. These were not formal questions but were provided to give us an indication of the communities’ preferences.
29. We note that a number of responders indicated that ‘drag’ function used for this question did not work. Multiple tests were carried out prior to launching and during the survey with over 1,000 responses for each question, therefore this would have had minimal impact to the overall results but is noted as a limitation of the data. In the case that the sliding scale question was skipped over entirely, the sliders did not show a result.

Service cuts

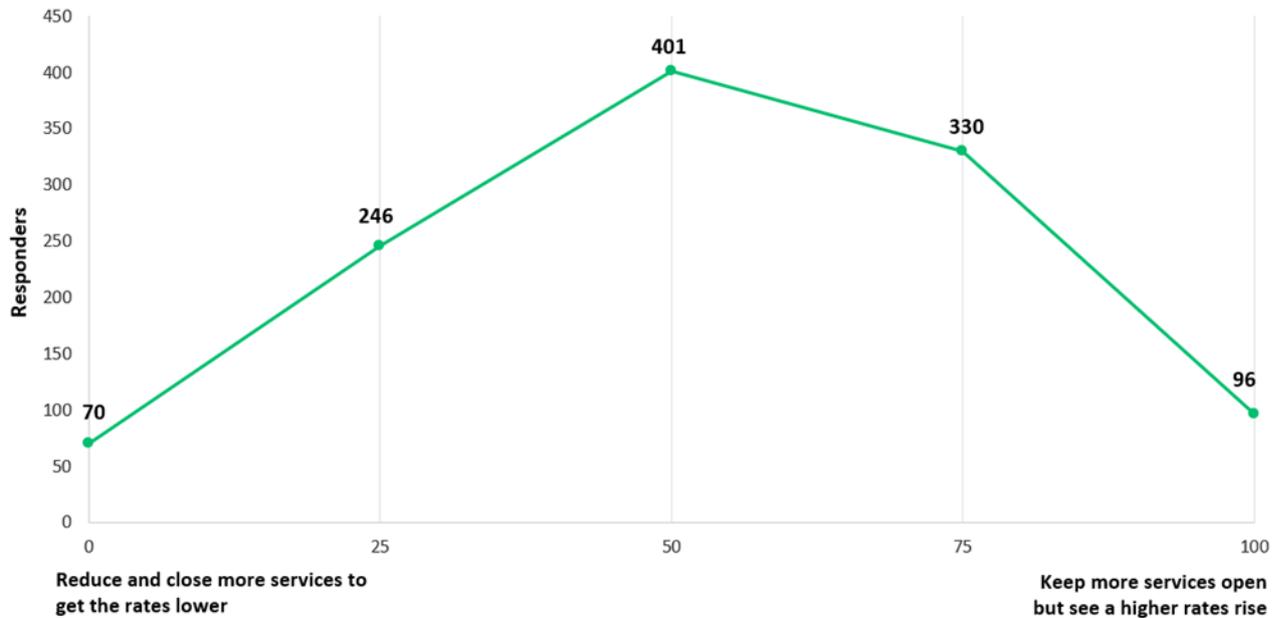
30. Using a 5-point sliding scale, the community was asked whether they would prefer reducing and closing more services to get rates lower (Rating of 0) or keep more services open but see a higher rates rise (Rating of 100).

Options

31. The options provided for this question ranged were:
 - Lowest rating (rating of zero on the graph below) - Reduce and close more services to get the rates lower
 - Highest - Keep more services open but see a higher rates rise

Community response

32. A total of 1143 responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option:



Officers analysis

33. The most common response was at the 50% mark on the scale with 401 responses. The average response to this question was '53' and the graph shows a moderate preference from the community to keep more services open but see a higher rates rise. The communities preferred approach overall seeks balance in maintaining services where possible in conjunction with a moderate rate rise.

Long-Term Investments

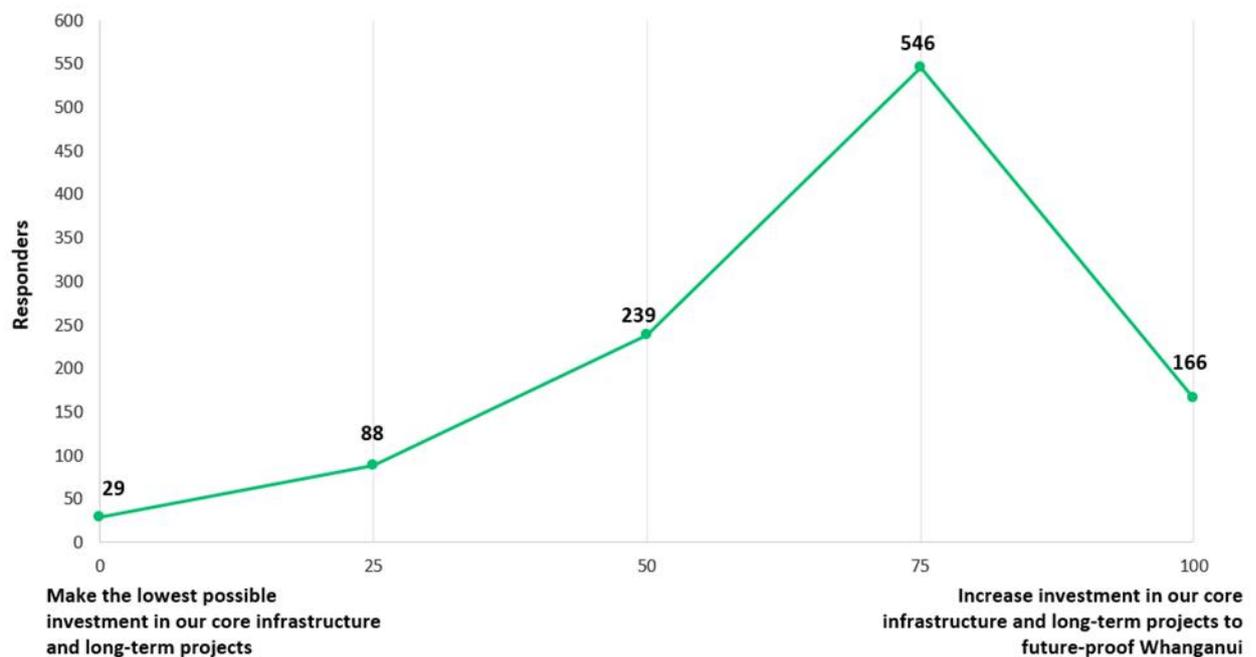
34. Using a 5-point sliding scale, the community was asked whether they would prefer making low investment into our core infrastructure and long-term projects (Rating of 0) or increase investment into our core infrastructure and long-term projects (Rating of 100).

Options

35. The options provided for this question ranged from:
- Lowest rating (rating of zero on the graph below) – Make the lowest possible investment in our core infrastructure and long-term projects
 - Highest rating (rating of 100 on the graph below) – Increase investment in our core infrastructure and long-term projects to future-proof Whanganui

Community response

36. A total of 1068 responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option:



Officers analysis

37. The largest number of responses was at the 75% mark on the scale –with 546 people electing this option. The average response to this question was ‘67’ and the distribution indicates a large majority of responders would prefer an increase or significant to investment to our core infrastructure and long-term projects.

Analysis and Advice – Selling assets to repay debt

Selling assets to repay debt

38. Council informed the community that there was an opportunity to sell some of our assets which would be used to repay debt and reduce costs.
39. The community was asked how comfortable they are with council selling assets up to \$16 million. It was made clear that council were aiming to see the community’s initial comfort levels with selling assets and, if so, we would go back to the community on which specific assets may be sold at a later date.

Options consulted on

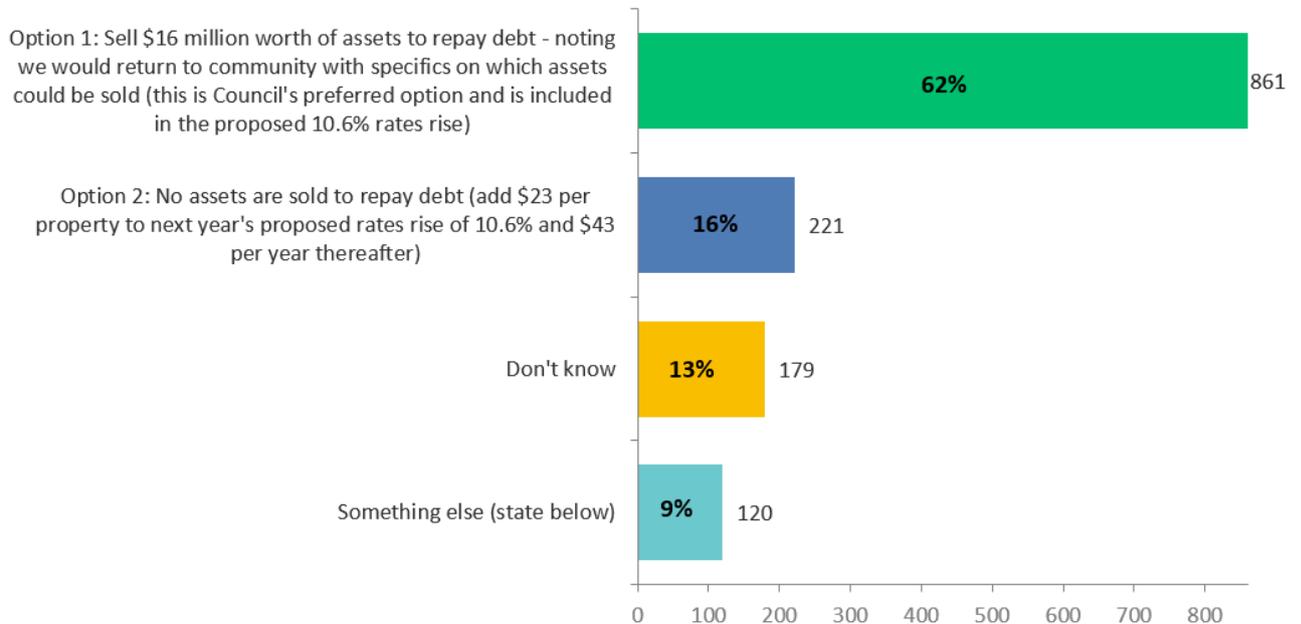
40. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Sell \$16 million worth of assets to repay debt (*preferred*)
- **Option 2** – No assets are sold to repay debt
- Don’t know

- Something else

Community response

41. A total of 1381 responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



42. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 431 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Sell \$16 million worth of assets to repay debt (*preferred*)
 - Reduces burden on ratepayers
 - Agree but need to know which assets are proposed to be sold or types of assets
 - As long as the proceeds are used in a certain way
 - Needs a clear consultation process with the community.
- **Option 2** – No assets are sold to repay debt
 - This is a short term solution
 - Concerns about losing certain types of assets i.e. reserves
 - Concerns over long term impacts
 - Maintain and develop/generate income off the assets we have
 - Need to know which assets are proposed to be sold.
- **Something else**
 - Needing to know what the assets are before making a decision

- (ii) Sell some assets (not necessarily \$16 million)
- (iii) Questioning of the \$16 million figure
- (iv) Importance of bringing Iwi/Hapū into conversations early
- (v) Excluding particular assets from being sold (e.g. reserves and open spaces, pensioner housing, sports facilities and recreational spaces)
- (vi) Sell particular assets (e.g. GasNet, Flight School, Sarjeant Gallery, Harbour Board land to support Port redevelopment)
- (vii) Concerns around the consultation process for specific assets
- (viii) Requests for a referendum on specific asset sales.

Key Stakeholder views

43. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Nga Tangata Tiaki o Whanganui (Tuaine, N.) – No option was selected with the following commentary; *“would want to understand what the assets were before they confirmed any support for this proposal. Some assets of the Council now own were previously divested to Council from the Crown, in our opinion there are still unresolved Treaty of Waitangi breaches that exist in respect of some of these assets and we would expect engagement directly with hapu and ourselves in relation to the sale of any that are on the banks of the Whanganui River or its tributaries. The Council could implement a first right of refusal provision to hapu and iwi as one way to address this matter.”*
- Business Whanganui Chamber of Commerce (Garner, H.) - Option 1 was selected with the following commentary; *“From our member engagement and survey feedback 79% of respondents supported the sale/rationalisation of Council-owned assets that do not contribute to community wellbeing, meet a future development requirement, or provide an acceptable cost to benefit ratio”*
- Sport Whanganui (King, T.) – Something else was selected with the following commentary; *“We understand the need to reduce debt, however we have serious concerns about the lack of transparency around this question. Asset sales have the potential to affect sport and recreation significantly. We do not want to see a loss of sports facilities, nor for neighbourhoods to lose access to recreational spaces. Our preferred action is for the council to clarify which assets will be sold, and for consultation to be undertaken once the community has enough information to assess the potential losses against the impact on rates.”*

Other considerations

44. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A large proportion of respondents were broadly in favour of selling assets, yet there was a vast desire for visibility in which assets were to be sold.
 - (i) In response to this we will take the time to develop a solid process for identifying, confirming and consulting (where appropriate) on which assets may be sold before any sales proceed.

- (ii) With the purchase of commercial properties in the CBD the Council now has the option to generate revenue to reduce rates – rather than rely on asset sales.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1 - sell \$16 million worth of assets to repay debt (base option)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
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
Option 2 – no assets are sold to repay debt		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
Add \$400,000 or \$23 per property in year 1 and \$800,000 or \$43 per year thereafter.	+\$16 million to what was proposed.	None
POST CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 3 – utilise additional revenue from commercial properties to offset rates, rather than relying on asset sales (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
Save \$50,000 or \$2.70 per property in year 1 and then add \$350,000 or \$18.70 per property per year thereafter compared to what was proposed.	+\$16 million to what was proposed.	None

Recommendation

45. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend that council proceeds with option 3 (above), and removes the \$16 million of asset sales from the LTP budget, but includes an additional \$450,000 of revenue for each year of the LTP, for the following reasons:

- While the community was broadly in support of asset sales in principle, they were concerned around the timing of asset sales and specifically which assets would be sold.
- Although the recommendation is to remove asset sales from the budget, officers will work on a considered process and business case for asset sales, including community engagement.
- Although the business case will take a period of time to complete, there are still opportunities to generate more revenue from our existing asset base, which is recognised by the additional \$450,000 revenue.
- \$200,000 of this additional revenue target has already been secured via the recent acquisition of properties in the CBD.

Analysis and Advice – Service cuts

46. The council carefully identified services that can be cut, balancing minimal impact to our services while achieving a sufficient reduction in costs to keep rates affordable. The community was provided an opportunity to provide feedback on the options provided.

The hours of operation of libraries – Davis Library

47. Due to the number of library facilities and services we have to offer, there is an opportunity to reduce this down to save on costs. The community was asked whether they would like to reduce the hours of operation and/or close the Davis Library.

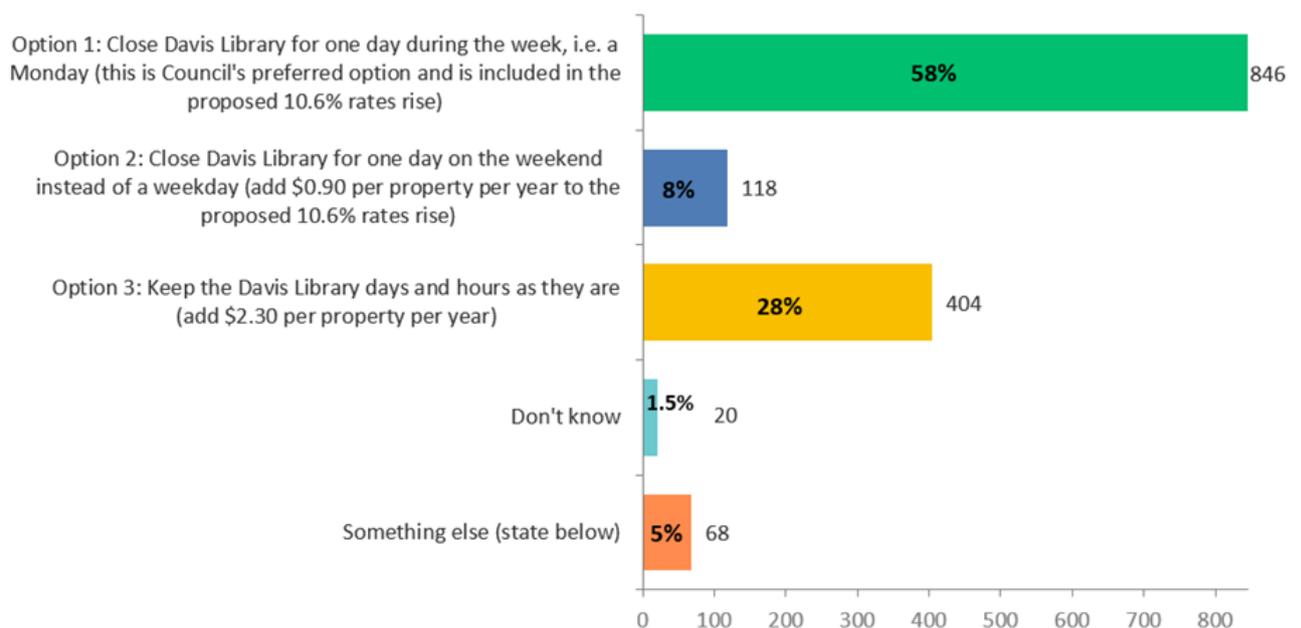
Options

48. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Close the Davis Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Close Davis Library for one day on the weekend instead of a weekday.
- **Option 3** – Keep the Davis Library hours as they are (status quo)
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

49. A total of 1456 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



50. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 447 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Close the Davis Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday. (*preferred*)
 - (i) It doesn't need to be open 7 days
 - (ii) It's more important to be open on the weekend
 - (iii) People will adjust to the change
 - (iv) Closing days should be in consideration with other libraries
 - (v) Some parts of the community don't need a physical location
 - (vi) Access limitations to the library itself on a Monday (e.g. parking).
- **Option 2** – Close Davis Library for one day on the weekend instead of a weekday.
 - (i) This was not a popular option, but for those who did select it they felt that closing on the weekend would have a smaller impact than a weekday.
- **Option 3** - Keep the Davis Library days and hours as they are.
 - (i) This is an essential service
 - (ii) Closing will have a massive impact on community wellbeing; social aspect; the library is a community hub
 - (iii) Vital to children and the community
 - (iv) Savings are trivial based on the amount saved per property per year
 - (v) This will be detrimental to low-income people
 - (vi) It provides digital accessibility
 - (vii) Library books have already been cut from the budget
 - (viii) This will have a downstream impact on other services
 - (ix) Ageing population relies on these facilities
 - (x) There's nothing to do on a Monday.
- **Something else**
 - (i) Cut/change hours or staff numbers i.e. open and close library one hour earlier every day
 - (ii) This should be a temporary measure only
 - (iii) Concerns about staff impacts /changes should be done in consultation with library users/staff
 - (1) Other suggestions included, charging for books/charge for library cards; attracting more ticketed events; and more paid services within the library e.g. café, genealogical research, renting rooms, advertising.

Other considerations

51. Other information to highlight or take into consideration:

- Those who supported closing the library for one day (options 1 or 2) generally felt that users could adjust or pointed out that a lot of information could now be accessed online, reducing the need for libraries in person.
- Those who opposed closing the library (option 3) were much more focused on the more vulnerable communities who used it for more than just books – access to internet for those who don't have it or can't afford it at home; a source of community events; a place that is safe, warm and dry; a place where people can go without an expectation of spending money; the ability to access key documents; and the broad range of other services offered by the library staff.
- Others felt that the potential savings were trivial compared to the loss of a community facility, or that the services the Davis Library provides every day of the week are highly valued.
- The most common suggestion for other ways to reduce costs **was to reduce hours on one or more days** rather than closing altogether:
 - (i) This option has been explored further by officers to determine what impact this may have on both staff and library users. Overall, this option will minimise the impact to staff and library users when compared to closing for a whole weekday; however, the resulting saving is approximately \$10,000 lower.
- Some users suggested charging for library cards or books, or relying on the online collection only:
 - (i) Officers' **response** – Charging for library cards is not a legal option under section 142 of the Local Government Act 2002. Charging for library books would significantly restrict access to services people have already contributed to through their rates, and disproportionately affects the poorest. The library does charge for bestsellers (where extra copies are purchased of high-demand books), but there is always a free-to-borrow copy.
 - (ii) Online books (via the ePukapuka consortium) are not a direct substitute for the physical collection.
 - (1) The books are different to those on the shelves.
 - (2) The collection is smaller (84,000 items in total)
 - (3) The collection is shared amongst more than 920,000 people across 22 local authorities
 - (4) Access requires owning a suitable device and having internet access.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Close Davis Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday (base option)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$43,000 or \$2.30 per	None	Reduction in days the Davis Library can be accessed per

property rates saving from prior year rates.		week. This will impact on residents who can only access the library on a certain day.
Option 2: Close Davis Library for one day on the weekend instead of a weekday		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Add \$16,000 or \$0.90 per property per year to what was 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.
Option 3: Keep the Davis Library days and hours as they are		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Add \$43,000 or \$2.30 per property per year to what was proposed.	None	None
POST CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 4: Close one hour earlier each weekday and two hours earlier on a Saturday		
(recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Add \$10,000 or \$0.50 per property per year to what was proposed.	None	Reduction in opening hours each day for the Davis Library through an earlier close time. This may impact on some residents who can only access the library near the end of the day.

Recommendation

52. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend option 4 (above), to close one hour early each weekday and two hours earlier on a Saturday for the following reasons:

- The last hour of each weekday and the last two hours on Saturdays are quieter than other times of day, therefore it will impact fewer customers than closing for a full weekday and will provide similar amount of cost saving
- While a majority were in support for closing for one day during the week, it was clear from the submissions that closing for a full day will impact our community negatively on the basis that this is an important hub that is used for multiple purposes.
- Closing one day per week was equated to \$43,000 per annum of saving, whilst closing one hour earlier each day and two hours earlier on a Sunday would equate to a saving of \$35,000 per annum.

The Whanganui East Pool

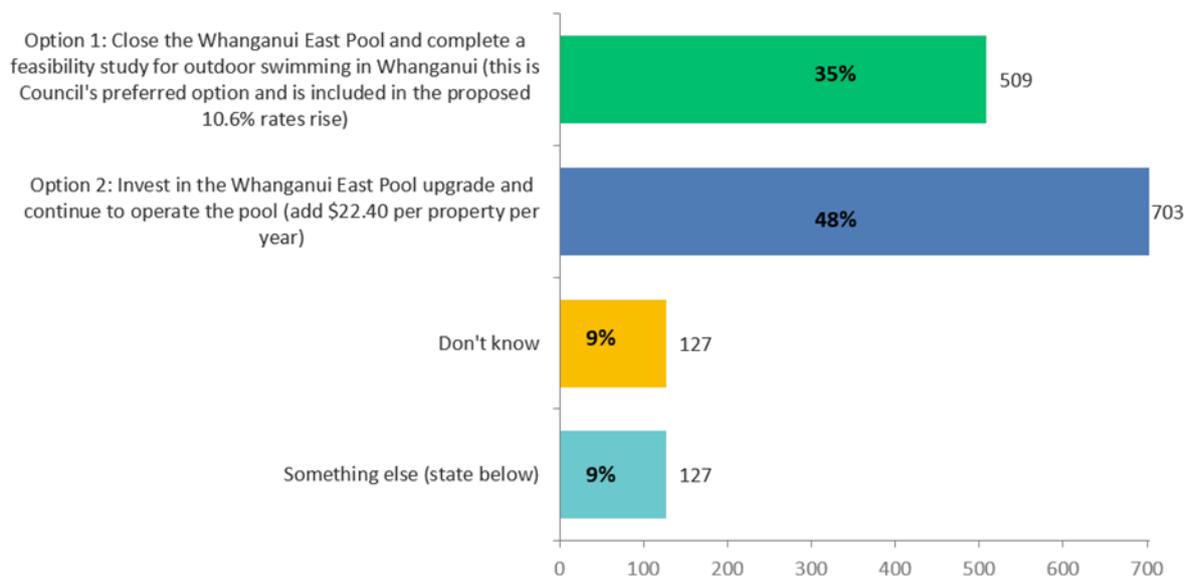
53. Multiple issues have been identified which will require an investment in the Whanganui East Pool at an approximate cost of over \$2million.
54. The community was asked whether they would like to close the Whanganui East Pool or invest in the upgrades that are required to keep it operating.

Options

55. The options provided for this question are as follows;
 - **Option 1** – Close the Whanganui East Pool and complete a feasibility study for outdoor swimming in Whanganui (*preferred*).
 - **Option 2** – Invest in the Whanganui East Pool upgrade and continue to operate the pool.
 - Don't know
 - Something else

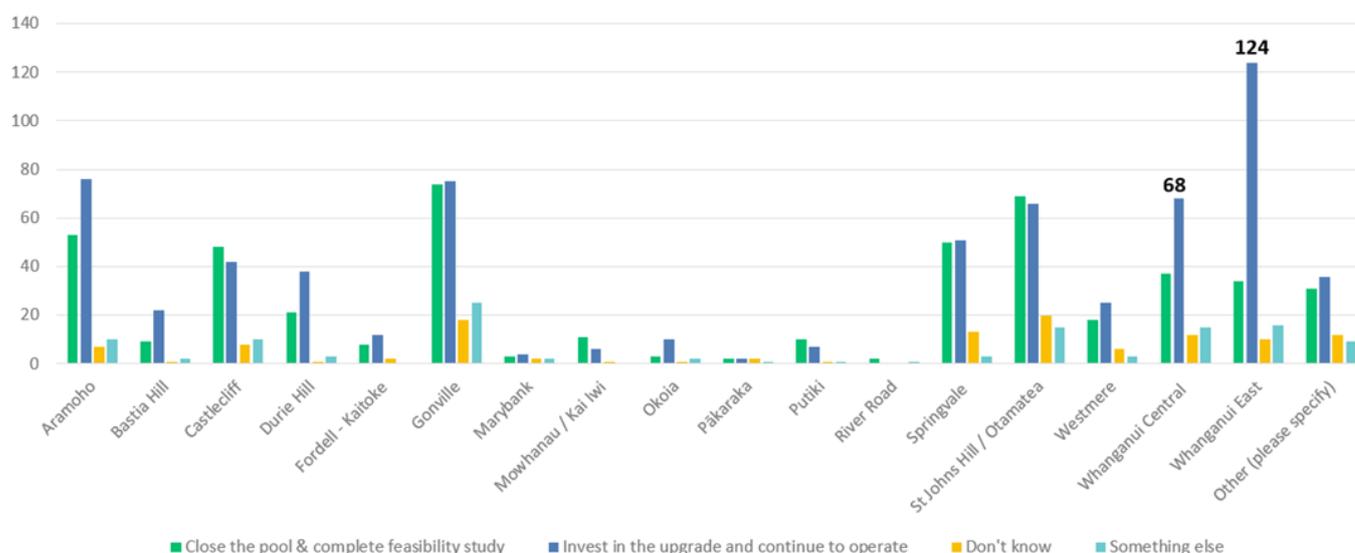
Community response

56. A total of 1466 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



57. The following graph indicates where responders were located based on the options selected. Two 'counts' have been provided on the graph to give you an indication of response numbers;

Responses based on location



58. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 605 submitters provided a comment. Some of the themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Close the Whanganui East Pool and complete a feasibility study for outdoor swimming in Whanganui. (*preferred*)
 - (i) Costs are too high to repair and maintain it
 - (ii) The location is limited to Whanganui East – other areas don't get the benefit/don't use it
 - (iii) Need for something better i.e.
 - (1) Bigger facility/New facility
 - (2) Outdoor facility with pleasant outdoor areas
 - (3) Need for a dive board
 - (iv) Need for something more central and/or invest in the existing Splash Centre
 - (v) Poor quality facilities
 - (vi) Issues with safety
 - (vii) Pool is not well utilised
 - (viii) To not spend money on a feasibility study
 - (ix) Safety concerns at the pool.
- **Option 2** – Invest in the Whanganui East Pool upgrade and continue to operate the pool.
 - (i) Importance of swimming/learn to swim/preventing drownings/swim safety /people will swim in the Awa if it closes

- (ii) Importance to local community and demographic:
 - (1) Important for local kids/local neighbourhood
 - (2) Transport restrictions to Splash/too far to travel/financial restrictions
 - (3) Good to have facilities spread out
- (iii) Outdoor facility (connection to nature)/open air facility
- (iv) Invest in what we have or upgrade what we have rather than rebuild
- (v) A new facility will cost a lot more and/or don't do the feasibility study
- (vi) Make smaller improvements instead
- (vii) Heritage asset to be saved/iconic/last outdoor pool in Whanganui
- (viii) Closing adds pressure to Splash centre
- (ix) Loss of physical activity /exercise/ family activity – the importance of the dive board was noted by a number of submitters
- (x) A number of submitters under this option also made other suggestions to reduce the costs such as: fundraising, events, using voluntary organisations, increasing fees, or finding business partners.

- **Something else**

- (i) The following table broadly summarises the comments from this category:

Themes	Count
Keep open at least until feasibility study is complete or an alternative is found	19
Keep it open but fund it differently : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraise/ seek sponsorship • Increase revenue potential of pool 	2 13 2
Keep it open but with the minimal investment/and or reduce the service	14
Keep it open and invest in the pool	5
Sell, lease, or donate the pool	14
Keep it open (other comments)	7
Close it and don't do the feasibility study	16
Close (other comments)	3
Other (general comments/questions)	25

- (ii) These results provide an additional overlay to the survey results above.

Key Stakeholder views

59. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Sport Whanganui (King, T) – selected the option ‘something else’ with the following commentary *“We support having an outdoor pool in our community but understand the cost of operating it affects ratepayers. In most cases pool facilities are not built as financial investments. They are costly to construct and operate. Those that are not private, commercial facilities (swim schools and tourist spas.) will operate at a financial loss. Therefore, the return on investment for most pool facilities is not driven by financial returns but by wellbeing returns. Sport NZ estimates that overall for every \$1 spent on sport and physical activity \$2.12 of social return is generated and aquatic facilities contributes to this. Completing a district aquatics strategy/feasibility study before the pool is either closed or invested in is the best approach to ensuring we are maximising social returns and minimising the financial burden on ratepayers. Our preferred action is completing the strategy/feasibility study during the pool's off-season and revisiting the decision once the need in the district is understood.”*
- Whanganui East School (Ramage, K) – selected option 2 with the following commentary *“The representatives of the community (not just Whanganui East residents) who attended a meeting on 9th April wish that the Whanganui East Pool remains open. Attached is a document of 50 comments from this meeting.”*
- Whanganui East Swimming Club – Chairman Sollitt, F - selected option 2 with the following commentary *“Re - option 1. Totally reject Council's proposal to close this pool. the Council needs to find a way to continue to operate the pool for a further year. At the same time Council needs to proceed with the proposed feasibility study for an outdoor swimming in Whanganui. The feasibility study needs to incorporate an option for the Whanganui East pool to be replaced with a new complex or for further upgrading of the existing pool, for continued community operation and access. Re Option 2. Personally and for the Swimming Club this is our preferred option for this year. A way needs to be found for the continued operation of the pool for the 2024-2025 season for; - Community use, - School use and -Whanganui East Swimming Club use. The Club would like to discuss with Council the time period (Days)that the pool can be made available for use. Also for an arrangement for the Club to have access to the pool (in the evenings) for the purposes of club training and events.”*
- Whanganui East School, age 8 student – selected option two and commented – *“The pools should stay open because it is really important to learn swimming. Also on hot days it is fun to play in it. It's close to my house and the other pools are too far.”*

Other considerations

60. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- The Whanganui East Pool was open 13 weeks for the 2023/2024 season, with 9,671 people using the facility last season; Splash Centre had 148,611 people using the facility over 43 weeks.

- The Strategic Leisure NZ Compliance Report (2013) identified the following five key issues with the pool:
 - (i) Filtration and Treatment: The main pool filtration system and the learners' pool filtration and pumping systems do not comply with industry standards, significantly elevating the risks associated with public health. It is recommended to limit bather loads to reduce the risks to a moderate level or to use regular pool water quality testing as an "early warning" system to take appropriate action when pool water quality is approaching unsafe limits.
 - (ii) Entrapment: There are instances where pool fittings, such as sparge pipes and pool ladders, do not comply with the Code, increasing the risk of entrapment below water. These issues should be properly corrected by embedding sparge pipes in concrete and ensuring there are no gaps or holes greater than 8mm or less than 25mm across. A full test of entrapment risks has not been carried out using the specified entrapment apparatus.
 - (iii) Diving Board: The minimum water depth required for the diving board is 3.4m, but only 2.3m is available. The diving board should be removed entirely before opening the pool.
 - (iv) Pool Heating: The pool heating system is not functional, posing a potential risk to both young and old patrons as the pools will be unheated.
 - (v) Pool Management: The pool management plan should be reviewed to incorporate management of pool bather loads, and a pool risk management plan should be written and adhered to throughout the season. The necessary pool chemistry testing as required by PoolSafe standards should be audited, and known non-compliances such as trip hazards and a steep ramp gradient should be rectified prior to opening the facility.
- A number of queries were received surrounding the cost of the feasibility study
 - (i) **Officer Response** – A feasibility study would investigate current provision across the entire aquatic network in the district gathering information on a variety of relevant factors and recommend future provision and solutions to current challenges.
- It was suggested that an aquatics strategy is completed first
 - (i) **Officer Response** – there is no budget provided to operate the WE Pool in the next season. If a study was to be completed first, a decision will still need to be made whether to operate the pool in the meantime, or remain closed until the study is complete.
 - (ii) A review report undertaken in 2014 by Strategic Leisure noted:
 - (1) The filtration and treatment plant at the WEP does not comply with industry standards, posing risks to public health.
 - (2) Upgrading the current pool complex is not considered viable.
- It was questioned why the pool cannot remain open for a season while the feasibility study takes place

(i) **Officer Response** – If the pool was to remain open, a maintenance programme is required to meet the health and safety requirements. This includes remedial works to all pools, and additional staff resourcing due to ongoing safety concerns.

- Note since the consultation document was drafted the estimated operating costs of the pool have increased from \$250,000 to \$360,000 for next year, due to a number of factors including safety incidents at the pool, the need for increased staffing, and health and safety requirements.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Close the Whanganui East Pool and complete a feasibility study for outdoor swimming in Whanganui (base option)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$250,000 or \$13.40 per property saving from prior year rates.	None	No opportunity for council-provided outdoor swimming due to the pool's closure. New level of service to be determined following the outcome of the feasibility study.
Option 2: Invest in the Whanganui East Pool upgrade and continue to operate the pool		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Add \$530,000 or \$28.30 per property per year to what was proposed. * Note since the consultation document was drafted the estimated operating costs of the pool have increased from \$250,000 to \$360,000 for next year, due to a number of factors including safety incidents at the pool, the need for increased staffing, and health and safety requirements. This has increase the rates impact of keeping the pool open from \$420,000 to \$530,000, or from \$22.40 per property to \$28.30 per property.	+\$2.1 million	Temporary closure of the Whanganui East Pool to complete the required upgrades, with major improvements to the facilities upon re-opening.
POST CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 3: Close the Whanganui East Pool and <u>do not</u> complete a feasibility study for outdoor swimming in Whanganui (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
No change to what was proposed.	None	No opportunity for council-provided outdoor swimming due to the pool's closure.

Recommendation

61. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend closing the Whanganui East Pool and not completing a feasibility study for the following reasons:

- There have been previous reviews undertaken by independent bodies on the Whanganui East Pool (Strategic leisure 2014; Watershed 2022) both of which have acknowledged the ongoing issues, and current state of a near 100-year-old outdoor pool.
- Very little has been done in maintenance on the Pool over the years, it continues to leak, and remains non-compliant with industry standards. The ongoing costs to maintain an ageing facility are high and will continue to increase.
- Findings shared from a Sport NZ draft National Aquatics Strategy has identified:
 - (i) The aquatics sector is facing ever increasing challenges, including:
 - (1) Maintaining the existing, ageing, network of provision
 - (2) Meeting increasing demand from a growing and aging population
 - (3) Adapting to the changing needs within the community
 - (4) The cost of provision, both capital and operational
 - (5) Adapting to climatic change and improving environmental sustainability
 - (ii) In general, aquatic sports and lane swimming is adequately supplied and there is no evident need for more major event pools, particularly 50m pools.
- This report also contained a regional analysis on aquatic provision, with Whanganui being noted as having the highest surplus of aquatic provision per 1,000 residents in New Zealand.
- Since the consultation document was prepared the costs of continuing to operate the pool have increased from \$250,000 to \$360,000 for next year, due to a number of factors including safety and threatening behaviour incidents at the pool, the need for increased staffing, and health and safety requirements.

The Repertory Theatre

62. It has 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 is not a feasible option for council.
63. The community was asked whether they would like to close the Repertory Theatre building for demolition, invest in the upgrades that are required to keep it operating, or to demolish and build a new theatre entirely.

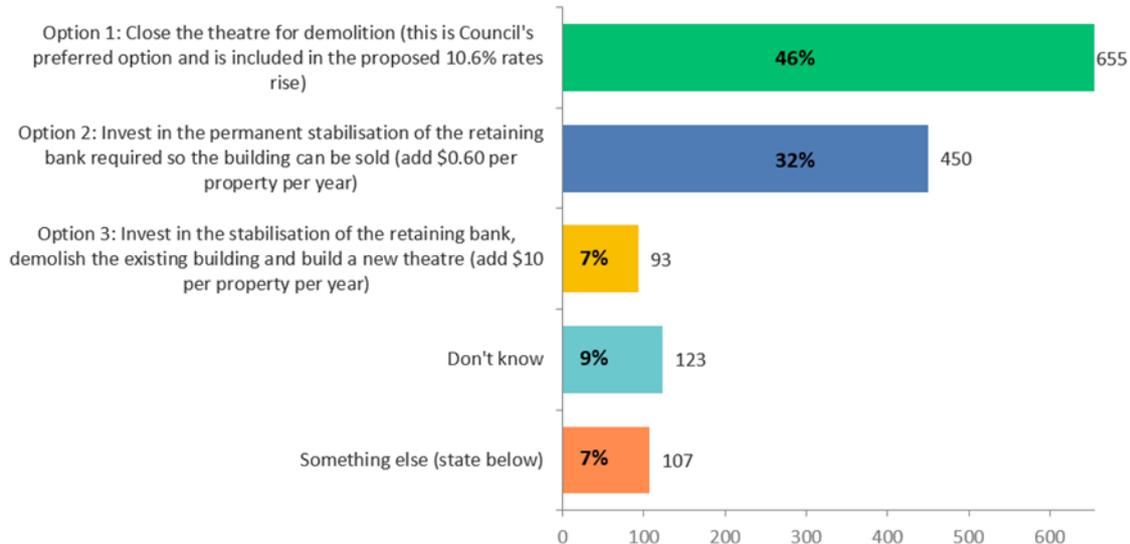
Options

64. The options provided for this question are as follows;
 - **Option 1** – Close the theatre for demolition (*preferred*).
 - **Option 2** – Invest in the permanent stabilisation of the retaining bank required so the building can be sold
 - **Option 3** - Invest in the stabilisation of the retaining bank, demolish the existing building and build a new theatre

- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

65. A total of 1428 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



66. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 424 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Close the theatre for demolition (*preferred*).
 - Too costly/ongoing costs to maintain and fix
 - Only used by a small group /benefit is small
 - Other facilities to use/ opportunity to join up with Amdram and utilise other venues
 - Facility not appropriate/up to standard
 - If this closes, there is still a need to provide other facilities for the group
 - Demolish but keep the façade
 - Hand it back to the community/theatre group.
- **Option 2** – Invest in the permanent stabilisation of the retaining bank required so the building can be sold
 - The theatre group is important and there is a need to continue to provide facilities for the group
 - Do both - maintain both the building and stabilise the bank
 - Retain as a heritage building / part of Whanganui's culture
 - Demolish but keep the façade

- (v) Honour commitments to the Repertory Society and gift to the theatre to the Repertory Society – they are a loyal base/seek views from members
 - (vi) Need to fix the bank regardless.
- **Option 3** - Invest in the stabilisation of the retaining bank, demolish the existing building and build a new theatre
 - (i) Importance of community theatre facility
 - (ii) Invest in the rebuild for the community
 - (iii) Invest in something smaller/more intimate than the Opera House (a number of submitters noting the Opera House is too big or not appropriate for community shows)
 - (iv) Importance of history/heritage of site
 - (v) Seek third party/ private funding.
- **Something else**
 - (i) There were 107 'other submissions' – broadly:
 - 2/3 of these want the building retained (whether it was sold or not)
 - 1/3 want the bank retained
 - 1/3 want the property sold/transferred ownership.
 - (ii) These results provide an additional overlay to the survey results.
 - (ii) Comments from this option included:
 - (1) The Repertory is a valuable community asset, keep the building and/or stabilise the bank too
 - (2) Sell /give to a community group / gift to the Repertory group
 - (3) Retain it until the renovations on the Opera House are complete
 - (4) Seek a philanthropist venture/private sponsorship
 - (5) Sell to an investor/private sale of the land.

Key Stakeholder views

67. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Repertory Theatre (Morton, M.) – Option 2 was selected with the following commentary; *“We would like to acquire the building, and enter into negotiations.”*
- Amdram Theatre (Dack, G.) – Option 2 was selected with the following commentary; *“Rep Theatre should be offered he option of buying the building once the stabilization of the bank has been completed. They would then have the sole*

responsibility for upkeep and bringing the building up to code. Whilst it would be an option to demolish and rebuild the building a modernised theatre would likely take up a bigger footprint than is currently available. The building also has some heritage value and adds value to the current stock.”

Other considerations

68. Other information to highlight or take into consideration:

- There were a number of queries about how easy it would be to demolish the Repertory Theatre as a heritage building.
 - (i) **Officer Response** – There is a risk that we may not be able to demolish the building. That said if the value of conserving, making safe and alterations for functionality is prohibitive for a 'heritage' building there is a case for demolition. This building has heritage value of a small feature of the facade which is in disrepair, and the building is listed on WDC plan.
- There were questions about the process for demolition.
 - (i) **Officer Response** – In terms of process, we would need to seek resource consent for demolition. The assessing planner will decide on the process. The Repertory Theatre is unique in that only the facade has heritage value. Guidance from the plan is that discretionary activities will generally be publicly notified, partly due to public interest in those sorts of activities. Ultimately the decision about whether to limit or publicly notify will be made by the processing planner, based on the effects of the proposal.
- It has been questioned if it will cost more to demolish it than stabilise the bank.
 - (i) **Officer Response** – It is believed that value of demolition is less than retaining the bank. If the building goes, the bank can be addressed in alternate ways rather than retaining (e.g. sloped out across the site). Demolition is estimated to cost \$170k and retaining the wall is estimated to cost in excess of \$250k.
- There were a few comments around the safety of the building.
 - (i) **Officer Response** – There are fire egress risks and if the bank continues to subside it will push the building which is not tied to its foundations. The building is currently in use and over time without work will change to when it cannot obtain a Building Warrant of Fitness.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Close the theatre for demolition (base option) (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.	\$200,000	Loss of a heritage building and reduced options for theatre

<i>This is a \$40,000 or \$2.10 per property increase over prior year rates.</i>		venues. The theatre group will also need to find an alternative venue to continue to host shows.
<i>Option 2: Invest in the permanent stabilisation of the retaining bank required so the building can be sold</i>		
<i>Impact on rates</i>	<i>Impact on debt</i>	<i>Impact on level of service</i>
<i>Add \$11,000 or \$0.60 per property per year to what was proposed.</i>	<i>+\$50,000 to what was proposed.</i>	<i>New level of service will be determined by the buyer.</i>
<i>Option 3: Invest in the stabilisation of the retaining bank, demolish the existing building and build a new theatre</i>		
<i>Impact on rates</i>	<i>Impact on debt</i>	<i>Impact on level of service</i>
<i>Add \$183,000 or \$10 per property per year to what was proposed.</i>	<i>+\$2.65 million to what was proposed.</i>	<i>Closure of the theatre to demolish the building and retain the bank, with major improvements to the facilities upon re-opening.</i>

Recommendation

69. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend option 1, closing the Repertory Theatre and demolish for the following reasons:
- The building is no longer fit for purpose
 - There would be significant repairs and costs needed to maintain the building
 - There are other appropriate venues available for theatre groups.
70. In addition to the options listed, there is the option to sell the building to the Repertory Theatre group which will require investment to stabilise the bank – this will effectively be the same as option 2.

The Aviary at Rotokawau Virginia Lake

71. Council consulted on this issue in its 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 from that consultation was strongly in support of retaining and improving the aviary. Council has since made some improvements such as reducing bird numbers, changing feeding schedules, providing enrichment and improved veterinary services.
72. In the new context of increasing costs and our efforts to keep rates affordable, we put this option back on the table for the community to consider before the more significant and costly improvements are made.

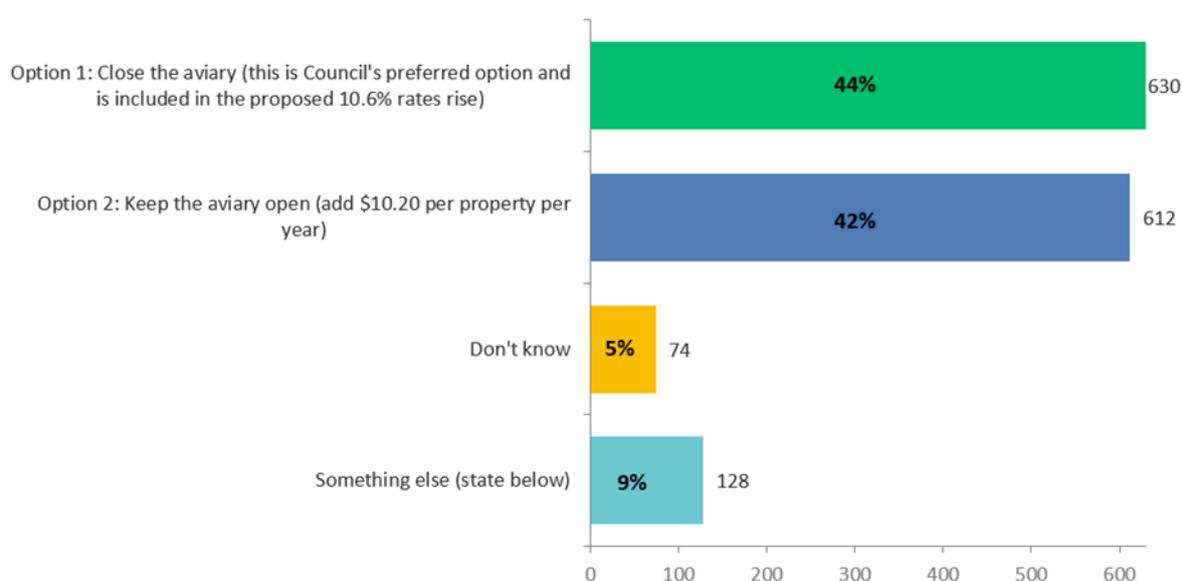
Options

73. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Close the aviary (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Keep the aviary open
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

74. A total of 1444 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



75. Note the graph represents the responses from the survey, further analysis is needed to include the preferences of those who selected 'something else' and who provided alternative options for council to consider - these are discussed in the report below and will be discussed further at the deliberations meeting.

76. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 556 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Close the aviary (*preferred*).
 - (i) The aviary is not fit for purpose/ not an appropriate facility
 - (ii) Birds should not be caged
 - (iii) Close the aviary and enhance the overall area
 - (iv) The costs are too high to maintain the aviary
 - (v) Rehome the birds.

- **Option 2 – Keep the aviary open**
 - (i) It is a great asset and attraction for locals and visitors
 - (ii) Family friendly and free attraction
 - (iii) Get volunteers to run the aviary
 - (iv) Reduce the costs associated with the aviary
 - (v) This has already been supported by community feedback
 - (vi) Put a donation box out to support running costs
 - (vii) Seek sponsors.

- **Something else**
 - (i) The broad themes in this category are summarised in the following table:

Themes	Counts
Keep it but get volunteers/community group to run it	43
Change something about it/ general comments	28
Keep it and seek sponsorship/investment	13
Privatise/sell it	12
Generate income from it/charge a fee	14
Reduce the costs	10
Invest in the aviary further and/or promote as a tourist attraction	7

- (ii) These results provide an additional overlay to the survey results.

Key Stakeholder views

77. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Whanganui Bird Club (Roberts, P.) - Option 2 was selected with the following commentary; *“The Aviary is an attraction which has been part of Whanganui for many years and many generations have visited and enjoyed seeing the birds. There are a range of things that could be done to improve the Aviary and resources are a well-worth spend for future.”*
- Virginia Lake Trust Inc (Coxon, T.) - Option 2 was selected with the following commentary; *“We believe that Council is using a sledge hammer to crack a walnut! You previously consulted on this and we supported a submission by one of our Lake Volunteers who also helped at the Aviary, Mike Street. The Council made an interim decision to meet some of the pedantic conclusions of a so called expert, made some refinements, reduction in numbers and other adjustments that*

enabled it to carry on. Why change that now when the facility could be left alone for some time to come until natural attrition may then seal its fate. A service Club gifted it to you at some cost ...has that be considered? Also has any real investigation been carried out on true usage of the Lake? We think you must consider our belief in a "Total Lake Package" of many components, making up the visitor experience. Taking away one for a modest saving in rates is foolish. Surveys of users may have been done in the past but has anyone really got any accurate idea of total Lake usage. We doubt there is any Council facility that has a higher overall resident & visitor usage than Virginia Lake as evidence by the usually full car parks in daylight hours. Prove us wrong but not with guess work. We obviously support retention of the Winter Gardens which you obviously realise would never be supported by reatepayers or the public, yet it is just one more part of the totality that is Virginia Lake Reserve, al equally adding to its appeal."

Other considerations

78. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- Many submitters (either for keeping or closing the Aviary) commented on the high operational costs for the Aviary and that the council should consider community volunteers and or business sponsorship to lower these costs.
 - (i) **Officer Response** – Operation of the aviary was previously based on a small number of part time staff and volunteers. This low level of untrained resource is, in part, the root cause of the issues highlighted in the independent review report. It is also the reason that budget was approved as part of the 2022 Annual Plan so that 1.5FTE trained animal handlers could be employed. Continuing with a volunteer based approach would be “back to the future” and the animal welfare issues that were the initial cause for concern would likely be perpetuated.
- A large number of responders suggested that Council get volunteers or a community group to run the Aviary, particularly through the ‘Something else’ option.
 - (i) **Officer Response** – In order for this to be a viable option, a well-established volunteer or community group must be identified and officers will require time to work through this. This step is necessary so that council does not retain health and safety or animal welfare responsibilities when a separate entity is operating the aviary.
- The cost of closing the aviary will be circa \$20,000 for demolition.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS
Option 1: Close the aviary (base option) (recommended)

Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<i>Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$190,000 or \$10.20 per property saving from prior year rates.</i>	None	Loss of an outdoor recreation facility that is available for community use in a premier park.
Option 2: Keep the aviary open		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<i>Add \$190,000 or \$10.20 per property per year to what was proposed.</i>	None	None

Recommendation

79. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend to close the Aviary for the following reasons:
- The council is facing significant cost pressures and this is an area where costs can be saved.
 - Without ongoing operational and capital investment, the aviary will not meet an acceptable standard as detailed in the report commissioned and received in 2022/23.

Mainstreet hanging flower baskets

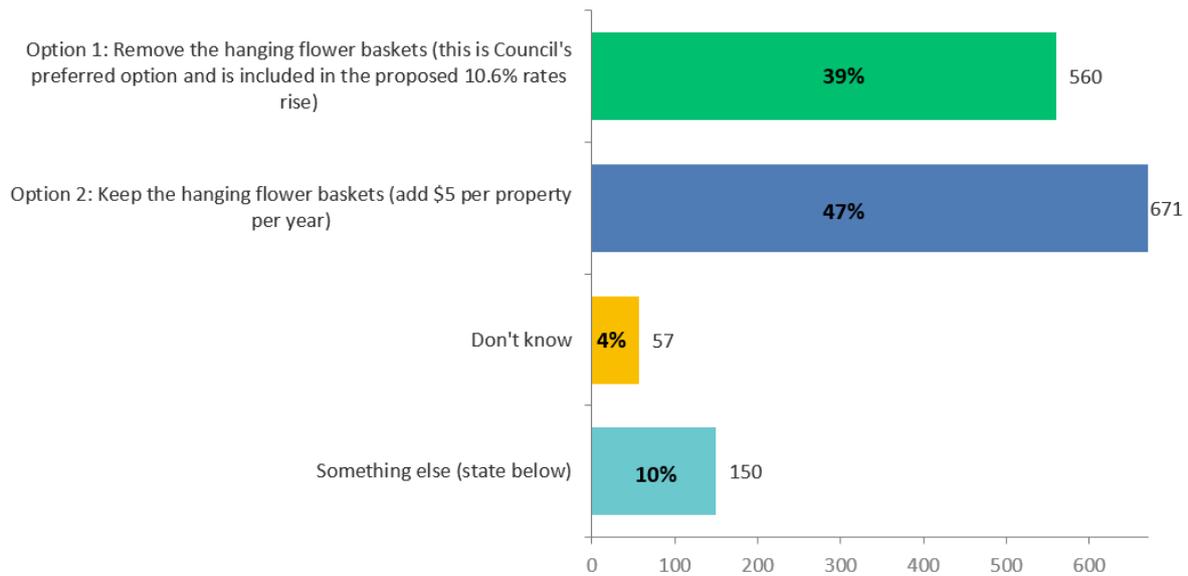
80. The hanging baskets have provided a pop of colour and enhanced our city's atmosphere for 30 years, but they could be considered a nice-to-have as we find ways to reduce costs.
81. The community was asked whether they would like to remove the hanging flowers baskets, or keep them.

Options

82. The options provided for this question are as follows;
- **Option 1** – Remove the hanging flower baskets (*preferred*).
 - **Option 2** – Keep the hanging flower baskets
 - Don't know
 - Something else

Community response

83. A total of 1438 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



84. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 565 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Remove the hanging flower baskets (*preferred*).
 - (i) The cost to have them is too high.
 - (ii) The flower baskets are a “nice to have” when there are other more important things the council needs to pay for.
 - (iii) The baskets are not as spectacular as they once were and now they don’t offer much value and aren’t that special.
 - (iv) Many people who opted to remove the baskets indicated they would like to see the baskets kept if the burden on general rates could be reduced.
 - (v) Adjacent businesses should be responsible for the baskets.

- **Option 2** – Keep the hanging flower baskets
 - (i) The flower baskets are a unique and iconic motif in Whanganui which is loved by visitors and locals alike.
 - (ii) The baskets put Whanganui on the map 30 years ago when first installed and now other cities have followed suit.
 - (iii) The baskets provide lots of value to people - aesthetic, cultural, heritage, and environmentally. They support the wellbeing of people and the vibrancy of the inner city.
 - (iv) Some people who supported keeping the baskets also raised concerns about the cost of the baskets or made suggestions to reduce the effects on rates:
 - (1) Adjacent businesses should help pay the costs

- (2) Volunteer groups could care for the baskets
 - (3) Baskets be put to tender to find a cheaper service provider
 - (4) A corporate or community sponsor could fund the baskets.
- **Something else**
 - (i) Most of the comments made in support of ‘something else’ are aligned with the suggestions from both the Remove and the Keep submissions in that they wanted to find ways of keeping the baskets but reducing the rates contribution to these;
 - (1) Make adjacent businesses pay for the upkeep.
 - (2) Seek a sponsor to fund them.
 - (3) Design the baskets to require less maintenance. Different plants etc.
 - (4) Keep some, remove some, with street corners and other high impact areas prioritised.
 - (5) Tender out to find a lower cost service provider to maintain these. Suggestions of Corrections/Prison nursery, community organisations, rest homes etc.
 - (6) Establish a volunteer approach to maintain the baskets.
 - (7) Some novel alternatives were suggested to the hanging baskets to reduce maintenance etc.

Key Stakeholder views

85. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Mainstreet Whanganui (Warahi, D) – Selected option 2 and provided the following commentary; *“CBD Vibrancy and Street Appeal The Whanganui District Council preferred option 1 to Remove the hanging flower baskets. To permanently remove the iconic summer and winter hanging baskets which have been a vibrant part of the CBD for over 30 years. The current summer baskets are near the end of their season and are due to be removed, Council has instructed that there will be no winter baskets for 2024 which were scheduled to be hung in June 2024. a) It is disappointing to see the baskets removed as they have brought vibrancy, color, and street appeal to the CBD, we have received many positive comments from locals and visitors, and the baskets are also included in a range of Whanganui promotional materials engaging visitors to come to Whanganui. ...”*
- Carter, G. (General Manager of Springvale Garden Centre) selected option 1 and provided the following commentary; *“As general manager of Springvale garden centre I want to comment the quality of the baskets has dropped significantly. Plant choice seems poor and they don’t look stunning like they used to when Frank and Joy Bristol were doing them. There could be consideration given that irrigation*

infrastructure that is in place now would deteriorate if not used and if were to be resurrected in the future be more expensive”

Other considerations

86. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A consistent message received across all options is that the flower baskets are valued and that the community does not want to lose them.
- That people wanted to see the baskets kept in some form and council should explore ways to do this while reducing the burden on rate payers.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - Based on the range of suggestions that were provided, Council has looked into retaining summer baskets only as a possible option.
- Making businesses on the street pay some/all of the upkeep was also a common theme across all options presented
 - (i) **Officer Response** - The existing arrangement does already include partial funding from CBD businesses. The hanging baskets are funded 50% by the CBD rate and 50% by the general rate. Elected members have the option of varying the funding split where either the general ratepayer or the CBD ratepayer pays a greater share of the cost.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Remove the hanging flower baskets (base option)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<i>Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. This is a \$93,000 saving from prior year rates and would save \$157.30 per SUIP for CBD ratepayers and \$2.55 per SUIP for general ratepayers compared to the prior year.</i>	None	Loss of street appeal in the CBD area.
Option 2: Keep the hanging flower baskets with the existing 50% CBD rate and 50% general rate funding split		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<i>Add \$93,000 to what was proposed. This is an increase of \$157.30 per SUIP for CBD ratepayers and an increase of \$2.55 per SUIP for general ratepayers compared to what was proposed (but no change from prior years' rates).</i>	None	None
POST CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 3: Keep the hanging flower baskets but change the funding split to 75% CBD rate and 25% general rate (preferred)		

Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<p><i>Add \$93,000 to what was proposed.</i></p> <p><i>This is an increase of \$235.90 per SUIP for CBD ratepayers and an increase of \$1.30 per SUIP for general ratepayers compared to what was proposed.</i></p> <p><i>This would increase CBD ratepayers' contribution by \$78.60 per SUIP and decrease general ratepayers' contribution by \$1.25 per SUIP compared to prior year's rates.</i></p>	None	None

Recommendation

87. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend retaining the Hanging Flower Baskets for the following reasons:
- There was community support to retain the Hanging Flower Baskets as a feature that is valued by the community and unique to this district.
88. In addition, there is an opportunity to adjust the funding split between CBD businesses and residential ratepayers and/or to retain the summer baskets only.
- A preferred option of 75% CBD ratepayer funding and 25% general ratepayer funding has been proposed.

New Zealand Glassworks

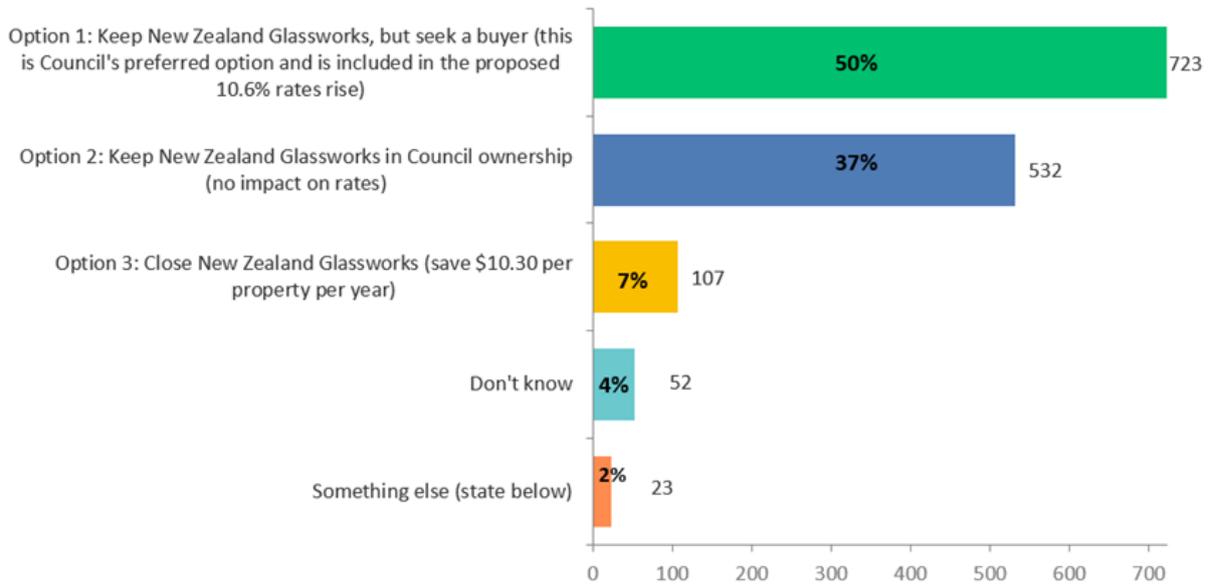
89. Te Whare Tuhua O Te Ao New Zealand Glassworks is a centre for art glass, located in Whanganui that has a rich history of glass spanning over 150 years.
90. The community was asked whether they would like to keep NZ Glassworks but seek a buyer, keep NZ Glassworks in council ownership, or close NZ Glassworks.

Options

91. The options provided for this question are as follows;
- **Option 1** – Keep New Zealand Glassworks, but seek a buyer (*preferred*).
 - **Option 2** – Keep New Zealand Glassworks in council ownership
 - **Option 3** - Close New Zealand Glassworks
 - Don't know
 - Something else

Community response

92. A total of 1437 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



93. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 321 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Keep New Zealand Glassworks, but seek a buyer (*preferred*).
 - (i) It's a tourist attraction that benefits our arts reputation; UNESCO city of design
 - (ii) Sell, not a core council responsibility
 - (iii) Needs to be run as a business and operate for profit
 - (iv) Seek buyer with conditions, primarily to retain Glassworks in Whanganui
 - (v) Maintain services for public enjoyment and education

- **Option 2** – Keep New Zealand Glassworks in council ownership
 - (i) Iconic Whanganui asset that must be retained locally
 - (1) Introduce donation box to offset rates/costs
 - (2) If sold, significant concern around negative impact to arts and cultural scene
 - (3) If sold, concern of loss of council autonomy and what the future would mean for the facility

- **Option 3** - Close New Zealand Glassworks
 - (i) Minority usage showcasing / not used by the majority of residents
 - (ii) Concerns come through of value for money
 - (iii) Price per use from community viewpoint (\$192,000 across 37,000 visitors)

- **Something else**
 - (i) Combination of options 1 and 2 i.e Option one, but if it doesn't work then option 2
 - (ii) User pays
 - (iii) Ways to ensure Council retain majority ownership but sell half the asset

Other considerations

94. Other information to highlight or take into consideration:

- Numerous responses were similar no matter which option was selected.
- There was a favour of keeping this asset in Whanganui and open to the public and to focus on user pays.
 - (i) **Officers Response** - There is a significant element of user pays already in the operation of the NZG: commission on sales in the gallery; income from workshops and events; and income from artists' hiring of the facility.
- There were varying viewpoints on the feasibility and viability of New Zealand Glassworks as a business
 - (i) **Officers Response** - There are further efficiency savings with opportunities to increase this revenue, including by increasing the number of workshops offered to the public.
- Whanganui & Partners have provided the following supporting information:

Central Government Funding

- (i) NZ Glassworks has begun to access central government funding to offer internships and residencies with the potential to grow this further.
- (ii) This funding is in large part because NZ Glassworks is a local government entity which is assuming an increasingly national role in the arts sector.
- (iii) Privatisation, especially to a commercial business model rather than an entity like a charitable trust, will make central government funding difficult to access.

Promotion of Whanganui

- NZ Glassworks plays a key role in promoting Whanganui and our key proposition – Whanganui is New Zealand's City of Design:
 - Connected to this is a perceived risk around any privatisation that could lead to:
 - Moving the facility out of Whanganui
 - The NZG proposition moving in a direction that may not allow for the current breadth of our use as far as tourism and promotion is concerned (e.g reduced focus on offering public workshops).

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Keep New Zealand Glassworks, but seek a buyer (base option)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
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.
Option 2: Keep New Zealand Glassworks in council ownership (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Add \$0 to what was proposed. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
Option 3: Close New Zealand Glassworks		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Save \$192,000 per year or \$10.30 per property per year from what was 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.

Recommendation

95. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend to keep the operations of the New Zealand Glassworks within Council, rather than seek a buyer, for the following reasons:

- The recent Infometrics report noted NZG supports \$485,000 of local spending, 5.4FTE local jobs and adds \$478,000 to Whanganui's GDP. As such there is a positive ratio of benefits compared to the cost to the ratepayer of \$192,000.
- Council has just appointed a new manager for NZG who has noted opportunities to increase revenue that will reduce the funding required from the ratepayer.
- NZG features prominently in Whanganui's marketing and status as City of Design; and is unique in New Zealand.
- Ensures NZG is retained in Whanganui to meet the council's wellbeing aims.

Drop off points for rural rubbish

96. 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 Kaurapaoa Valley.

97. The community was asked whether they would like to keep the drop off points for rural rubbish or close them.

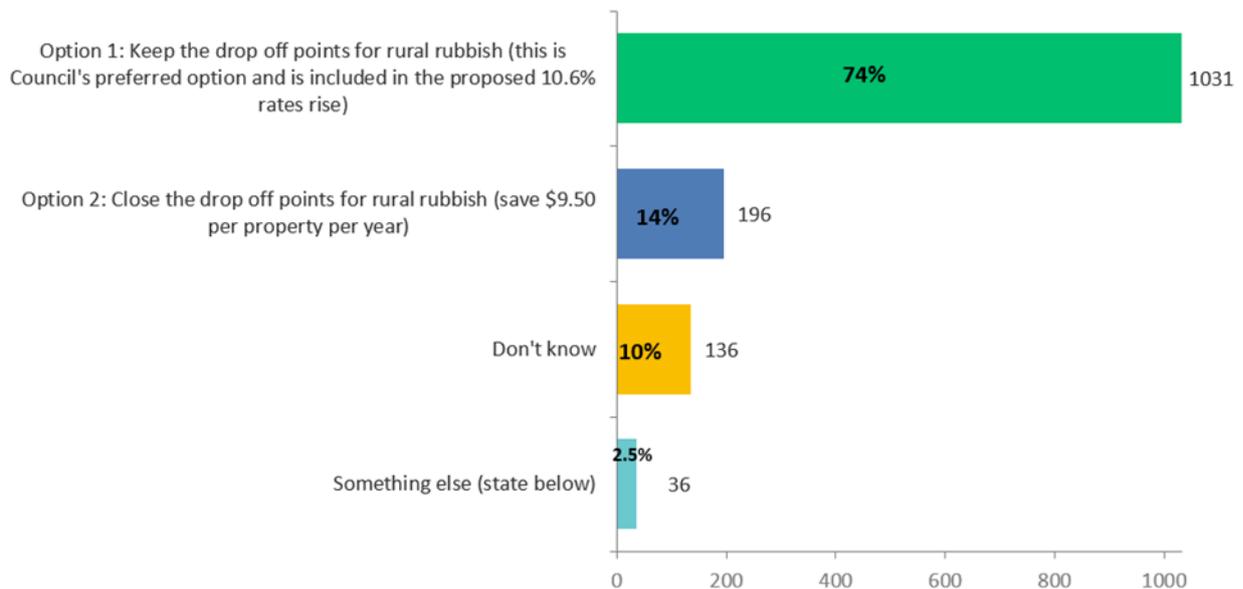
Options

98. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Keep the drop off points for rural rubbish (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Close the drop off points for rural rubbish
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

99. A total of 1399 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



100. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 260 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Keep the drop off points for rural rubbish (*preferred*).
 - (i) This is an essential service
 - (ii) Keep status quo to reduce fly tipping/ environment impacts if we were to stop this service
 - (iii) Could recycling be introduced for these areas?
 - (iv) Rural communities are a part of Whanganui therefore same opportunities should apply
 - (v) Tougher enforcement should be applied for illegal dumping at sites

- (vi) Some concern around the inconsistent approach to charges for rubbish collection – rural verses urban
- **Option 2** – Close the drop off points for rural rubbish
 - (i) User pays/rates parity for service
 - (ii) It's their responsibility to come into town and disregard their own rubbish
 - (iii) Tougher enforcement should be applied for illegal dumping at rural bin sites
- **Something else**
 - (i) Rates parity/levy for service
 - (ii) Users should pay for this service
 - (iii) Reduce collection frequency and number of drop off points

Stakeholder views

101. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Rural Community Board (Wells, D) selected option 1 and provided the following commentary *“Would like investigation into including these sites for recycling pickup.”*
- Ngāti Ruaka and Ngāti Hine hapū of Rānana Marae provided the following commentary *“we support the retention of rural rubbish drop off points, particularly in our hapū rohe and Tamaupoko tupuna rohe. These sites have certainly assisted in managing waste disposal and deterred dumping, which is harmful to our Awa and environment.”*

Other considerations

102. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- The greater portion supported keeping the rural rubbish service.
- There was an emphasis from some on not having enough detailed information provided in the consultation document about how the service is funded (i.e. if through a targeted or a general rate).
 - (i) **Officer Response** - The rural bin service is funded by the general rate and therefore by all ratepayers across the district.
- There was some support for retaining the service but making it user pays:
 - (i) **Officer Response** – There are challenges with making this service user pays due to the remote nature of the bin sites and the fact that the bin sites are open access and are not restricted to use by the local communities. The rural bin service is not an at-gate service. We know that people travel from outside the district boundaries (e.g. Rangitikei) and from other areas of the district to use the bins. There is no specific set of properties that the bins

service in order to identify ratepayers to charge a targeted rate. Bag stickers have been discussed but there is no way to police usage of the stickers and no way to stop people dropping rubbish off without bag stickers given the fact that the sites are very remote and are unattended.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Keep the drop off points for rural rubbish (base option) (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
Option 2: Close the drop off points for rural rubbish		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Save \$175,000 or \$9.50 per property per year from what was 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.

Recommendation

103. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend keeping rural rubbish collection for the following reasons:

- Ongoing community support to retain the service in its current form.
- There is a volume of illegal dumping and fly tipping in rural sites now with the service 'free' and cleared weekly/fortnightly – any change to the level of service will likely increase the illegal dumping.
- There is no practical alternative for charging via targeted rate or user pays.

The hours of operation of libraries – Gonville Library

104. Due to the number of library facilities and services Council offers, there is an opportunity to reduce this down to save on costs.

105. The community was asked whether they would like to reduce the hours of operation and/or close the Gonville Library.

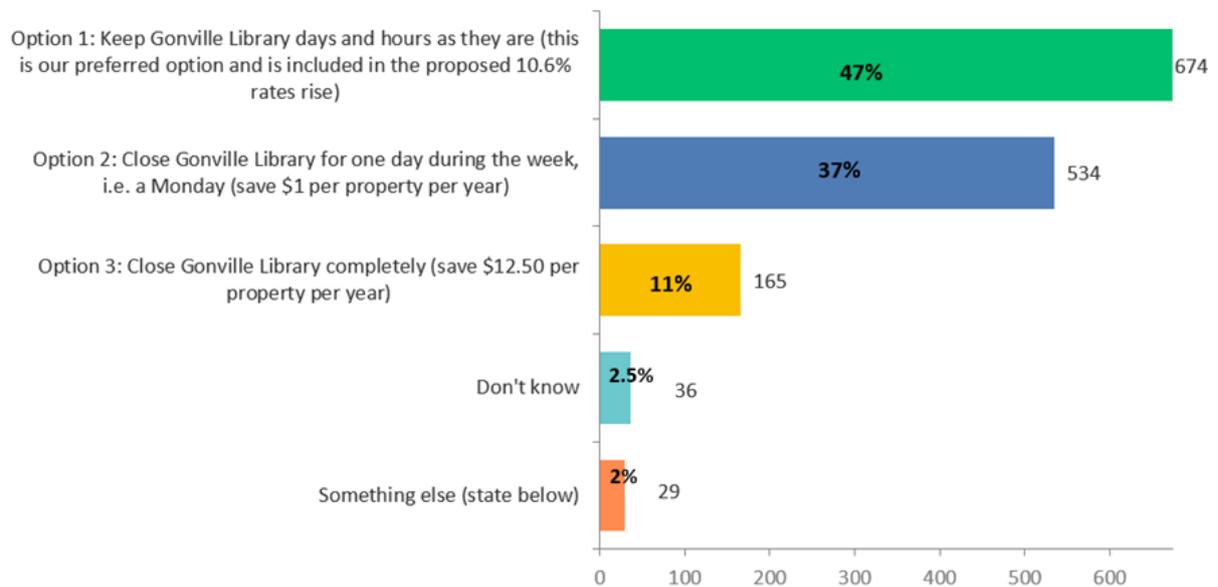
Options

106. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Keep Gonville Library days and hours as they are (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Close Gonville Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday
- **Option 3** - Close Gonville Library completely
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

107. A total of 1438 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option:



108. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 344 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows:

- **Option 1** – Keep Gonville Library days and hours as they are (*preferred*).
 - (i) This is a Community hub/asset/essential community service
 - (ii) This is a well-used community facility
 - (iii) Lower socio-economic area and there is a need access to information
 - (iv) Important to youth
 - (v) Important to elderly
 - (vi) Provides digital accessibility
 - (vii) Closing is not worth the savings
 - (viii) This will result in downstream impacts

- (ix) Don't lose spaces where you don't have to spend money (the library is free to visit)
- **Option 2** – Close Gonville Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday
 - (i) Close specifically on a weekday/specifically on a Monday
 - (ii) Close on a different day than the other libraries
 - (iii) Close on the same day as other libraries
 - (iv) Close only if there's low usage
 - (v) Close for two days instead of one
 - (vi) Ask staff/users of this facility
 - (vii) Have good transport into the town library
 - (viii) Rely on mobile libraries
 - (ix) Make it a temporary measure only
 - (x) Not needed 7 days a week (Note- Gonville is not open 7 days)
- **Option 3** - Close Gonville Library completely
 - (i) Cover this service with the library bus
 - (ii) Use the Davis library instead
 - (iii) Use digital books instead
 - (iv) Use public transport to access other libraries.
- **Something else**
 - (i) Other ideas were covered by submitters under the other options i.e. close on a different day to other libraries

Other considerations

109. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- People advocating for leaving the Gonville Library as-is were focused primarily on the value of the facility that didn't relate specifically to books. They focused on its use as a community centre, a hub for social activity, and a representative of services in a lower socio economic suburb. They had particular concerns about digital accessibility in Gonville, and emphasised the library as a place to access wifi and computers for job seeking, service access, and entertainment. They also pointed out the number of members of the Gonville community who cannot easily access the Davis library - such as people with mobility restrictions and those living in council's older persons' housing.
- Visits to Gonville Library in the year to 30 April 2024 totalled 52,644.

- Those who favoured closing the library for a day often also acknowledged the importance of Gonville Library as a community hub, and were split between those who thought (assuming the Davis library would also be closing for one day a week) it should be closed on the same day as Davis in order to keep a consistent policy, and those who thought it should be closed on a different day in order to ensure that there were still accessible libraries 7 days a week.
- Those who advocated for closing the Gonville Library altogether also primarily focused on a library as a place to check out and read books, and often advocated significant increases in other public services such as the library vans and public transport to increase the accessibility of the Davis library.
- Gonville Library has a far wider role than simply issuing books.
 - (i) The mobile library van is significantly smaller and carries far fewer books; and operates on a timetable three days per week.
 - (ii) Online books (via the ePukapuka consortium) are not a direct substitute for the physical collection.
 - The books are different to those on the shelves
 - The collection is smaller (84,000 items in total)
 - The collection is shared amongst more than 920,000 people across 22 local authorities
 - Access requires owning a suitable device and having internet access
 - (iii) Council renewed the lease on Gonville Library in August 2023 for a period of five years.
- As with the question around the Davis library, those who supported closing it (whether once a week or altogether) were more likely to be concerned with the value they personally felt they gained from the Gonville Library, while those who supported retaining or expanding it were more concerned with the benefits it offered others in the community, including unhoused and unemployed people, children, disabled people, and other marginalised groups.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Keep Gonville Library days and hours as they are (base option) (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
Option 2: Close Gonville Library for one day during the week, i.e. a Monday		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service

Save \$21,000 or \$1.00 per property per year from what was proposed.	None	This will impact on residents who can only access the library on a certain day of the week.
Option 3: Close Gonville Library completely		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Save \$230,000 or \$12.50 per property per year from what was 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.

Recommendation

110. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend keeping Gonville Library days and hours as they are for the following reasons:

- As noted above, Gonville Library is an important community hub in an underserved suburb that, like the other libraries, does much more than issue books.
- There is a clear community demand for the facility, with over 52,000 visits in the year to 30 April 2024.
- The impact of closing one day per week is disproportionate to the savings from so doing.

The Winter Gardens

111. 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.

112. The community was asked whether they would like to close the Winter Gardens or keep them open.

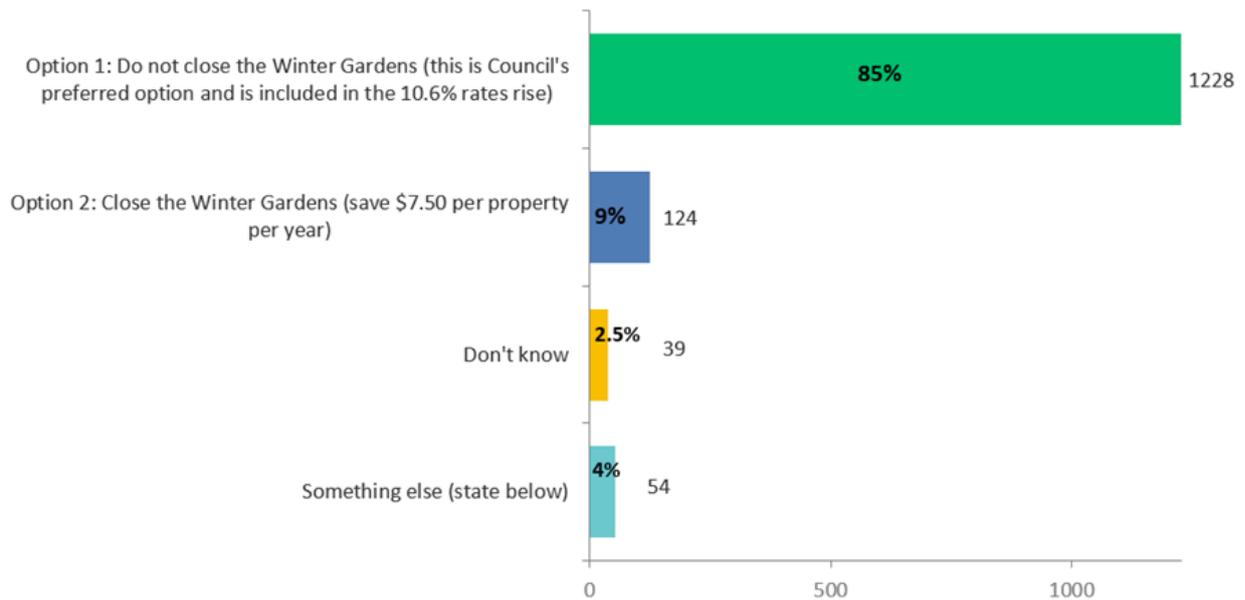
Options

113. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Do not close the Winter Gardens (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Close the Winter Gardens
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

114. A total of 1445 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option:



115. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 363 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows:

- **Option 1 – Do not close the Winter Gardens (*preferred*).**
 - (i) It's a key tourist attraction that brings enjoyment and visitors.
 - (ii) It is a free family-friendly venue that people of all ages can visit and enjoy regardless of the weather and it is accessible.
 - (iii) An asset to our community and improves overall wellbeing.
 - (iv) Iconic historical feature that is unique to Whanganui's heritage culture.

- **Option 2 – Close the Winter Gardens**
 - (i) The venue is unappealing and needs updating to remain relevant in attracting visitor interest.
 - (ii) Would rather the money spent on the operational costs went to maintaining other essential services.
 - (iii) Seek business support or consider selling to a private business to maintain this asset as ratepayers and the council should not be funding this.

- **Something else**
 - (i) Incorporate a user-pays structure and seek volunteers to maintain the gardens in order to lessen the operational costs and the burden on the rate payer who does not utilise this space enough.

- (ii) Consider reducing the days that the gardens are open to lower operational costs.

Key Stakeholder views

116. Key Stakeholder views include the following:

- Virginia Lake Trust Inc (Coxon, T.) - Option 1 was selected with the following commentary; “See previous comments re Aviary!”

Other considerations

117. Other information to highlight or take into consideration:

- Several submitters commented on the high operational costs and that the council should consider community volunteers and or business sponsorship to lower costs.
- Many submitters suggested introducing a ‘user pays fee’ to view the garden to offset some of the operational costs.
- Some submitters commented on the potential effect on the area for residents and tourism should the Winter Gardens, aviary and café close.
- Some submitters commented that the Winter Gardens are not up to an ‘attractive’ botanical standard and could do with some strategic planning to be more relevant for the cost.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Do not close the Winter Gardens (base option) (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise. No change in rates from prior year.	None	None
Option 2: Close the Winter Gardens		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Save \$140,000 per year or \$7.50 per property per year from what was proposed.	None	Loss of an all-year-round attraction available for community use in a premier park.

Recommendation

118. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend that council do not close Winter Gardens for the following reasons:

- The Winter Gardens are a highly valued and free facility
- There was strong community support to retain them
- It was noted if the Aviary is closing the Gardens should be maintained.

Level of community grant funding

119. 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.
120. The community was asked whether they would like to increase community grant funding, maintain or cut funding.

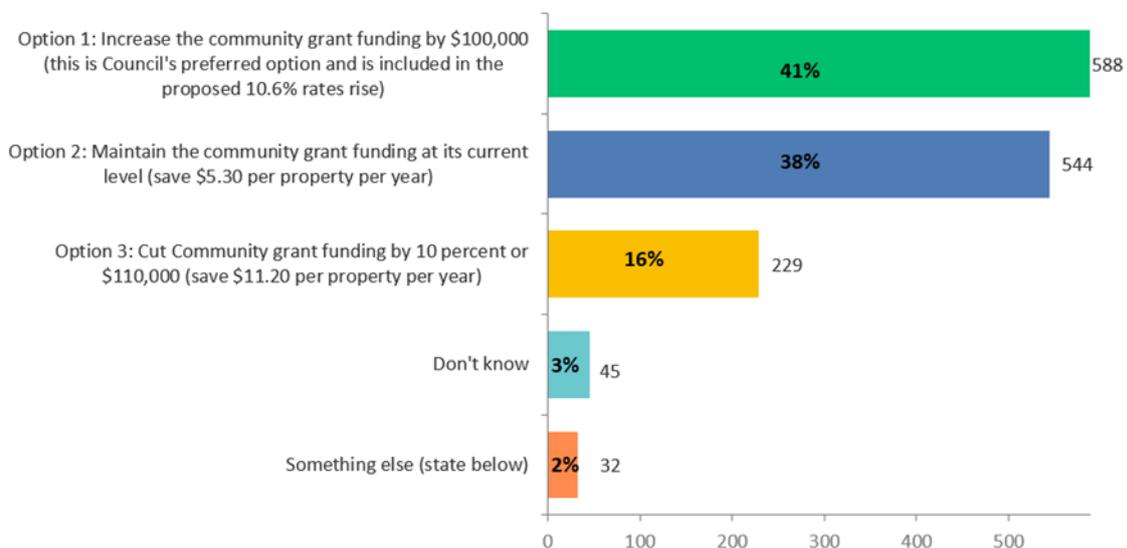
Options

121. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Increase the community grant funding by \$100,000 (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Maintain the community grant funding at its current level
- **Option 3** - Cut community grant funding by 10 percent or \$110,000
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

122. A total of 1438 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



123. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 282 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Increase the community grant funding by \$100,000 (*preferred*).
 - (i) Community grants are an important support mechanism that provides a lot of value. Many community groups rely on this funding source which allows them to continue supporting our community.
 - (ii) There are countless benefits to community-led initiatives which specifically enhances the wellbeing of our community. This current economic climate amplifies how important these support networks are.
 - (iii) Need to ensure that an efficient process is in place that provides targeted funding for groups who need it most and ensuring that they're using this funding effectively.
 - (iv) The scope of these funds should be broadened to allow more organisations to apply (Heritage, Arts & Cultural were specifically mentioned).
 - (v) Funding needs to keep up with the rate of inflation/increasing costs.

- **Option 2** – Maintain the community grant funding at its current level
 - (i) Due to this economic climate, we are not in a financial position to increase our community grant funding.
 - (ii) There is too much reliance on Council to provide funding. Community groups should aim to be self-sustaining or seek other sources for funding.
 - (iii) The process that sits behind the administration of this funding could be reviewed instead to ensure it's efficient and effective.
 - (iv) This could be revisited at a later date.

- **Option 3** - Cut community grant funding by 10 percent or \$110,000
 - (i) Due to this economic climate, we are not in a financial position to increase our community grant funding and we should consider reducing this amount.
 - (ii) Council should focus on our core functions as opposed to providing more funding which doesn't benefit all ratepayers.
 - (iii) There is too much reliance on Council to provide funding. Community groups should fundraise and seek other sources for funding.

- **Something else**
 - (i) Reduce the funding even further than the proposed \$100k, or cut the funding completely.
 - (ii) Increase the funding by a different amount than the proposed \$100k.

Other considerations

124. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A few submitters highlighted the disestablishment of the Youth Council, highlighting that funding for youth is important.
- A handful of submitters requested a list of those who currently receive grant funding. An attachment has been provided listing funds provided.
- A couple of comments noting that Central Government should provide support for such funding.
- Some submitters requested a list of those who currently receive grant funding. This will be shared as an attachment noting where there are line times and contestable funding.
- The Community Grants fund has not been increased since 2017/18, though some line item funding has an annual CPI adjustment.
- The Community Grants criteria was last reviewed in 2018. A full review will occur once the council’s overarching strategy work is completed.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Increase the community grant funding by \$100,000 (base option) (recommended)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
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.
Option 2: Maintain the community grant funding at its current level		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Save \$100,000 or \$5.30 per property per year from what was proposed.	None	None
Option 3: Cut community grant funding by 10 percent or \$110,000		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
Save \$210,000 or \$11.20 per property per year from what was proposed.	None	Reduction in services and events provided by council-funded community organisations.

Recommendation

125. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend increasing community grant funding by \$100,000 for the following reasons:

- It is part of the Council’s purpose under the local Government Act to enable the community to make decisions and take action for itself.

- Support has been received by the community to increase community grant funding.
- Community groups provide an important function to our district, which is considered by the community as even more important throughout these tough economic times.

Analysis and Advice – General comments for service cuts

126. The community was given the opportunity to offer final thoughts in relation to the service cuts.

Community response

127. A total of 250 submitters provided a comment.

128. Many responders used this question to list alternative suggestion or highlight where other service cuts could be made. These suggestions include;

- Reduce hours on services rather than cutting
- Reduce councillor numbers/ cap councillor salary/ expenses
- Reduce staff pay/ cut staff
- Reduce consultancy groups
- Reduce fleet
- Reduce maintenance standards
- Stop doing speed bumps/roading savings
- Don't do kerbside food scraps or kerbside recycling
- Cut Masters' Games
- Cut various council budgets or funds or programmes
- Cut community grant funding
- Cut spending on port and North Mole
- Sell land /sell harbour board land
- Cut spending on NZICP.

129. While a lot of people used this question to list other service cuts, a significant number of submitters also used this comment box to oppose service cuts for a wide variety of reasons, including:

- Retaining prominent draw cards that allow the Whanganui district to grow and flourish
- Retaining activities and services for families and for those who are poorer or unemployed
- Retaining activities for young people

- The need to continue to keep supporting economic growth during a crisis
- Adding to long-term financial and environmental resilience
- Concerns about the required future spending that may be prompted by keeping rates low now.

Officers Analysis

130. Many of the service cut comments fall into efficiency savings that have already been factored into the budget and there is already \$1m of efficiency savings in the budget.
131. In addition to this, the wages and salary budget has already been reduced by 6% as a savings target for the vacancy management programme, therefore cutting staff numbers is already included in the budget.
132. There was a balance between people who wanted service cuts and those who didn't want cuts/didn't want to lose services.
133. Officers will review the service cut suggestions and assess if any are feasible for future consultation or efficiency savings.

Analysis and Advice – Long-Term Investments

134. Long-term investments help to make our city more attractive, setting us up for financial stability over the long term. With a number of projects that we could invest in, we asked the community to help us decide which investments we should proceed with to enhance our district.

Funding of core infrastructure – roading, footpaths and three waters

135. Due to increased regulatory standards and inflation, costs for core infrastructure are increasing substantially. It was highlighted that a step change in the level of funding is required to maintain our roading, footpath and water networks.
136. The community was asked on the rate of funding they would like to allocate to our core infrastructure.

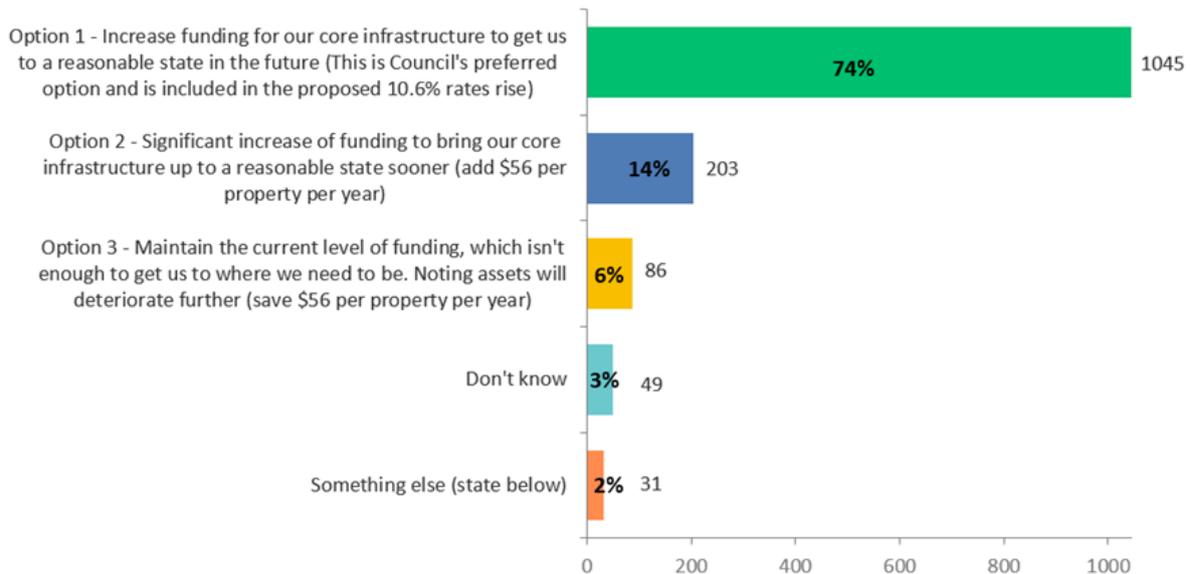
Options

137. The options provided for this question are as follows;
- **Option 1** – Increase funding for our core infrastructure to get us to a reasonable state in the future (*preferred*).
 - **Option 2** – Significant increase of funding to bring our core infrastructure up to a reasonable state sooner.
 - **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.

- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

138. A total of 1414 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



139. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 289 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Increase funding for our core infrastructure to get us to a reasonable state in the future (*preferred*).
 - Infrastructure is council's core business so should be prioritised.
 - Being proactive with our assets sets us up for the future/ puts us in a good position for growth and minimises future costs.
 - Rate of asset deterioration, inflation and impact of climate change mean we need to stay on top of this.
 - Health and safety – mostly relating to ensuring there is clean drinking water and footpath hazards that have led to accidents.
- **Option 2** – Significant increase of funding to bring our core infrastructure up to a reasonable state sooner.
 - The faster that core infrastructure is the prioritised, the less this will impact on Whanganui in future.

- (ii) Core infrastructure is a necessity, with long-term benefits if we are to maintain it properly and there will be consequences if we do not.
 - (i) Costs will continue to rise, therefore staying ahead of this will be better for us in the long-run and set us up for future.
- **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.
 - (i) Focus on our critical assets as opposed to other 'vanity' projects.
 - (ii) Complete the work properly the first time around and to high standards.
 - (iii) Hold contractors accountable where necessary.
 - **Something else**
 - (i) Agreement that there should be an increase, but proposed options are too expensive.

Key Stakeholder views

140. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Mainstreet Whanganui (Warahi, D) - selected option 1 and provided the following commentary *"Support growth in the city and district."*
- Whanganui Rural Community Board (Wells, D) - selected option 1 and provided the following commentary *"we are concerned the roading allocation is insufficient to maintain rural roads."*

Other considerations

141. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A lot of people specifically called out Wellington and their water issues and wanting the council to prioritise investment to avoid being put in that position ourselves.
- Mixed views on those who are for and others against funding for cycleways for various reasons.
- Multiple people throughout mentioned that speed bumps and judder bars were considered an unnecessary spend.

142. Since the consultation document was published officers have identified a number of additional drinking water, wastewater and stormwater projects that are needed to accommodate population growth and housing development. These will be delivered over the 10 years of the Long-Term Plan and beyond into the 30 year Infrastructure Strategy. This time phasing of the projects over coming years minimises the impact on

rates in the short term. The specific changes will be provided in the schedule of changes to be adopted.

143. In addition, officers recommend that, based on the feedback from the community, budgets for pipe replacements are also increased. This will better enable the Council to maintain the good condition of its water networks in order to avoid the problems of bursting pipes that have affected many other councils in New Zealand. Again, these increases are spread over the 10 years of the Long-Term Plan in order to minimise the impact on rates increases.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
Option 1: Increase funding for our core infrastructure to get us to a reasonable state in the future (base option)		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<p>Included in the proposed 10.6% rates rise.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Annual funding of our core infrastructure will increase by \$10.5 million per year or +\$560 per property per year by year 10.</p>	None	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.
Option 2: Significant increase of funding to bring our core infrastructure up to a reasonable state sooner		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<p>Add \$1.05 million or \$56 per property per year to what was proposed.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Annual funding of our core infrastructure will increase by \$10.5 million per year or +\$560 per property per year by year 5.</p>	None	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.
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 rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<p>Save \$1.05 million or \$56 per property per year to what was proposed.</p> <p>No changes in rates from prior year.</p>	None	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.
POST-CONSULTATION OPTIONS		
<i>Option 4: A larger, but not significant, increase of funding to bring our core infrastructure up to a reasonable state slightly sooner (recommended) i.e. between options 1 & 2.</i>		
Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on level of service
<p>No change to rates in year 1 compared to what was proposed.</p> <p>On average over the 10-year period, add \$0.45 million per year or \$24.10 per property per year to what was proposed.</p>	None	<p>A gradual improvement in the condition of our piped water networks, treatment plants, roads and footpaths over time. Increased investment in three waters to address long-term sustainability, increased requirements of the regulator and growth. 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.</p>

Recommendation

144. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend increased funding to core infrastructure (option 4) for the following reasons:

- There was overwhelming support from the community to increase funding for our core infrastructure.
- This is an essential service and the safe supply of water is critical.
- Some of the additional projects enable the Council to stay ahead of population growth as well as increases in drinking water safety standards expected to be implemented by the regulator.

Hotel and Carpark

145. To attract more events to the city, we identified through the 'Hotel Market Demand and Supply Report' supplied by Horwarth HTL Corporate, that more accommodation and parking is required, as the lack of places to stay and limited covered parking is currently hindering our ability to host large-scale events. Council proposed to take the lead with both of these projects by investing in the development of a suitable hotel and car parking facility.

146. The community was asked whether they would like Council to take the lead in this development, whether we should seek an operator or do nothing.

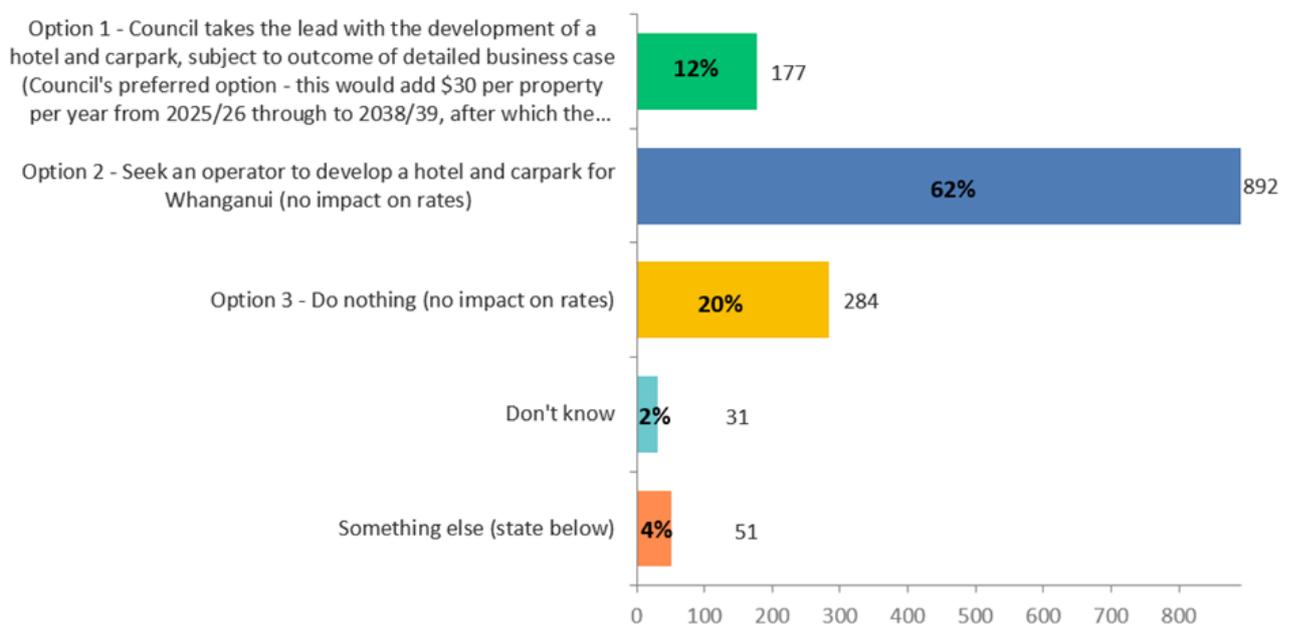
Options

147. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Whanganui District Council takes the lead with the development of a hotel and carpark, subject to the outcome of a detailed business case (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Seek an operator to develop a hotel and carpark for Whanganui.
- **Option 3** - Do nothing.
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

148. A total of 1435 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



149. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 541 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Whanganui District Council takes the lead with the development of a hotel and carpark, subject to the outcome of a detailed business case (*preferred*).
 - (i) The district needs more accommodation and car parking space and the current situation hinders our ability to host large-scale events.
 - (ii) This development will lead to positive impacts for Whanganui.
 - (iii) Council should proceed with caution and take the lead only if required to. Ensure that an external provider runs the operational management of the hotel facility.
 - (iv) Need to ensure that design specifications are aligned with the district's identity (e.g. heritage, culture and arts).

- (v) Ongoing maintenance is important to ensure this asset has longevity.

- **Option 2** – Seek an operator to develop a hotel and carpark for Whanganui.
 - (ii) General agreement that there is a need for more accommodation and car parking facilities, though this venture is not Council’s core purpose.
 - (iii) The development of a hotel and carpark should be left to the private sector as they have the knowledge and expertise required. If this was a viable opportunity, work would already be underway.
 - (iv) Council’s role should be to make it more viable by removing ‘red-tape’ which may be acting as a barrier.
 - (i) Stimulate tourism and growth in other ways that are more suited to Council’s remit, which may encourage private operators to invest further.
 - (ii) With the current economic environment, this is not affordable and ratepayers should not be burdened with this high cost proposal.
 - (iii) The risks are too high. Concerns about budget blow outs.
 - (iv) Concern with Council opting to close much loved facilities yet propose a venture like this which could work against its core purpose.
 - (v) Lack of confidence in Council’s ability to deliver the project.
 - (vi) Utilise and support existing accommodation facilities that are already available (including those for the flight school and emergency housing).
 - (vii) A few in this option were not convinced that a hotel or carpark are needed – wanted to see more evidence.

- **Option 3** - Do nothing.
 - (i) Similar responses to option 2 with the addition of:
 - (1) A hotel and carpark are not needed and would only prove useful when big events are in town, which is not often enough. Local accommodation providers are never at capacity and there’s a risk this may negatively impact these small businesses.
 - (2) Support the current accommodation providers in Whanganui instead.
 - (3) Lack of accommodation has been exacerbated by the Flight School’s usage of Collegiate Motor Inn.
 - (4) If appropriate facilities were provided for emergency housing, this would free up what’s already available for those visiting.

- **Something else**
 - (i) Proceed with the hotel, but a carpark is not necessary.

- (ii) Other suggestions for different hotel models such as boutique hotels/heritage hotel /apartment hotels etc.
- (iii) Need more evidence and research before proceeding.

Key Stakeholder views

150. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Business Whanganui (Garner, H) selected option 2 and provided the following commentary; *“From our member engagement and survey feedback 91.5% of respondents said they wanted WDC to identify a developer to fund and undertake these projects, regardless of how long it takes. They do not want these projects to be ratepayer funded.”*
- Mainstreet Whanganui (Warahi, D) selected option 2 and provided the following commentary; *“Mainstreet Whanganui supports a hotel in Whanganui preferred in or close to the CBD. And that a plan is developed for the hotel to work in collaboration with other businesses in the CBD to benefit all parties e.g. hospitality and retail. That there be a greater connection facilitated by the Council between accommodation, events/ conferences, tourism, and business. We have concerns that at the same time council is removing highly visible & relatively inexpensive items such as the hanging baskets, they are happy to spend an ill-defined amount on potentially encouraging someone else to set up a hotel. The savings from removing hanging and baskets and other preferred options will be absorbed by the first consultant’s report on the hotel. We comment on the Boutique Hotel models around the country, we see a range of Boutique hotel types that we believe would suit Whanganui CBD and the surrounding area examples can be seen in Hamilton and Napier. These models fit into the heritage environment of Whanganui and are more achievable.”*
- Womens Network (Donson, C) selected option 2 and provided the following commentary; *“We recognise the need to be ambitious and to identify ways to capitalise upon Whanganui’s unique assets - its culture, history and heritage; facilities; events; and environs. However, we believe that activating other partnerships are key to our ongoing development. Encouraging the development of local business and key stakeholder relationships remains important, as does our ability to engage with and attract external interest. We also want to ensure that we are developing in consideration of our unique identity which includes a recognition of our iwi partners in our bicultural heritage, the status of the awa, and our ability to be responsive to climate change through moving away from car-centric activities to those which encourage active and public transport initiatives.”*
- Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust (Ewing, M. A.) selected the option ‘something else’ and provided the following commentary; *“The Trust is concerned there is very little information about the impact of the hotel and car park. If it’s in the center of the town, we would be concerned about the impact on heritage and character of the center. The height of the building could be out of character and dimension to the other buildings, there might be risk of*

demolition to existing heritage and the design may clash with existing heritage character.”

- Lazelle, M – selected option 3 and provided the following commentary; *“I was the financial controller of the company that built the 220 room Park Royal Hotel (now Intercontinental) in Wellington. The hotel proposed by Council is effectively a small boutique (code for expensive) hotel. Hotels need to have scale to support the full range of services that customers expect. Any hotel would need to have a management arrangement with a national chain in order to link with other centres. The manager gets all operational costs covered as well as a fee. The Building owner gets the residual, if any. Hotel ownership (as opposed to management) is a risky proposition. In the case of the Wellington Park Royal it costs \$220m to build, was sold soon after completion to National Provident fund for less than \$100m and has passed through various owners with the current owner having acquired it for \$50m before undertaking a major renovation in 2013. New builds might work in major centres, but they work better once the value has been significantly eroded. Spending \$32m on a hotel in a small regional community like Whanganui is a reckless waste of ratepayers money. It is aimed at the wrong market – visitors to Whanganui for sporting events, arts trail & masters games, need motel-type accommodation in a price range of \$125 to \$175. A 60 bed boutique hotel will do nothing to alleviate the problem. Council is already part of the problem – Council’s purchase of Collegiate motel and the former St Georges premises took viable accommodation options off the table.”*

Other considerations

151. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- In almost all options, submitters made reference to the Flight school and other accommodation which is no longer available.
- A handful of references were made to a situation which happened in Lower Hutt and to ensure we are aware of the lessons they had learned.
- A few people stated that they’d prefer a focus on public transport than carparks.
- Focus on CBD revitalisation rather than the Hotel.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
<i>Option 1: Whanganui District Council takes the lead with the development of a hotel and carpark, subject to the outcome of a detailed business case (base option)</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$55 million</i>	\$30 per property per year from 2025/26 through to 2038/39, after which the returns from the hotel and	\$55 million	Hotel and carpark owned by council will increase accommodation and parking options. More events will likely be hosted

	carpark will start to offset rates.		within the district as a result.
Option 2: Seek an operator to develop a hotel and carpark for Whanganui (recommended)			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
Retain \$200,000 in year 1 to progress the hotel feasibility study Save \$55 million from what was proposed	Save \$30 per property per year from 2025/26 through to 2038/39, and miss out on projected returns to offset rates beyond.	Save \$55 million	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.
Option 3: Do nothing			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
Save \$55 million from what was proposed	Save \$30 per property per year from 2025/26 through to 2038/39, and miss out on projected returns to offset rates beyond.	Save \$55 million	Limited events within the district due to limited accommodation and parking options.

Recommendation

152. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend seek a private operator to develop hotel and carpark for the following reasons:

- The direction given by the community is clearly opposed to the Council taking the lead in the development of a hotel.

153. Officers propose retaining \$200,000 of funding in year 1 to progress the feasibility study to demonstrate the business case for a hotel in Whanganui. This will assist Council with attracting potential private hotel developers to the city.

Royal Whanganui Opera House

154. The Royal Whanganui Opera House (RWOH) has seen a lot of love over the years, yet there are aspects of the building that no longer meet requirements. Significant investment is required to attract and retain touring and community shows. Council is proposing to undertake the upgrades that are required.

155. The community was asked whether they would like Council to proceed with the upgrades proposed, which have been scaled up from doing nothing to a full upgrade.

Options

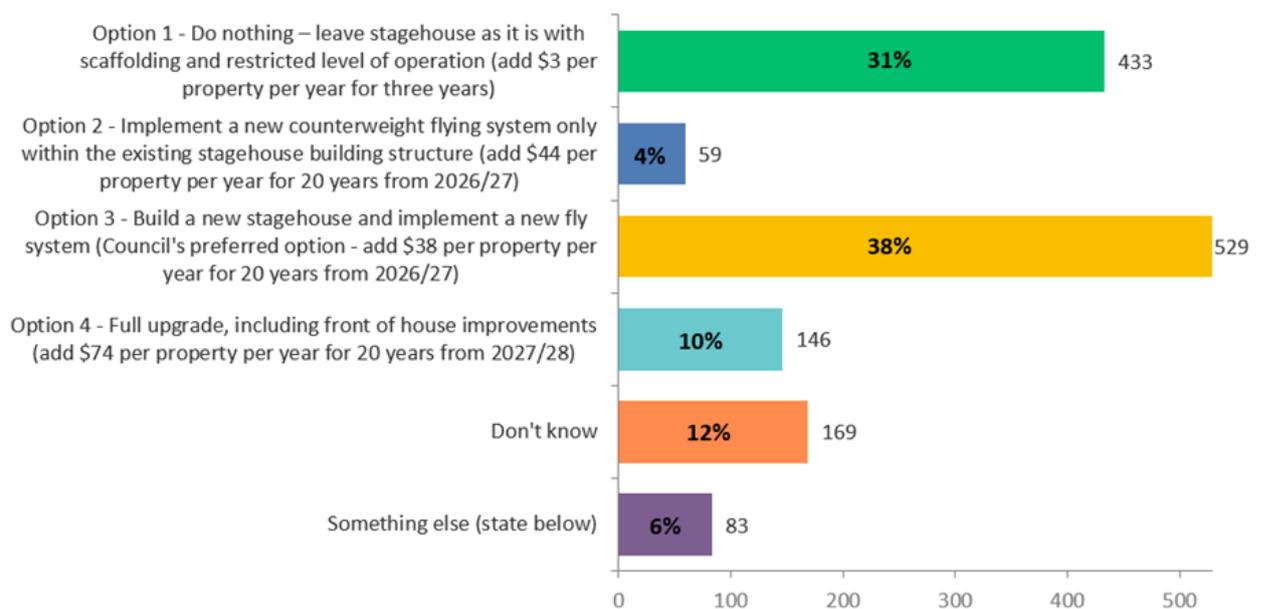
156. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Do nothing – leave stagehouse as it is with scaffolding and restricted level of operation.

- **Option 2** – Implement a new counterweight flying system only within the existing stagehouse building structure.
- **Option 3** - Build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system (*preferred*).
- **Option 4** - Full upgrade, including front of house improvements
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

157. A total of 1419 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



158. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 386 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Do nothing – leave stagehouse as it is with scaffolding and restricted level of operation.
 - This is an unnecessary expenditure as the theatre operates fine as it is. Seen to be a 'nice-to-have' rather than a must.
 - This upgrade can be delayed to a later date once the economic environment improves.
 - Try to source funding from external providers (donations, grants, philanthropists, benefactor, sponsorship etc.).
 - This is too costly and the quotes themselves are highly unreasonable.

- Due to limited number of seats and the limited types of shows, we will not achieve ROI for this upgrade.
 - For larger shows, people are willing to travel to other venues (specifically Palmerston North).
- **Option 2** – Implement a new counterweight flying system only within the existing stagehouse building structure.
 - Larger venues are not too far away and we should not be competing with such venues. Instead, recognise its heritage and maintain its uniqueness as a point of difference.
 - Necessary upgrades only should be made to keep it operating.
- **Option 3** - Build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system (*preferred*).
 - The opera house is an iconic building and needs to be preserved for future generations to enjoy. Its historic and cultural values must be maintained and celebrated.
 - These upgrades are necessary to ensure the facility operates as it should which will attract more performers to our district and encourage people to attend shows.
 - It's important that funding is achieved, and additional funding opportunities are explored to minimise costs to ratepayers.
 - Possibility to proceed with option 3, then scale it up to option 4 if it's feasible.
- **Option 4** - Full upgrade, including front of house improvements
 - If you're going to make an investment, do it once and do it properly.
 - This heritage building is important to Whanganui's culture and needs to be recognised properly as an icon to the district and respected as such.
 - The full upgrade will help to attract touring shows and performances alongside enticing people to purchase tickets and attend more events.
- **Something else**
 - Incorporate a user-pays structure both from the shows touring and frequent users.
 - Try to source funding from external providers (donations, grants, philanthropists, benefactor etc.).
 - Address the main issues only, particularly health and safety.

- Remove the burden by demolishing the building, selling the asset or closing it down completely.
- Focus on retaining the heritage elements – ‘old pulleys’ need to preserve these.

Key Stakeholder views

159. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Amdram Theatre President (Dack, G) selected option 3 and provided the following commentary - *“this building has stood for 125 years and is a symbol of our cultural heritage... It is a place of inspiration...with the current restrictions in place decisions need to be made to bring this grand old lady back to life... An upgrade to a more modern side stage counterweight system would bring back and provide many of the lost technical benefits back to ourselves and other touring productions. Option 3 is the minimum improvement required. These changes allow for the important side stage space and ability to fly scenery. Option does require change to back roof line which won’t require change to front of the façade these changes will attract a wider range of professional touring acts benefitting the community both economically and holistically a vibrant arts scene is not a luxury it is actually a powerful economic driver. By investing in the RWOH you are investing in the social fabric of our city, preserving a space for creativity, expression and connection. Investing in the RWOH is not an expense it is a investment in our identity and places real value on this city’s history.”*
- Brass Whanganui Musical Director (Jellyman, B) selected option 3 and provided the following commentary; *“For the events that I am involved in, all community based projects with community related outcomes, the theatre will need to have a fully functioning fly floor, basic lighting in theatre, good sound reinforcement in theatre and space at the sides of the stage area along with dressing rooms. The current stage with the scaffold support has restricted the stage area to an extent that I can’t use it for some of my productions though the current lighting is adequate and the sound reinforcement is good. The existing stage without the scaffold is better for my purposes but still limiting with regards to space. The toilets and dressing are oddly positioned to the stage and are sometimes problematic. Option 3 of the plan seems to provide for these problems solution and that is what I would recommend. There are a number of theatres to which the stage has been rebuilt to do exactly the we need to do. Hasting Municipal Theatre (Toitoti) and the Rotorua theatre (Howard Morison Centre) are worth a look at. Generally Whanganui is quite poorly off for theatre space that works. So the maintenance of the Opera House as the main facility is very important especially if the theatre is designed to be a flexible space available for multi-disciplined events.”*
- NZ Opera School, NZ Opera Foundation Trust (Trott, D) selected option 3 and provided the following commentary; *“ideally, option three for now! Having been involved with the RWOH all my life, the stage wings have always been a problem but not insurmountable. To undertake the work suggested it would certainly*

enhance the stage and fly system for the next 20 years. The RWOH is a gem. It is warmly appreciated by visitors from Auckland, Wellington.”

- Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Central Region Area Manager (Raymond, D) did not select an option, but provided the following commentary; *“The Royal Whanganui Opera House is granted the status of Historic Place Category 1 in the New Zealand Heritage List / Rārangī Kōrero. The Whanganui District Council has nominated the building as a Class A heritage in its revised Heritage List. The Council is responsible for the maintenance and upgrade of the building to comply with the New Zealand Building Code. Heritage New Zealand encourages the Council to maintain and upgrade the existing stagehouse building structure which would provide a positive outcome for Whanganui’s heritage character. In the 2024-2034 Whanganui Long Term Plan, Heritage New Zealand is supportive of the Council implementing either Option Two or Option Three as both the options would be associated with positive heritage values. Option Two would retain the building exterior and the building interior as identified in the heritage features and assessments in the Draft Conservation Report by Bruce Dickson Architecture (2004). 1 Option Two, would retain the built form of the entire heritage building while maintaining more of the heritage fabric of the original structure. Option Three would involve partial demolition of the building while still retaining much of the heritage features of the built form while also improving the functionality and vitality of the Opera House, by enabling varied types of performances. Heritage New Zealand recommends that a conservation architect is involved for both Option Two and Option Three in order to mitigate any impacts on the heritage values of the Opera House, so that the Opera House is retained and enjoyed by future generations. Both options would enhance Whanganui’s heritage character and align with the vision of the Heritage Strategy for Whanganui to be a district that values, protects and promotes its historic heritage.”*
- Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust (Ewing, M. A.) selected the option ‘something else’ and provided the following commentary; *“We believe further investigation into keeping the existing theatre building but enhancing its capability needs to be exhausted before either Option 2 or 3 are seriously considered. We are concerned the community cannot utilise the expanded theatre to the extent the cost of Option 2 & 3 will cost. The building is what it is and has other limitations throughout the building which are self limiting and will always be an issue unless Option 4 is approved and then you might as well build a new building.”*
- Friends of the Opera House – a group submission was not made but multiple individual submissions from various Friends - some were in support of option 3 while others felt they did not want any upgrades and for the theatre to remain as is.

Other considerations

160. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- General confusion on the fly-system, why it's necessary and the impact it will have.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - A fly system is required in a theatre to support a range of production items including but not limited to stage curtains, scenery, artistic cloths, digital screens, lights, sound equipment, props. Some of these items can weight up to 400kg. A handline system can no longer manage the kind of weights that shows require and therefore restricts the type of shows potentially wanting to tour to Whanganui. Other suggestions, such as the hemp rope system are not a viable solution.
- It was questioned quite a few times whether this facility will ever receive the ROI due to the limited number of seats.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - Seat numbers are not the issue - RWOH has more seats that Gisborne and only slightly less than ToiToi, Napier and Rotorua.
- A couple of suggestions stating that a broader review of the pricing models for both performers and visitors is needed.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - There are two venue rates for fees and charges - Community and Private. The Community rate provides a 20% discount on the private rate.
- References were made to recent renovations and questioning any additional spend.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - The last renovation that was done was to bring the building to a level that met earthquake strengthening standards. Operating systems such as the flying system were not addressed as part of this.
- A handful of comments specifically highlighting the flawed heating/ventilation system and the inadequate sizing of seats.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - There are issues with the heating and cooling available at the RWOH. To heat the building in winter gas heaters need to be left on for 2-3 days and run 24/7 to generate any kind of warmth in the building. In summer the building is incredibly hot with no cooling apart from vents which only allow air from outside to come in which is generally hot. These issues are only addressed in Option 4.
- There was some confusion between options 2 & 3 and the impact on rates.
 - (i) **Officer Response** - This is because option 3 has the higher level of upgrade and therefore could attract a higher level of external funding. The better the end product the more opportunities there are for external funding. There will need to be a commitment from Council to proceed in order seek other funding sources.
- References to the Repertory Theatre were made. A couple highlighting that if the Repertory was to close, they'd like to see more work being done to improve the Opera House.

- The Sarjeant Gallery was mentioned a few times for comparison, both in a positive and negative way. Positive relates to its iconic status, negative relates to the cost escalations.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
<i>Option 1: Do nothing – leave stagehouse as it is with scaffolding and restricted level of operation</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$150,000 to purchase scaffolding</i>	<i>\$3 per property per year for three years from 2024/25</i>	<i>\$150,000</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •purchase of temporary scaffold structure •completes work on health and safety issues identified •retains the existing scaffold structure within existing stagehouse (no flying system) •establishes the loading capacity of the scaffold structure within existing stagehouse •retains existing theatrical systems infrastructure
<i>Option 2: Implement a new counterweight flying system only within the existing stagehouse building structure</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$14.7 million with \$4.4 million of this assumed to come from external funding sources (e.g. grants)</i>	<i>\$44 per property per year for 20 years from 2026/27</i>	<i>\$10.3 million</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •purchase of temporary scaffold structure •completes work on health and safety issues identified •retains the existing stagehouse external envelope •provides new foundations and structure within the existing envelope to support flying system •provides vapour barrier, insulation and wall lining to stagehouse •provides new counterweight flying system with 51 line sets •retains existing theatrical systems infrastructure – modified to suit introduction of new flying system.
<i>Option 3: Build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system (base option) (preferred)</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$17.8 million with \$8.9 million of this assumed to</i>	<i>\$38 per property per year for 20 years from 2026/27</i>	<i>\$8.9 million</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •purchase of temporary scaffold structure •completes work on health and safety issues identified

<i>come from external funding sources (e.g. grants)</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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.
Option 4: Full upgrade, including front of house improvements			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$34.7 million with \$17.3 million of this assumed to come from external funding sources (e.g. grants)</i>	\$74 per property per year for 20 years from 2027/28	\$17.3 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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.

Recommendation

161. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend build a new stagehouse and implement a new fly system, for the following reasons:
- The community were most in favour of this option
 - It provides a fly system that is well utilised across New Zealand and can therefore be easily maintained, serviced and operated.
162. Noting that the project will only proceed after a full business case has been produced and external funding secured.
163. An engagement programme will also take place with key stakeholders throughout the development of the detailed business case process.
164. Until the business case is completed, reporting will come to the Operations & Performance Committee and subsequently to Council for approval before anything progresses.

Marae Development

165. 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. Council is proposing to continue providing funding to Marae from 2028 once access to the “Better Off Funding” provided by Central Government ceases.

166. The community was asked whether they would like Council to provide grant funding to Marae.

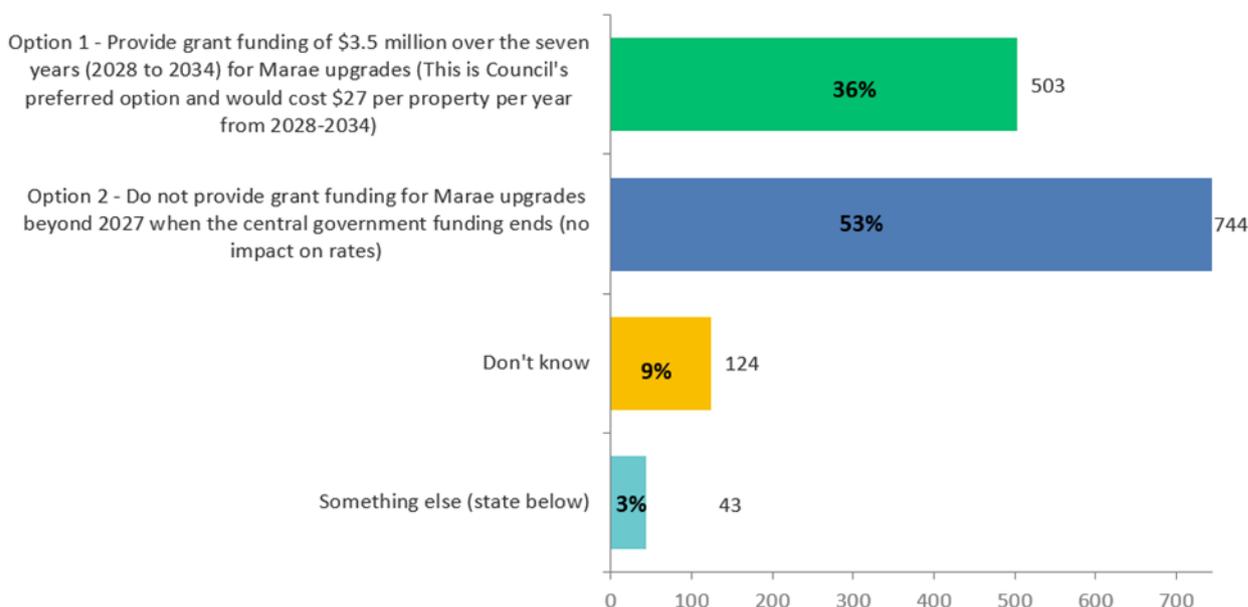
Options

167. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Provide grant funding of \$3.5 million over the seven years (2028 to 2034) for Marae upgrades (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Do not provide grant funding for Marae upgrades beyond 2027 when the central government funding ends.
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

168. A total of 1414 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



169. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 366 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Provide grant funding of \$3.5 million over the seven years (2028 to 2034) for Marae upgrades (*preferred*).
 - (i) Marae play a vital role in emergencies for the whole community.

- (ii) Marae are important cultural and community hubs. Broader than emergency management.
 - (iii) Investing in Marae is important for everyone.
 - (iv) Central government should be funding, but if there's a gap Council should work with others to fill it.
 - (v) Marae host a range of functions important to community wellbeing – Te Ao Hou Marae examples.
- **Option 2** – Do not provide grant funding for Marae upgrades beyond 2027 when the central government funding ends.
 - (i) Marae should be funded by central government.
 - (ii) It is not ratepayer's responsibility to pay for Marae.
 - (iii) Iwi should pay for Marae with Treaty Settlement Claim funds.
 - (iv) Marae should be treated the same as any other community centre/organisation that has to provide their own funding.
 - **Something else**
 - (i) Look for other funding options and partnerships.
 - (ii) The funding should be given to all places that provide emergency event services.
 - (iii) Fund but provide a smaller amount.

Hapū & Key Stakeholder views

170. Hapū and Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- H.K Ranginui Whanau Trust provided the following commentary: *“We support the proposed marae development funding initiative. It is long overdue, and we have observed similar initiatives in other parts of the country. Marae are central to hapu and rural communities, and need to be supported in similar ways to other community and emergency centres. We would also support increasing the fund and level of investment before 2034.”*
- Kauangaroa Marae (Smith, P.) provided the following commentary: *“We strongly encourage support increasing the Marae funding and level of investment during the 2024- 2034 term. For example, \$500,000 from years 4-10 is a really small pool of funding for the near 20 marae to apply for. This will inevitably lead to marae competing for funding and some losing out. Not to mention zero funding allocated for the next immediate 3 years.”*
- Nga Tangata Tiaki o Whanganui (Tuaine, N.) provided the following commentary: *“Marae are also economic contributors to their communities every time a hui or tangi is hosted at a marae they investment anything from \$1000 to \$5000 back*

into the community through the purchasing goods and services. The economic contribution of Marae is not noted in the commentary. We congratulate the Council for including Marae Development. As noted before there are other organisations that contribute to Marae Development and we commend the grant funding from 2028. We believe if the Council partners with other organisations who also give to Marae would achieve greater efficiencies and lead to savings for the rate payers.”

- Te Ao Hou Marae (Hipango, G) provided the following commentary: *“Marae are not just the buildings in isolation, they are connected and located within communities we reside in” and “Marae have contributed significantly to economy and social cohesion and this will only get stronger inclusive of tourism and narratives from tribal perspective. Te Awa Tupua and Te Heke Ngahuru Strategy which commits WDC and hapuu to a shared future pathway of development that will benefit Whanganui.”*
- Te Paku o te Rangi – Collective Marae View (Waitokia, T.) stated that *“having Marae Development funding within the Long term plan supports hapori/community wellbeing” and “Our Marae are our papakainga, they are our original homes, they are our home base, villages that are built on our whenua.”*

Other considerations

171. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A number of letters of support were received from Marae and Hapū representatives. These letters provide numerous examples of the social, cultural and economic value Marae provide to community, including as a:
 - (i) gathering place for tangihanga, hui, waananga, language revitalisation, international visitors and exhibitions. Marae also play a key role in hosting community groups, events and services,
 - (ii) place of refuge – functioning as civil defence centres in times of need, and as a;
 - (iii) place where Māori values and culture can be fully expressed and which fosters identity and pride.
- Marae are also the site of original homes, built on the whenua and connected to the communities they reside within – encompassing kohanga reo, kura kaupapa, churches, kaumatua flats and cemeteries.

172. Of note, Council do not fund Urupa, but fund cemeteries generally in the district.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
Option 1: Provide grant funding of \$3.5 million over the seven years (2028 to 2034) for Marae upgrades (base option) (recommended)			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$0.5 million per year</i>	There is no impact on rates in the next three years. \$27 per property per year from 2028 - 2034.	\$0	Marae, Iwi and Hapū are stronger partners for responding to civil defence emergency events. Marae can better support community social wellbeing.
Option 2: Do not provide grant funding for Marae upgrades beyond 2027 when the central government funding ends			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>Save \$0.5 million per year from 2027/28 to 2033/34 compared to what was proposed</i>	Save \$27 per property per year from 2028 – 2034 compared to what was proposed	Save \$0 compared to what was proposed	No improvement to current levels of service.

Recommendation

173. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend providing grant funding for Marae upgrades for the following reasons:

- The important role Marae play in civil defence, community development, and rural connectivity – amongst other important roles into the wider community.
- Funding does not commence until year 4 of the Long Term Plan so any impact on rates will not occur until the current cost of living issues are hopefully abated.
- Approximately 27% of the Whanganui population identify a Māori, many of whom pay rates. Compared to the Council’s investment into New Zealand/European heritage, arts and other cultural facilities, the investment into comparable Māori facilities is disproportionately small.

Surf Lifesaving Service

166. The current lifesaving facility used by The Whanganui Surf Lifeguard Service Inc (WSLS) is at its end of its serviceable life and is a considerable barrier to training and development of lifesaving members. The ability to facilitate critical water safety

programmes is also significantly compromised. Council is proposing to provide funding of \$1 million to WSLs as contribution towards an upgrade to their facilities.

167. The community was asked whether they would like Council to provide funding to WSLs.

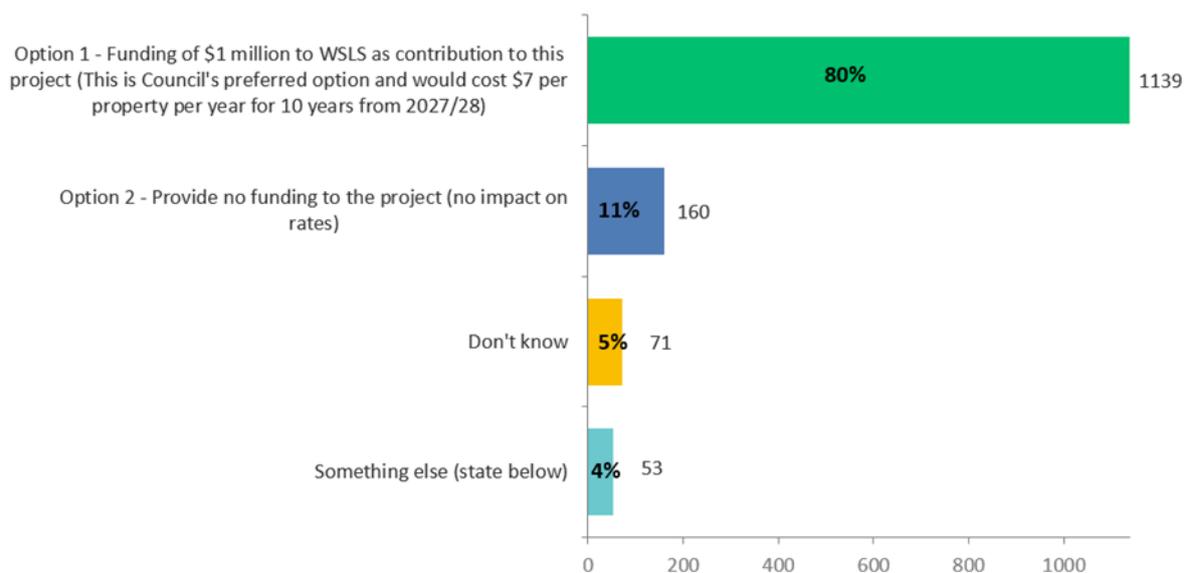
Options

168. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Funding of \$1 million to WSLs as contribution to this project. WSLs will seek the remainder from other sources (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Provide no funding to the project.
- Don't know
- Something else

Survey response

169. A total of 1423 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



170. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 309 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Funding of \$1 million to WSLs as contribution to this project. WSLs will seek the remainder from other sources (*Preferred*).
 - (i) This is an essential lifesaving service for the community.
 - (ii) There are opportunities to incorporate other amenities into the new building.

- (iii) Support the investment but still encourage research into other funding sources.
- (iv) The Club is important for youth development/ broader outcomes they provide.
- **Option 2** – Provide no funding to the project (no impact on rates)
 - (i) Central government should be funding this.
 - (ii) It's not ratepayer's role to fund this.
 - (iii) The Club should fundraise for the whole cost – seek private sector funding.
- **Something else**
 - (i) Give a smaller amount towards a cheaper building.
 - (ii) Do maintenance on the existing building rather than build a new one.
 - (iii) Support the Club to apply for funding from other sources.

Key Stakeholder views

171. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Newell, M (a representative from the Surf Lifesaving Club) – selected option 1 and provided the following commentary *“More funding should be contributed - at least \$2million. Funding needs to be brought up to 2025, this will give support and security to the WSLs to gain external funding and kickstart the project”*.
- Newell, J (a representative from the Surf Lifesaving Club) presented at hearings and noted that:
 - (i) the building needs to be able to handle a new generation of junior surf clubs; and the new building needs to survive at least another 50-70 years,
 - (ii) there were 35,000 patrons last year on the beach,
 - (iii) The club has confidence it will be able to raise the additional funding but requires the Council's funding as a foundation for the project.

Other considerations

172. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A number of questions were received about other sources of funding and who is responsible to fund it (ratepayers, central government, the Club to fundraise for themselves).
- Questions were raised about the cost and if there is an option to build a cheaper building.
- This was a community led initiative that was submitted through the Point of Entry Business Case process by WSLs.

- Council staff will work closely with the community and Hapū to ensure there is alignment between projects at the coast including the Duncan Pavilion and coastal restoration projects.
- Council staff will also work with the WSLs to understand how the recent central government announcement for additional funding for surf clubs will impact on the local club if at all.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
<i>Option 1: Funding of \$1 million to WSLs as contribution to this project in 2027/28. WSLs will seek the remainder from other sources (base option)</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$1 million in 2027/28</i>	<i>\$7 per property per year for 10 years from 2027/28</i>	<i>\$1 million</i>	<i>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.</i>
<i>Option 2: Provide no funding to the project</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0 per property</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>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.</i>
POST-CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
<i>Option 3: Funding of \$1 million to WSLs as contribution to this project to be brought forward by one year to 2026/27. WSLs will seek the remainder from other sources (recommended)</i>			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
<i>\$1 million in 2026/27</i>	<i>\$7 per property per year for 10 years from 2026/27</i>	<i>\$1 million</i>	<i>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.</i>

Recommendation

173. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend providing funding to WSLs in year 3 (previously in year 4) for the following reasons:

- The community was strongly in favour of providing funding to the WSLs, although it has been highlighted by WSLs that they would need the funding earlier than what was proposed in the draft LTP.
- Noting that the WSLs will still need to raise the remaining estimated \$4-\$5million required.
- Noting that the desire is to see the surf club function as a broader community facility.

Pākaitore paving and crossing

174. Pākaitore Reserve is a significant historic site. Council is proposing to construct a new raised pavement crossing between Pākaitore and the awa based on a proposal that was originally put forward in 2014.

175. The community was asked whether they would like Council to construct this raised pavement crossing.

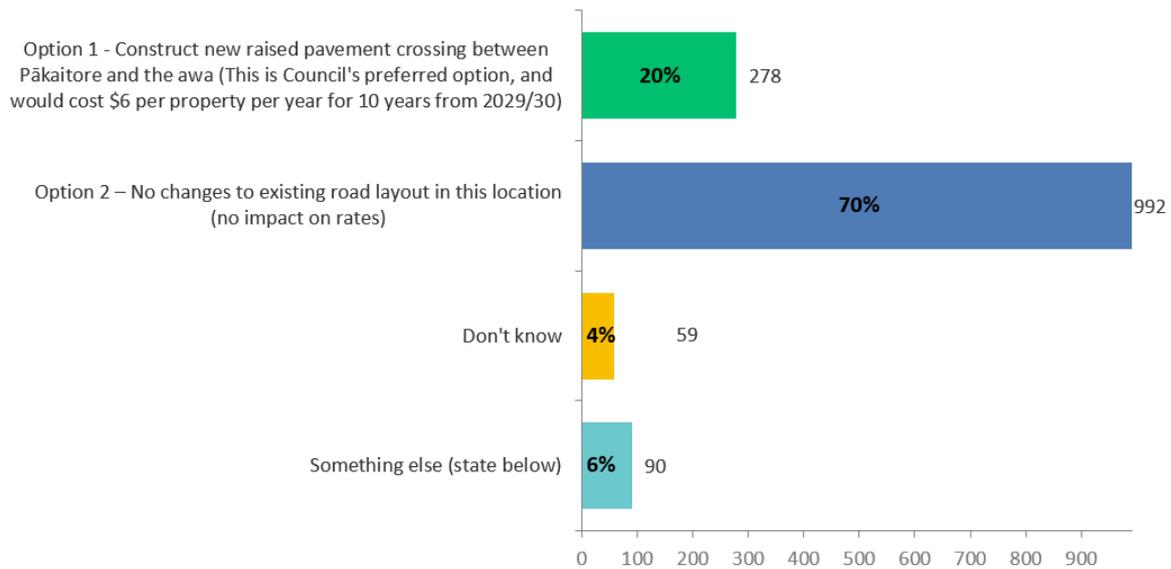
Options

176. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Construct new raised pavement crossing between Pākaitore and the awa (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – No changes to existing road layout in this location.
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

177. A total of 1419 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



178. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 463 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Construct new raised pavement crossing between Pākaitore and the awa (*Preferred*).
 - (i) Road safety/traffic reduction.
 - (ii) Honouring the site’s significance and link to the Awa.
 - (iii) Convenience/ positive for pedestrians.
 - (iv) Tourism opportunity.
 - (v) For those who wanted the pavement they still felt the cost was too high.

- **Option 2** – No changes to existing road layout in this location.
 - (i) Costs are too high
 - (ii) Unnecessary, not a high use area to justify money.
 - (iii) Too elaborate/too costly.
 - (iv) Install a regular pedestrian crossing instead.
 - (v) Will make it challenging for trucks.
 - (vi) Too many speed bumps/raised crossings.
 - (vii) A raised crossing will make it more dangerous.

- **Something else**
 - (i) Regular pedestrian crossing/ install a traffic light.

- (ii) Plaque/seating/some other form of place making to honour the site and crossing.
- (iii) Other traffic calming measures to make it safer.
- (iv) Do it later, not in current economic environment.

Key Stakeholder views

179. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Nga Tangata Tiaki o Whanganui (Tuaine, N.) provided the following commentary: *“Public safety is a necessity in this area not just as it relates to Pakaitore but the increased activity on the waterfront attracts numerous people particularly during events like the Saturday Market. The nearest raised walkway is by the I-site. If the walkway is not accepted we would still offer that a funding commitment is allocated to a development on Pakaitore that can add to the visitor experience and increase the opportunity for the use of that space for other iwi and community events. Ideas for its development contributions for ideas invited by the community.”*
- Ngāti Hau hapū of Patiarero Marae provided the following commentary: *“We support the proposed work at Pākaitore, so long as hapū and iwi are leading the discussion, writing the narrative, and support the proposed project.”*
- CCS Disability Action (Scott, R) selected option 2 and provided the following commentary: *“Decorate the road if you want, put in a regular crossing if it's really needed, but dont waste 800,000+ dollars on a White elephant”.*

Other considerations

180. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- In general, submitters who both supported and opposed this proposal were significantly in support of the aim to improve pedestrian safety and access between the awa and the park, and to establish a connection between the land and the awa. Objections almost universally came from practical concerns such as too many raised crossings already, the issues a raised crossing would cause for the trucks that use the route, and the proposed cost for a raised crossing.
- A standard pedestrian crossing was an extremely popular alternate suggestion, with various details proposed by different people including practical ones – flashing lights, speed limit signs, etc. – and aesthetic ones that tie into the local culture and Whanganui’s artistic scene – seats, plaques giving information about the area, traditional Māori designs to be included, and waharoa positioned as ‘gates’ to the crossing.
- Among those concerned about trucks using the road specifically, several felt that redevelopment elsewhere would be a key element, as providing other routes for trucks to take would alleviate the existing traffic problems and make proposals like this more feasible

- This was a community led initiative that was submitted through the Point of Entry Business Case process by the Pākaitore Historic Reserve Board.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
Option 1: Construct new raised pavement crossing between Pākaitore and the awa (base option)			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
\$830,000 Design and planning to begin in 2027/28 with construction scheduled for 2029/30	\$6 per property per year for 10 years from 2029/30	\$830,000	Improved connectivity between Pākaitore and the awa and reduced vehicle speeds.
Option 2: No changes to existing road layout in this location (recommended)			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
Save \$830,000 from 2027/28 to 2029/30 compared to what was proposed	Save \$6 per property per year for 10 years from 2029/30 compared to what was proposed	Save \$830,000 compared to what was proposed	No improvements in connectivity between Pākaitore and the awa and no reduction in vehicle speeds.

Recommendation

181. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend no changes to existing road layout in this location for the following reasons:

- The community were most in favour of this option.
- The costs were considered too high in the current economic environment.
- Simpler versions of a speed calming/pedestrian focused solution can be considered alongside other safety measures across the transport network.

Rapanui Road Trail

182. Rapanui Road is the long stretch that connects State Highway 3 past Westmere to Kai Iwi Beach (Mowhanau). There are safety concerns based on the users of this road and Council is proposing to provide funding to support a project that will add a shell rock trail which runs adjacent to the road.

183. The community was asked whether they would like Council to provide funding for the implementation of a shell rock trail, subject to a feasibility study being conducted.

184. This was a community led project submitted by the Kai Iwi community group.

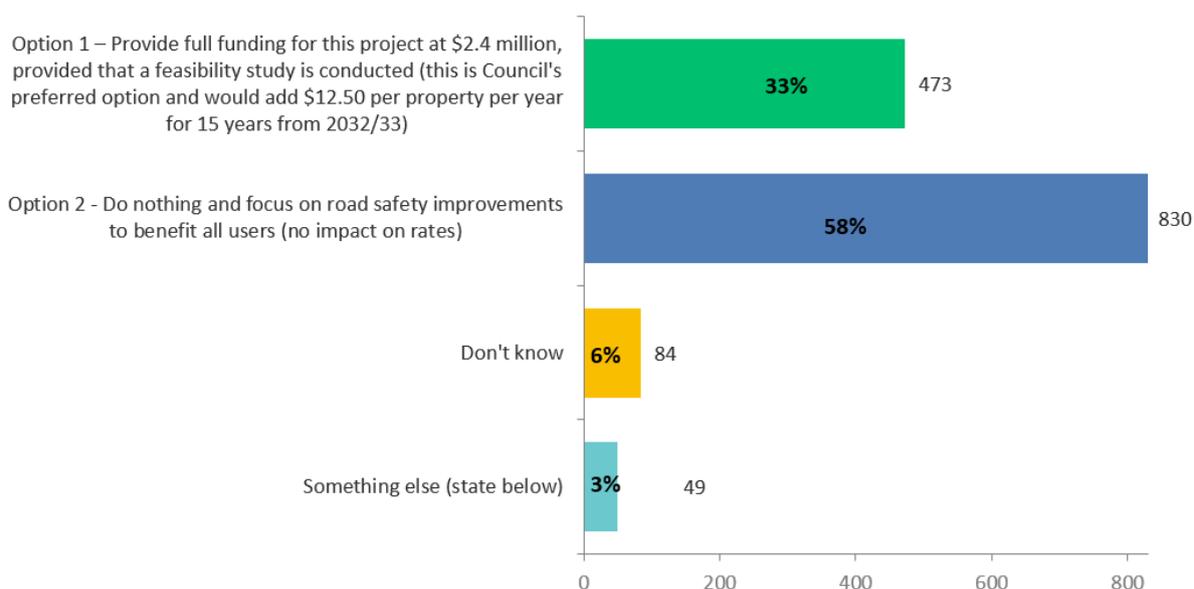
Options

185. The options provided for this question are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Provide full funding for this project at \$2.4 million, provided that a feasibility study is conducted (*preferred*).
- **Option 2** – Do nothing and focus on road safety improvements.
- Don't know
- Something else

Community response

186. A total of 1436 submitters responded to this question. The following graph indicates how many responders selected each option;



187. Submitters were given the opportunity to provide comment alongside their chosen option. A total of 330 submitters provided a comment. The themes that emerged for each option are as follows;

- **Option 1** – Provide full funding for this project at \$2.4 million, provided that a feasibility study is conducted (*Preferred*).
 - (i) The current road is very unsafe for cyclists.
 - (ii) A cycleway would attract tourists.
 - (iii) The trail would contribute to community, culture, health and wellbeing.
 - (iv) Cycleway would increase cycling/increase use.

- **Option 2** – Do nothing and focus on road safety improvements.
 - (i) This is too expensive and a ‘nice to have’.
 - (ii) Focus on other road safety measures.
 - (iii) The trail would be used by only a few.
 - (iv) Look at what other cycleways could be funded.

- **Something else**
 - (i) Focus on other safety measures instead.
 - (ii) Fund other priority cycleways.
 - (iii) Look for other funders to support this.

Key Stakeholder views

188. Key Stakeholder views include the following;

- Kai Iwi Beach Community Group (Sumita, D) selected option 1 and provided the following commentary; *“Kai Iwi Beach Community Group propose that a shared trail be created to travel along Rapanui Road from Mowhanau Beach to State Highway 3. This trail would form a recreational and ecological link between three beautiful sites of cultural significance in our area - Mowhanau Beach, Bason Botanic Gardens and Westmere Lake. Consultation has been commenced with local iwi, who have shown interest, and this trail would be a great partnership project. The trail would enhance the health and wellbeing of the local community by encouraging them to walk and bike more in their area, and to be able to do so safely. For the wider Whanganui District community it would further increase the popularity of these reserves. Families could make a "day of it", bringing out their bikes and a packed lunch, and enjoying being active in the fresh air as they biked between the reserves. The trail would bring financial gains to the district through increased tourism, supporting local businesses. It could support te taiao through the planting of natives along its boundary. It has already brought our community together as there is much support for this trail, and it would continue to bring us together in our use of it. It will be inclusive as it will be able to be used by people with varied recreational interests, and as it is only just on the outskirts of town it is an affordable activity for a family outing. It links easily to the city via a wide shoulder on State Highway 3 and in the future could extend along Francis and Tayforth Roads. It would benefit Westmere Primary School by providing safe links to the lake and the gardens for its students to enjoy. There are wide grass verges all the way along Rapanui Road and this trail would make good use of them. It could be made from shell rock, keeping it affordable and making it low-maintenance. Kai Iwi Beach Community Group will look for external funding opportunities to put towards this project to reduce the Council's share of the cost, however written permission to proceed with the project and seed funding is required. The project can also be built in stages to spread the cost. Please find*

attached a report dated August 2023 and supporting documents providing further details of this project. Many thanks for your consideration!"

Other considerations

189. Other information to highlight or take into consideration;

- A strong overarching theme across all options was that the road is very dangerous for cyclists. With some advocating for the cycleway and some saying that road safety measures are needed instead, for example lowering speed limits.
- Another common response was that the cycleway is ‘a nice to have’ but not necessary in the current economic climate.
- Some submitters also suggested that there are other cycleways in Whanganui that should be a higher priority before investing in this trail.
- As highlighted in option 2, road safety improvements requires an engineering assessment before it can be determined as to what this entails.
- This was a community led initiative that was submitted through the Point of Entry Business Case process by Kai Iwi Community Group.

Options and costs

CONSULTATION OPTIONS			
Option 1: Provide full funding for this project at \$2.4 million, provided that a feasibility study is conducted (base option)			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
\$2.4 million Design and planning for this project will begin in 2030/31 with construction scheduled for 2032-34.	\$12.50 per property per year for 15 years from 2032/33	\$2.4 million	Improved safety on Rapanui Road, recreational benefits, improved connectivity between Kai Iwi Beach (Mowhanau) and the city.
Option 2: Do nothing and focus on road safety improvements (recommended)			
Cost	Impact on rates	Impact on debt	Impact on service levels
Save \$2.4 million from 2030/31 to 2033/34 compared to what was proposed	Save \$12.50 per property per year for 15 years from 2032/33 compared to what was proposed	Save \$2.4 million compared to what was proposed	No improvement in safety or recreational benefits.

Recommendation

190. Based on the information provided for this item, officers recommend doing nothing and focus on road safety improvements to benefit all users for the following reasons:
- The community were most in favour of this option.
 - The costs were considered too high in the current economic environment.
 - The revised Government Policy Statement on Transport redirects funding away from this type of project and places a stronger focus on routine maintenance and road renewals. This reflects the Whanganui district's roading investment priorities at this point in time.

Other LTP issues

Youth Council

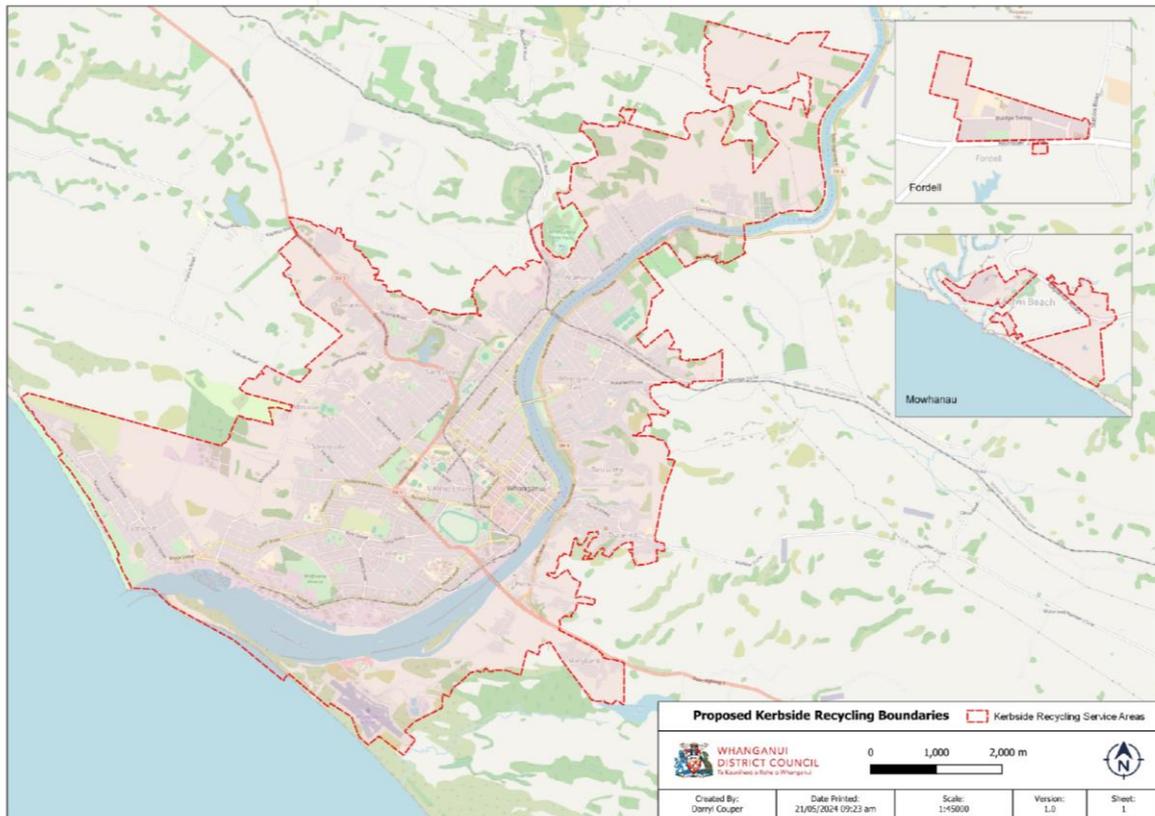
191. In February 2024, Council resolved to disestablish the Youth Council from 1 July 2024, retaining a budget of \$10,000 for youth related initiatives
192. This resolution will have saved the council \$41,000 operating expenditure from 1 July 2024
193. Given the number of submissions advocating for the Youth Council, Elected Members may wish to reinstate the funding of \$41,000 to bolster the funding back up to \$51,000, and consider establishing other youth related initiatives such as an advisory group function.

Accessibility

194. A submission was put forward by Baragwanath, M. encouraging Whanganui to be the first 'City of Possibility'. This vision involves making Whanganui the most accessible city in Aotearoa for people of all abilities amongst other things. A request was put forward of \$350k in year 1 of the LTP to establish this initiative.
195. In addition, a submission was put in by Davies, T. about accessibility improvements for public toilets in the District. Davies highlighted an initiative called 'Changing Places', established to provide fully accessible bathroom facilities in public places throughout New Zealand.
196. As a response to this proposal, Council would like to highlight that there is \$1.706m proposed in the LTP spread over ten years for the upgrade of public toilets (spread across Rangiora Street, Virginia Lake and the rest of the network).
There is a budget for the renewal and possible relocation of the Oriental toilets in the CBD. This project could be a suitable candidate for an accessibility improvement aligned to the 'Changing Places' initiative. Because this project is not scheduled until 2027/28, officers recommend that further research is undertaken to estimate the likely additional costs. A revised business case can then be tabled at an Annual Plan or the next Long Term Plan.

Kerbside recycling – rural petition

197. A rural petition was put forward by Simmons, W (Bill) on behalf of Pickwick Road and Dickens Lane regarding the upcoming roll-out of kerbside recycling.
198. As indicated in this submission, input was obtained from 29 of the 42 properties in the area (70%). A total of 43 residents were contacted.
199. Simmons highlights that;
- 39 (90%) of the 43 residents spoken to, representing 25 (86%) of the 29 properties did not want kerbside recycling introduced to the rural lifestyle zone. Many of these said they would prefer to continue using the Resource Recovery Centre and would probably not use the kerbside service if it was introduced.
 - (5%) of the 43 residents representing 2 (7%) of the 29 properties said they would welcome kerbside recycling and would use the service.
 - (5%) of the 43 residents representing 2 (7%) of the 29 properties were unsure.
200. Finally, legislative requirements were also highlighted in Simmons submission, questioning the consultation process Council undertook for kerbside recycling and the requirements set by The Ministry for Environment which states that urban areas are a requirement only, not rural.
201. In response to this, officers have reviewed the consultation process and have confirmed that it was sufficient to meet the legislative requirements. Given Mr Simmons made a submission and spoke at the hearings, his views and preferences on the issue have been considered by Council prior to it making its decision. That said, the review has also identified opportunities for improvement that officers will implement in the future to ensure similar consultation processes are more robust.
202. Boundaries and locations of peri-urban sites are finalised with the contractor, where the following considerations informed these boundaries:
- Population density
 - Growth area
 - Rubbish contractors and whether they service these areas
 - Numbers of households
 - Accessibility.
203. The map disclosing these boundaries can be seen below;



204. Pickwick Road and Dickens Lane are included in the service at present. The officer recommendation is that Pickwick Road and Dickens Lane remain as recipients of the kerbside recycling service and attract the targeted rate.
205. There is an additional option to remove Pickwick Road and Dickens Lane from the Kerbside recycling service and consult on including them through the Annual Plan 2025/26.

Tramways

206. A total of \$3.282 million was proposed to be included in year 4 of the Long-Term Plan for the Whanganui Tram which would be used for a track extension. This funding is contingent on a feasibility study before proceeding. This feasibility study is nearing completion with a final draft being prepared following feedback from key stakeholders and the Tramways Whanganui Trust.
207. A submission was made by the Tramways Whanganui Trust expressing concerns that funding a track extension alone will not provide sufficient economic, social or cultural benefit to justify the current estimated cost. Instead, they suggest creating a “heritage transport experience” which includes the Tram, the PS Waimarie, Whanganui Regional Museum, the Durie Hill elevator and a vintage bus or vintage vehicles, could be a more viable offering for an additional Whanganui visitor experience.
208. The Tramways Whanganui Trust’s submission aligns closely with the findings and recommendations in the draft feasibility study.

209. Their submission asked Council to consider whether the \$3.282 million proposed for a Tram track extension included in Year 4 of this LTP, could be spent more wisely if increased visitor attraction and awareness is the driver behind including this.
210. Based on this submission, officers recommends that the capital funding for the Tramway extension project is removed from the Long-Term Plan budget. Should the Council wish to proceed with the project after they have received and considered the final draft of the feasibility study, then the funding can added back into the budget via a future Annual Plan process.

Other funding requests

211. Council received a number of submissions that were seeking finding for operational activities – i.e. not for capital projects. Given the Council is considering increasing the community grants funding, officers recommend that all such funding requests be delt with via the community grant contestable funding process.

Alignment with Council's strategies and policies

212. A comprehensive 'District Snapshot' was prepared which includes Whanganui's long-term projected population growth and some of the challenges and opportunities we are expecting across our district in the coming years.
213. The Consultation Document for the LTP was developed in adherence with existing policies and strategies. Throughout the LTP process, a number of strategies and policies have also been reviewed concurrently.
214. Summaries of the Infrastructure Strategy and Financial Strategy were provided within the Consultation Document and will be updated based on feedback received from the community.
215. Other strategy and policy items that were being consulted in conjunction with the Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 are:
- a. Development Contributions Policy
 - b. Proposed Fees and Charges for 2024/25
 - c. Revenue and Financing Policy
 - d. Rates Remission Policy
 - e. Rates Postponement Policy
 - f. Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy
 - g. Parking Bylaw and Controls.

Financial Considerations

216. The costs associated with the community consultation process were met from existing budgets.

217. The financial considerations and impacts of each option are discussed in the analysis section of the report.
218. Based on the officer recommendations the rates increase for 2024/25 is estimated at 10.8%.
219. The final impact on rates and debt will depend on the decisions made by Elected Members at the deliberations.
220. Following deliberations, the final approved decisions will be incorporated into the Long-Term Plan 2024-34 document and audited by Audit NZ.

Legal Considerations

221. The Council is required to have a Long-Term Plan under the Local Government Act (LGA). Consultation on the LTP has complied with section 78 of the LGA.

Māori and cultural considerations

222. Iwi/Hapū representatives were encouraged to submit throughout the Long-Term Plan consultation through a number engagements.
223. The Chief Executive and Elected Members attended a hui hosted by Putiki Marae to which all Hapū across the district were invited to attend.
224. Council staff and Elected Members met with Iwi/Hapū representatives through other forums such as Te Runanga o Tamaupoko Link Hui.
225. Letters of support were received from Iwi/Hapū and Marae across the district in support of the Marae development proposal.
226. The views of Iwi/Hapū representatives have been highlighted and considered throughout the analysis and recommendations.

Climate change impact considerations

227. Climate Change has been considered within our Long-Term Plan Assumptions and align closely with our Climate Change Strategy– Te Rautaki Huringa Āhuarangi.

Risk assessment

228. The recommended decision has a moderate degree of risk as summarised in the table below.
229. Note the risk assessment has been applied to the overall recommended decision to make amendments to the proposed Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 – rather than to individual decisions.

Risk Profile Area	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating
<p>Reputation/image Based on the community feedback the final decisions are likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -generate high levels of public interest; -have a moderate impact on a large number of people. <p>Some of the recommended options are different to what was highlighted in the consultation document – however this risk is mitigated through the consultation process and final deliberations process whereby the recommendations reflect community feedback. A number of matters have already generated high levels of public interest and media.</p>	Possible	Moderate	Medium
<p>Financial The decisions will have an impact on Council’s budgets and on the rating levels of its communities. Budgets have been reduced as much as possible in the current economic environment to reduce the impact on communities at this time. There is a risk that the budgets are too conservative to deliver on the services council has committed to and the services the community expects.</p>	Possible	Moderate	Medium
<p>Service Delivery The decisions will impact on service delivery into the future. Some services are being proposed to be cut which will have a large impact on the communities they serve. There is also a risk that we cannot deliver the services expected on the restricted budgets or that costs increase further. In some cases, projects are dependent on third party funding which is yet to be achieved.</p>	Possible	Moderate	Medium
<p>Infrastructure/assets There is a risk that the infrastructure budgets are too conservative in the current environment. There is a risk that projects will cost more than the anticipated costs. Heritage assets will be impacted in some cases.</p>	Possible	Moderate	Medium
<p>Project completion There is a risk that we cannot adopt the LTP on 16 July. Any delays will also impact on when Audit NZ can complete their final audit of the LTP and have knock on impacts. If this is the case, the LTP adoption will need to be pushed out further which will have an impact on rates for the first quarter rates bills. It is recommended the CE is granted approval to operate on the draft LTP budgets.</p>	Unlikely	Minor	Low
Overall Risk Profile Score			Medium

Significance

230. The decisions and matters of this report are assessed as significant under the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

AND (for significant issues only):

231. The following criteria have been considered in assessing the significance of the issues in this report:

✓ **Impact on environment, culture or people (current and future)** *The decision may impact the health, sustainability and resilience of tangata whenua and the community.*

✓ **Impact on individuals, groups and organisations** *The decision may cause:*

- *high levels of public interest and potential to generate controversy;*
- *large divisions in views amongst the community;*
- *large impact on a moderate number of people in the community; or*
- *moderate impact on a large portion of the community.*

✓ **Impact on level of service of a significant activity** *The decision may alter the level of service provided by Council.*

✓ **Financial impact on Council or the rating levels of its communities** *The decision will have a substantial financial impact.*

✓ **Impact on strategic assets** *The decision may have an impact on a strategic asset.*

✓ **Impact on heritage assets** *The decision may have a significant impact on a heritage asset.*

Engagement

Pre-engagement

232. Community members and groups were invited to submit proposals as a 'Point of Entry Business Case', 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 in our Long-Term Plan 2024-2034. A total of 20 community proposals were submitted for review.

233. A series of workshops were held with Elected Members, multiple workshops were livestreamed and available to watch by the community alongside other relevant committee meetings. This allowed the community to gain a broader understanding of the Long-Term Plan process.

234. Media releases distributed on 16 October 2023 and 5 December 2023 provided the community with preliminary details of how the Long-Term Plan is shaping up based on the challenges that had been identified at that time.

235. In early 2023, Council also started a review of the Leading Edge Strategy to develop a new Vision for Whanganui – work of which is ongoing. Our engagement with the

community on wellbeing helped to steer council’s direction with the Long-Term Plan at a high-level. Engagement that took place in 2023 and included;

- a. Collaborative leadership approach with Hapū
- b. One-to-one meetings with community representatives and interest groups
- c. Survey that resulted in 660 responses
- d. 16 engagement events and 4 strategic forums.

236. Full results of the survey have been published on council’s website. Work on the longer-term vision is ongoing and we will be returning to the community for feedback on this later in the year.

Consultation

237. Over 20 engagement events were held across the community, hosted by officers and councillors

238. A dedicated Long-Term Plan webpage was created which obtained 6796 page views throughout the consultation period

239. To raise awareness and encourage engagement, emails were distributed and face-to-face meetings were held with Iwi, community groups and key stakeholders

240. Approximately 11 social media posts were scheduled, achieving a reach of 28,805 across our channels

241. An estimate of 20 news articles were distributed by local media throughout consultation, alongside multiple print and digital advertisements. Seven adverts were placed in local newspapers reaching approximately 179,000 people

242. Over 500 respondents have indicated that they’d like to join our ‘Have Your Say’ panel (currently 900+ in the database)

CONSULTATION Community groups / stakeholders	Levels of engagement	Techniques to engage
Wider Community	Inform and Consult Actively seek communities’ views and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and newspapers: Community Link, Whanganui Chronicle and River City Press • In-person engagement events included; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Davis Central City Library ○ Hakeke Street Community Centre ○ Lorenzdale Park ○ Splash Centre ○ Castlecliff Community Hub & Library ○ Whanganui War Memorial Centre ○ Majestic Square

CONSULTATION Community groups / stakeholders	Levels of engagement	Techniques to engage
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor engagement events included interaction with; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends of the Opera House ○ Saturday riverside markets ○ Whanganui Club (Heritage House) ○ Repertory Theatre ○ Business Whanganui ○ Mainstreet Whanganui ○ Wembley Park (Saturday Football) ○ Heritage and Museum stakeholders ○ Arts (incl. performing arts) ○ Spriggens Park (Saturday Rugby) ○ Welcoming Communities Group ○ Women after 5 ○ Porridge Watson ○ Article Café • Engagement with Iwi/Hapū across the region including a joint hui at Putiki Marae • Engagement with Youth Council, Whanganui Rural Community Board, Positive Ageing Forum, and Safer Whanganui Forum • Hard copies of the consultation document and submission forms were made available at public libraries and the Municipal building reception area. • Posters and leaflets were distributed at multiple locations. • Phone number was provided for residents to call • Policy team email address was provided for enquiries • Online promotion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council website ○ Facebook ○ Instagram ○ Email out to the ‘Have your say’ stakeholder database (900+ on the database).
Key stakeholders and policy interest group	Inform and consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Have your say’ stakeholder database • Council website link to consultation material • Antenno Alerts

CONSULTATION Community groups / stakeholders	Levels of engagement	Techniques to engage
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone number to call and email address.

Next Steps

243. Beyond deliberations, changes will be made to the final Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 document based on the direction given from Elected Members through deliberations.
244. The final audit of the Long-Term Plan is scheduled to occur between 24 June – 5 July 2024.
245. The Long-Term Plan 2024 is scheduled for adoption on 16 July 2024.
246. All submitters will receive a formal letter to notify them of the final decisions made by Elected Members.