

Council adopts reduced rates increase

A targeted stormwater rate, a \$10 public good rate, and what may be one of the lowest total 2024/25 rate increases for any council in Aotearoa were confirmed following the adoption of the 2024-27 Long Term Plan.

The Long Term Plan (LTP) is the council's key strategic planning document, setting out its programme of works for the next three years. It was adopted during an Extraordinary Council Meeting on Wednesday 26 June.

The plan includes a total rate increase for the first year of 4.5 per cent. That was less than a 5.1 per cent total rate increase agreed to by the council during final deliberations held on 6 June, and significantly less than a 16.5 per cent total rate increase the council initially consulted the public on during April.

That initial 16.5 per cent proposal was on par with increases many other councils consulted their communities on. Whether other councils have agreed to rate increases less than 4.5 per cent will be known once all councils have formally adopted their LTPs.

Kahika Moko Tepania told the extraordinary meeting that people had been very clear a large rate increase would present challenges for many communities. "The people of the Far North asked us to keep their rates lower because of the affordability issues they are feeling right now."



Far North District Council is expected to have one of the lowest rates increases in Aotearoa

He says the result is especially gratifying as the reduction has not been achieved through the lowering of service levels to ratepayers. However, he cautioned ratepayers that their individual rate increases could be different to the 4.5 per cent rise adopted by the council: "[It] will depend on the services you are connected to, or the differentials involved, or whether you are commercial or residential."

Asked how the total rates increase had been reduced, CEO Guy Holroyd explained that a rigorous process had been followed through multiple reviews of the LTP process. This included focusing on key

deliverable infrastructure projects, and forward projections of staff numbers.

Another factor was a \$5 million special dividend from the council's commercial arm, Far North Holdings Limited. "We expect in the future for dividends to be a focus [of Far North Holdings Limited] instead of retention of income."

Property owners can find out what rates will be applied to their properties for the 2023/24 financial year by checking the Rating Information Database on the council's website from 10 July.

Take the lead with dog rego



Dog registration for the new financial year began on 1 July.

The chance to register your dog for the new financial year began on Monday 1 July with early birds going into the draw to win a prize pack.

There are 10 prize packs up for grabs for owners who register their dogs between 1 July and 31 August. Each pack includes a refund on your dog registration plus two large bags of dog biscuits. Winners will be drawn after the promotional period has ended. Only one dog registration will be free per winner.

This year's campaign continues the 'Dogs are whānau' theme featuring a local family. Dog owners are legally required to register their dogs for the year which can be paid for all year round. However, fees are higher between 1 September and 30 June 2025.

In the Far North, dogs must be registered from three months of age or as soon as they come into your possession. For registration forms, to pay online, or for more information visit our [register your dog](#) webpage.

New sirens set to save lives

Forty-two new state-of-the-art tsunami sirens are to be installed near coastal settlements around the Far North District over the coming months.

Designed to alert people with loud, clear instructions on what to do in the event of a possible tsunami wave, the sirens were manufactured in Denmark. Unlike the existing sirens, these use backup power sources during power outages to provide warnings during an emergency.

The \$6.5-million upgrade to the tsunami siren network around Northland will replace older, outdated technology with a more effective warning system for coastal communities. All four Northland councils are sharing the cost of the tsunami siren rollout.



The new tsunami sirens transmit loud clear instructions on what to do.

Head to our website fndc.govt.nz to watch a video about how this new early warning system could help save lives. To find out more about where the new tsunami sirens will be located, visit the Northland tsunami siren replacement project page at nrc.govt.nz.

Board serves up food funding

A collaboration formed to tackle food shortages and hunger in the Hokianga has been granted more than \$26,000 by the Kaikohe-Hokianga Community Board.

The He Kete Kai Food Security Programme incorporates four groups addressing food insecurity as part of a long-term project to support struggling families. It applied for funding under the umbrella of the Hokianga Community Educational Trust.

The community board agreed at its 21 June meeting to grant a total of \$26,566 from its Placemaking Fund to support the programme.

Moves to address the issue of food security in Hokianga came after local cultural centre Manea Footprints of Kupe carried out a survey following Cyclone Gabrielle. It revealed many kuia, kaumatua and elderly were struggling with the cost of living, food prices, and access to fresh food.

Hubs in Waimamaku, Ōpononi, Whirinaki, and Rāwene have been established where locals can learn to grow their own kai, gather as well as redistribute food to those in need, and create long-term food security and resilience in Hokianga.



A programme aims to tackle food shortages in the Hokianga.