**Tamahere-Woodlands Councillors’ update February 2025**

**New CEO**

A powhiri was held on Monday for Craig Hobbs who started as our new CEO this week. His past experience includes roles as CE of South Waikato District Council and most recently director of regulatory services at Auckland Council. Other past roles include CEO of Paralympics NZ, and CEO of the National Maritime Museum. After 21 years with WDC, outgoing CEO Gavin Ion will stay on until June, leading development of a new Waters CCO (council-controlled organisation) with Hamilton City for public consultation later this year.

**New roading contractors**

New roading contracts for the district have been let to Fulton Hogan (in the south of the district) and Higgins (in the north) starting from July this year. Tenders were judged on value for money, flexibility, and planning/scheduling to deliver efficiency and responsiveness. The Waikato District Alliance contract with Downer will wind up at the end of June.

**LTP workshops**

After three days of workshops on the Long Term Plan 2025-34, the indicative budget was pointing to a potential general rate (GR) increase of just over 4% for the first year (2025/26), before falling to an increase of about 2.5% in 2026/27, and then 2% and less in subsequent years. (These rates exclude public transport costs which will be rated directly by the Waikato Regional Council from 2025/26.)

This represents hard work by staff to find savings, and comes despite early LTP budget indications last year that a 13.75% GR increase this year would be followed by several 6% annual rises, and despite the council using reserves to keep the increase to 11.9% this year (below average for councils around the country). Nevertheless, rates affordability remains a major concern. With costs up 20% overall since preparation of the last LTP (2021-31) and rising compliance costs for three waters services, these are putting pressure on targeted rates with indications that overall rates (general and targeted) in our towns could rise between 7.8% and 10.8% in the first year – but less in areas not subject to significant targeted rates eg. a projected rise of 5.9% in country living areas in Year 1 with reduced increases in subsequent years. (A waters CCO will eventually bring relief, but it will take 5-10 years to realise the full benefits.)

The proposed LTP budget is expected to be approved in mid-February, and a plan developed for public consultation in March-April prior to final adoption in June.

**Applications open for Creative Communities Scheme**

This Creative NZ-sourced fund is designed to support art activities that celebrate the uniqueness of the Waikato district, with a goal to increase participation in local arts (defined to mean all forms of creative and interpretative expression). Applications opened on Thursday 30 January and close at 5pm, Thursday 6 March 2025. For more information go to [www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/funding](http://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/funding)

**NZTA roadworks**

* **SH21 Airport Rd –** Completion of resurfacing work on SH21 Airport Rd near the Narrows Bridge is planned by Fulton Hogan (for NZTA) to start overnight on Sunday 9 February and expected to take two nights, weather dependant. The work will be done between 8pm and 6am. During these times SH21 Airport Rd will be closed to through traffic between Clearway Rise and Narrows Lane. There will be a detour of about 20 minutes through Hamilton along SH3 and SH1/SH1C. However, emergency vehicles will be allowed through the worksite, as will local residents needing access to their properties. Residents on Narrows Lane will be escorted through the worksite.

***Contact your Tamahere-Woodlands Councillors:***

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