



**CENTRAL
HAWKE'S BAY**
DISTRICT COUNCIL

April 2020

Drought and COVID-19 Economic Recovery Action Plan

This action plan is driven by 'our DNA'; through this plan, and throughout it, we will seek to:

- Work together with our community and key regional and national partners
- Provide customer excellence by keeping the needs and welfare of our community at the heart of our decision making
- Think smarter by continuing to innovate and continuously improve how we operate

Immediate Response

1. Leading Civil Defence in Central Hawke's Bay to ensure comprehensive welfare support

Council is leading a Civil Defence response and is coordinating with Hawke's Bay Civil Defence and Emergency management (HBCDEM) Ministry of Health, Police, Red Cross, FENZ, Safer CHB and other agencies. Council has created an economic recovery and drought function within our Civil Defence structure, and these functions are liaising directly with their regional counterparts to align work programmes. Council has already approved \$200,000 to support the organisation in responding to the unprecedented situation of COVID-19 and Drought.

2. Support the establishment of Tihei Mauri Ora – Te Taiwhenua o Tamatea support structure

Council has worked with the Taiwhenua to establish a structure to enable direct engagement and support for hapū and mana whenua within the Civil Defence. The Tihei Mauri Co-Ordinator and Tumuaki liaise with the Controller and Welfare manager regularly and a daily meeting is held including the Deputy Mayor. The structure is being established across the district with 'tautoko' (support) being identified in Takapau, Porangahau, Pukehou, Ōtāne, Waipawa and Waipukurau. Council has invested a significant amount of IT resource and support, including equipment and training on its use. This will allow a resourced, connected support structure for Te Taiwhenua o Tamatea, that is on a compatible platform with Council and other supporting agencies.

3. Refund consent fees affected by Lockdown

Full refunds will be offered to anyone who wants to cancel a building consent or resource consent application that was lodged prior 24 March 2020.

4. Early payments to suppliers

The Council is moving from a monthly cycle of payment of supplier invoices to a weekly cycle. This will assist our key supplies to maintain regular cash flows, and in turn allow them to meet their payroll obligations so that the maximum possible number of staff in the region retain their jobs.

5. Progress Central Hawke's Bay projects in regional economic stimulus packages

Council staff are investigating bringing forward or increasing parts of the District's capital programme to stimulate business and create jobs. This includes working closely with government officials on how we ensure our District is part of any Hawke's Bay regional economic stimulus packages to help reduce social and economic impacts and advocating for our businesses and communities to access these packages. These discussions with Government include possible co-funding arrangements. These opportunities range across #thebigwaterstory, wastewater, roading, housing and other transformational community infrastructure projects linked to Project Thrive. As part of this Council has already progressed additional Provincial Growth Fund applications for roading and other infrastructure projects.

6. Advocate to Central Government on behalf of our most vulnerable citizens

Council will advocate to Central Government to increase the current rates rebate scheme for those in financial hardship.

7. Advocacy to Hawke's Bay Regional Council

Council will continue to advocate on behalf of our community to Hawke's Bay Regional Council and request that they give clear guidance on their regulatory approach towards implementation of the Tukituki Catchment Plan and associated consenting deadlines.

8. Rates Postponement Policy

Council will implement its newly adopted Rates Postponement Policy which allows those in our community experiencing financial hardship due to Drought, have their rates payment postponed.

9. Accelerate our regional, digital Business Hub project

Council will accelerate our proposed regional digital business hub project to create a space for businesses to connect. Council will work with our regional economic development delivery partners to programme the hub to support business growth and revitalisation.

Short – Mid-Term Recovery

10. Re- frame existing assessment work to identify 'quick wins'

Council staff will re-frame existing assessment work to include strategic analysis and potential direction for economic recovery; and identify resources available and any identified additional resource requirements.

Three immediate projects which can be re-framed to identify quick wins are:

- Tourism Infrastructure Needs Assessment: fast tracking this assessment (completed in 2 months rather than 4), and use the process to develop localised points of different domestic tourism campaigns, aligned with regional and national campaign activity
- High Productivity Motor Vehicle assessment: quick win bridge and road work identified earlier and progressed for government funding
- Integrated spatial planning; identify community and social infrastructure such as cycle ways, cultural hubs, business hubs, digital connectivity.

11. Establish a Central Hawke's Bay Recovery Task Force, in partnership with Centralines

Council will establish a CHB Economic Recovery task force, in partnership with Centralines, which looks at developing and supporting community/industry led economic recovery projects. Council will seek to work with key sector groups including primary, commercial, service, and construction to accelerate projects to encourage stimulus, and provide a nimble approach to supporting these developments. This task force will be aligned with and supported by regional activity led out by Business Hawke's Bay and our neighbouring local authorities.

12. Incorporate a community recovery lens in our grant funding policy

Council will look to prioritise allocation from the Environment and Sustainability Fund, and the Community Pride and Vibrancy fund, to applications which contribute to community recovery from the effects of COVID-19 and drought.

13. Examine policies and process to ensure Council can assist ratepayers who are experiencing financial hardship

Council will examine ways in which it can mitigate the financial impact felt by our community through a proactive and more lenient approach in the application of our existing rates payment policies. This proactive approach will include:

- Increased use of the \$640 government rebate on annual rates for those on superannuation/WINZ beneficiaries who qualify
- Use of the 'Remission of Additional Charges Policy' to ensure those impacted by Drought/COVID-19 aren't further impacted by the application of late payment fees
- Use of the 'Postponement of Rates for Natural Calamities Policy' to assist landowners who are in financial difficulty due to drought
- Working with rate payers/debtors who are in arrears to put an appropriate/tailored payment plan in place

In addition, officers will investigate if it's existing 'Postponement of Rates for Natural Calamities Policy' could be extended to cover COVID-19, or whether a completely new policy specially for this pandemic be written.

14. Rates Rebate for 1,000 most impacted rate payers

Council will look to utilise \$200k from our 'Catastrophic Events Fund' to fund the creation of a new Rates Rebate Fund. This will enable Council to give a \$200 rebate for up to 1000 ratepayers who are most impacted by the financial effects of COVID-19. Council staff will begin to develop a Policy Framework to implement and manage this process.

15. More financial relief options

Council is in the process of setting its annual budget for the 2020/21 financial year. Council will proactively seek to soften the financial blow through revising the draft annual plan. A number of initiatives will be used to ensure the annual rates increase will be kept as low as possible for the 2020/21 financial year without reducing levels of service. We will also explore a campaign to encourage up-front rates payments in full for those who can afford this, to assist with Councils' cash fluidity.

16. Incorporating Social Procurement into Council's capital programme

Social procurement is a way to ensure any investment maximises community uplift through the engagement of local suppliers, and a focus on wider economic, cultural, community and environmental benefits. Additional emphasis will be given to the full range of social procurement opportunities in our current and future capital works programme, including those projects accelerated by government investment in action five. Contracts could be constructed to mandate certain levels of re-employment of workers who had their employment affected by COVID-19, and employment of local residents.

17. Continued prioritisation of Ngā Ara Tipuna and investigate feasibility of phase three opportunities

Ngā Ara Tipuna will remain a transformational and aspirational project for mana whenua, with renewed emphasis on the economic and business development work streams within that project, and an emphasis on social procurement to benefit local, Māori suppliers and sub-contractors. Work will also be accelerated to identify and scope phase three opportunities to be in a position to respond to further fiscal stimulus opportunities, as presented by Central Government, when and if they arise.

Long Term Recovery

18. Ongoing development of a revised/re-prioritised Economic Development Action plan and work programme including:

- a. Skills and employment
- b. Growth and development
- c. Business development and attraction
- d. Domestic/regional tourism strategy and events programme
- e. Land use diversification
- f. Infrastructure
- g. Water security