

Christchurch and Banks Peninsula Long Term Plan 2024-34: Councillors' Expectations

Dear Dawn,

As indicated, I have prepared this letter setting out Councillors' expectations to help inform the work that you and your staff will undertake to support development of the Long-Term Plan (LTP) 2024 – 2034.

Part A makes clear Councillors' expectations around LTP content – the major strategic issues that the LTP needs to address. **Part B** is designed to provide clarity and certainty to both governance and staff around how the LTP process will unfold.

Context

Christchurch is a fantastic city that is on the move. It is the place where we all call home, and where we want to do our part to make it an even better place to live, work, play and invest.

Christchurch has faced more than its fair share of challenges over the past decade, including those arising from earthquakes, floods, fires, water supply security concerns, terrorist attacks and the current pandemic recovery. The human, financial and environmental costs to our city have been great.

We now face significant change to our sector flowing from Government reforms, as well as the ongoing impacts of long term challenges faced by our community such as climate change, increasing inequality, rising cost of living and affordability issues. Our Council must also confront the immediate challenge of rising inflation, skills shortages and supply chain disruptions on our operations and capital projects.

Amongst the changes will be the implementation of Three Waters reforms from 1 July 2024. This means that the LTP 2024-34 will not include Three Waters and will reflect a post-reform Council in line with the Government's direction. We anticipate considering a range of scenarios as part of the development process.

However, the large investments over the past decade, our location as the gateway to the Antarctic and South Island, and our status as our nation's second largest city mean we are

well-placed to respond to these challenges. This will help us put Christchurch 'on the map' as the best place to live, work, invest and play in New Zealand.

Councillors are determined to realise their vision for Christchurch as 'a city of opportunities.' Our city must continue to thrive and grow sustainably by attracting new businesses, people and investment. We want to provide, encourage, enable and improve the services that are essential for sustainable growth, resilience, liveable neighbourhoods, safe and healthy natural environments, and to support diverse cultural interests, activities and events. This should occur within the context of increasing partnership with mana whenua and greater collaboration with neighbouring councils and government agencies. The Greater Christchurch Partnership and Canterbury Mayoral Forum will offer opportunities for this collaboration to increase.

Overall, we are expecting sound, evidence-based advice and options to help us make informed choices in the best interest of our city, our environment and our residents.

Part A - Key themes of the LTP 2024

We recognise that the joint development approach between Councillors and staff which formed the basis of the LTP 2021 was very successful and we want to build on that approach.

Councillors have worked well with ELT on a Strategic Framework which lays the foundation for LTP 2024. We expect that the Framework will set out our commitment to working in partnership with Ngāi Tahu to achieve meaningful outcomes that benefit the whole community. The Framework sets out the strategic priorities that will be our focus for work programme planning and investment over this Council term. We are aiming to finalise the Framework by the end of March 2023 in order for it to underpin all subsequent LTP work. We are currently discussing the following draft strategic priorities:

- Put people at the centre of developing our city and district, prioritising wellbeing, accessibility and connection
- Champion Christchurch and collaborate to build our role as a leading New Zealand city
- Build trust and confidence in the Council through meaningful communication, listening to and working with residents

- Reduce emissions as a Council and as a city, and invest in adaptation and resilience, leading a city-wide response to climate change.
- Manage ratepayers' money wisely, delivering quality core services to the whole community and addressing the issues that are important to our residents
- Actively balance the needs of today's residents with the needs of future generations, with the aim of leaving no one behind

To achieve these outcomes we need to provide clear direction for the LTP at an early stage. To ensure success this should include:

Genuine partnership with Mana Whenua

The draft Strategic Framework acknowledges Ngāi Tahu rangatiratanga over its takiwā and commits the Council to partnering with mana whenua to achieve meaningful outcomes that benefit the whole community.

The LTP presents the first key opportunity this Council term to advance the Council partnership with Papatipu Rūnanga and to discuss meaningful outcomes. The Mayor and Councillors expect that the LTP programme will enable authentic partnership and active dialogue with mana whenua.

Joint Development between Councillors and staff

It is expected that the joint development process used in the 2021 LTP will be continued and refined. This ensures that the views of Councillors and Community Board plans are taken into account from an early stage, and that debate and direction-setting is based on transparent, objective and accurate staff advice. Early engagement across our communities is also a key part of the approach. There must be sufficient time set aside for pre-engagement to occur in a transparent and measured way. The purpose and scope of pre-engagement will need to be agreed over coming weeks between Councillors and staff.

Listening to our customers, communities, and businesses

There is a wealth of feedback from our community in the Resident and Point of Contact Surveys, as well as other sources. These highlight areas of high satisfaction as well as areas where improvement is needed.

It is important that a diversity of voices is heard, that we actively listen to what our communities are saying and that the LTP provides options for addressing those community ambitions and concerns, including those voices that are not part of our current way of

thinking. The LTP should provide certainty for our community on what we will do in response to the feedback they give us.

There is also a need to identify opportunities to work more closely with businesses and community groups to unlock the potential of our city. Feedback will need to be balanced with financial sustainability and deliverability during LTP decision-making as we will be confronting some hard choices.

Committing to a Climate Resilient City

Christchurch is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and has a significant role in the district's greenhouse gas emissions reductions efforts, and protecting our natural environment. It is essential that the Infrastructure Strategy, Asset Management and Activity Plans all include meaningful actions to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, increase our resilience to more frequent and extreme weather events, and reduce our community's overall vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

Continuous Improvement

Given the dynamic nature of Council's operating environment it is critical that the organisation continues to learn and improve. Council expects to see innovative thinking applied to the financial and infrastructure strategies, activity plans, business reviews, S17a service delivery reviews, and in particular the Letters of Expectation with our group of companies, and for these to inform the LTP. It is critical that staff provide advice during the LTP process that reflects new and innovative ways to achieve outcomes for our community.

Infrastructure Strategy

The Infrastructure Strategy (IS) needs to inform many of the key LTP documents. It must contain a strategic view of our key infrastructure opportunities and challenges, including residual earthquake damage to infrastructure, and options to address these. It should include opportunity cost assessments for councillors to consider when evaluating options. The preferred option must be supported by an investment proposal, which should be well progressed early on in the LTP process so that it can frame the development of the capital programme and be closely aligned with the Financial Strategy and Strategic Priorities. The IS will also help to shape and inform the Consultation Document.

The IS must be understood as a strategy: it should give high level direction for the future of our infrastructure planning and investment; lead the development of the asset plans, the

capital programme and capital prioritisation process. This will include a clear view of essential asset management and renewals as well as more discretionary projects. It should avoid being 'backcast' (a simple retrofit to existing asset plans.) The IS will both inform, and be informed by, activity plans and asset plans through an iterative process.

The 30-year horizon for the IS makes it high level enough that it will not hinder the ability to defer programmes to later years, if required by deliverability challenges. It is therefore important that the proposed capital programme is clearly visible to Community Boards and residents as part of the LTP engagement process and extends beyond the traditional ten year view. Projects should be available by ward over the life of the LTP.

Council expects that the overall direction of the IS (and ideally its preferred option) to be available for asset plans and activity plans to reference while they are being co-developed. It is expected that staff will have considered other Council's IS and asset planning documents in light of the feedback from the Auditor-General after the LTP 2021.

Financial Strategy

The long-term financial management approach needs to focus on keeping rates and other fees and charges affordable over time, while at the same time balancing the need for fit-for-purpose services and our residents' quality of life. It must also present a clear picture of the Council's long term strategic approach to debt ensuring we are taking a whole life costing and intergenerational approach.

Rating approach

Councillors wish to signal a clear expectation that rates increases will be contained and they must always be justifiable. It is timely for Council to undertake an assessment of our rating base and approach and how well it is understood.

More broadly, the Financial Strategy should:

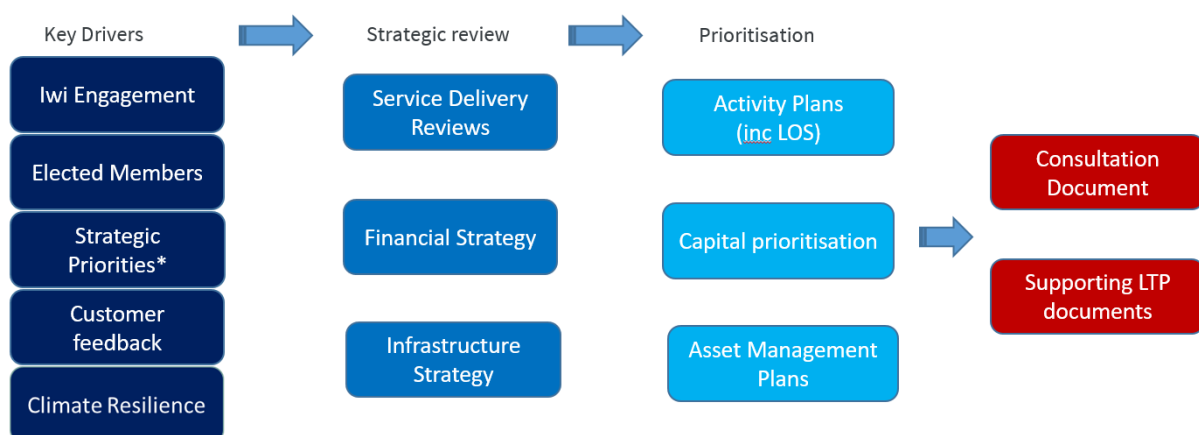
1. Provide the economic context, interest rates and inflation projections and debt profile within which are proposed options for rates setting.
2. Be clear on the role and performance of CCHL and the CCTOs, and their contribution to Council's financial resilience over time.
3. Provide an assessment of the impact of the RMA reforms as best can be assessed at this point in the reform programme. Based on observations from the last LTP process.

4. We would also like staff to consider the following:

- the capital programme be proposed at a level that responds to actual need and that is demonstrably deliverable and affordable in each year of the LTP.
- alleviate an unacceptably high capital programme 'bow wave' with inevitably large carry-forwards each year, which has the potential to drive unnecessarily high rates increases (note that while we do not borrow for what we are not delivering, that work is built into our plans and therefore rates increases).
- as the capital programme changes, any related opex implications must be clearly called out and evidence based – including whole-of-life costing implications.
- Activity budgets should be available when activity plans are reviewed by Councillors. These could be draft budgets for activities that are not changing markedly, but with indicative budgets for activities where any major change is proposed.
- Impacts to Levels of Service arising from budget changes must be transparent to Councillors in activity plans.
- Adjustments to (or deletion of) capital projects/programmes or Levels of Service must be transparent in LTP documents, including the CD.

Part B - The LTP Process

It is essential that both Councillors and staff have a clear and mutually agreed understanding of how the LTP process will unfold. The advice below is informed by what worked well during the LTP 2021 process. It also reflects improvements based on the LTP 2021 process review, which included input from senior managers and councillors, as well as the Office of the Auditor-General.



Restoring trust and confidence

The LTP process needs to provide ample opportunities for a full range of issues to be canvassed. Residents, business and communities of interest and other key stakeholders must be broadly engaged on key issues and options so we hear the many and varied voices of our community as we consider those issues. This places an obligation on Council and staff to ensure that accurate, easy to assimilate information on options (and their impacts) is available to all our stakeholders to help inform their views. We want a two way conversation that is:

- collaborative and meaningful
- designed to deliver real benefits for the city equitably and at reasonable cost for all generations
- communicated clearly so the community is aware of the responses and the reasons for the decisions we have made.

In addition to early work with mana whenua partners, Councillors expect the LTP process to create better connections with disenfranchised communities, and to consider stakeholder-specific assessments. We also want to see more youth-focused engagement (by youth for youth). Where relevant, there should also be more project-based engagement to encourage and support community involvement and more submissions.

Consultation Document

The Consultation Document (CD) is the flagship and main public document of the LTP. It is led by the Mayor and will set out the key issues being considered, and the options available in response to those issues. The right CD will encourage and support community involvement. It will be important to retain clear accountability for the Consultation Document (CD) development within the Communications and Engagement Unit, so it is written in plain and consistent language rather than technical jargon, with the options to be considered by the Council and community are articulated clearly and accessible to all.

The Consultation Document will be supported by a range of related tools and communication streams to ensure that all people in our community can participate and contribute. There will continue to be an option to submit through easy to use online surveys.

The Joint Development Process

This was successful in 2021. Councillors felt that they had clear oversight of the LTP strategies and plans, as well as sufficient time to scrutinise them and provide feedback.

The overarching objective of the plan (that the suite of LTP documents are available in draft form by 1 July 2023) remains. Councillors should also be engaged early on levels of service to ensure they understand the issues and options they consult on. It is essential that there is a measured and transparent programme of presentations on activity and asset plans to Council between July and December 2023 that allows for questions and the opportunity to circle back if needed. Staff should find meaningful ways to enhance transparency during this process.

This programme of presentations should be set and agreed with elected members now so that there is clarity for both the managers presenting and for the councillors. Focus areas for activity plan presentations include:

- clear line of sight from high level outcomes (Strategic Framework, including climate resilience and other relevant Strategy documents) to proposed levels of service and capital projects.
- a capital prioritisation process that has a focus on community need, deliverability, affordability and climate resilience across all capital portfolios.
- Levels of Service that are consistently SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) and which will provide transparency of non-financial performance across services. We note there are legislatively prescribed LOS, and in addition we wish to focus our efforts on a reduced suite of LOS that are most critical and meaningful.

It is also expected that once the strategies and plans are in draft form on 1 July 2023 they will be available to councillors on the BigTinCan. All of these refinements were valuable in the 2021 process.

Other Issues

Rather than proscribing the more detailed elements of the LTP Programme, the *LTP 2024-34 Programme Plan* (approved by the Executive Leadership Team and Council in June 2022) remains the approved LTP process. Please report progress against this programme plan monthly to the Finance and Performance Committee, including any risks or impediments to the project and its key work streams.

Councillors need a clear stocktake of on-hold Annual Plan and LTP proposals from the last triennium, so that we can confirm whether this work should form part of the 2024 LTP.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community Boards need to develop their Plans early in the triennium and they need to be aligned with the Council's strategic framework. This will assist the ability to integrate Community Board Plans at an earlier stage in the LTP process. This reinforces the need for a timely sign off on the strategic framework by the new council.

As stated, early engagement and partnership with Ngāi Tahu/ Ngā Papatipu Rūnanga must be programmed specifically into the LTP programme plan.

In addition, I welcome staff advice on the potential to have early conversations with the community, to help support the development of an LTP that closely matches the priorities of residents whilst recognising intergenerational impacts. Particular attention needs to be given to how we reach a greater diversity of residents in our early engagement, and during the formal consultation period.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this expression of expectations on behalf of Councillors. I hope it will help guide the organisation as you implement the LTP process.

Regards

Phil Mauger
Mayor