

We listened

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Christchurch City Council's Annual Plan 2020-21 was developed at a time of great difficulty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan balances the need to meet our residents' and businesses' expectations of Council's level of service provision with the need to make prudent savings. It makes some hard decisions now, in the certain knowledge that there are further hard decisions to be made in our Long Term Plan. Our first version of the draft 2020-21 Annual Plan was superseded by an updated draft as we came to more fully understand the implications of COVID-19. This final version of the Plan sets out a budget for the next year and prepares for the discussions we will need to have as we develop the Long Term Plan.

In line with our obligations under the Local Government Act, we adopted the first draft of the Annual Plan on 11 February 2020. The reworked draft Plan was released on 29 May 2020. Residents were then asked to give their feedback on what was included in the draft, and on what they wanted to have changed or added.

The full Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan was available for download from our website, and in hard copy format from Council libraries and service centres. As the draft Plan is a large and complex document, an easy-to-read consultation document was also developed to highlight the key changes and this too was available for download or in hard copy.

An email with advice on the Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan and the consultation process was sent to stakeholders and community groups. Advertising, social media and Newsline articles also helped inform people about the consultation.

The Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan Consultation Document was approved on 11 June followed by a further period of written and oral submissions from 12 June to 19

June. Almost 800 submissions from the first consultation were resubmitted. 887 submissions on the Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan, excluding pro forma submissions, were also received.

Submissions focused on options presented on the level of rates increase, a proposed excess water charge, increasing the use of the weed killer glyphosate, and a proposed one off increase to the Strengthening Communities Fund. Submissions also included requests for additional grants and funding, cycleways and cycling infrastructure, road upgrades and maintenance, parks projects, climate change action, and getting back to basics. There was also a group of submitters who addressed governance and decision making issues, and the need to better listen to the views of residents.

Staff reviewed all of the submissions and responded with additional information as appropriate, before these were sent to the Mayor and Councillors for their consideration. Council heard from 116 submitters during the hearings process, discussed the wide range of issues raised and deliberated changes to the Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan, before adopting the final Plan at a formal meeting on 23 July 2020.

Changes from draft to final

The final Annual Plan largely adopts the activities and budgets proposed in the Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan. The changes outlined below stem from public submissions and adjustments to the timing and scope of some projects. We have also noted proposals of note that did not proceed.

Rates

The budget provides for an average residential rate rise of 2.09% – which equates to an extra \$1.12 a week for an average valued house – and an overall average rate increase of 3.8% to existing ratepayers. The rate increase is therefore slightly higher than the 3.5% proposed in the Updated Draft 2020-21 Annual Plan.

Rates extensions for financial hardship

In light of the difficulties caused by COVID-19, the Council approved a rates payment extension in cases of financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For approved applicants this will be for up to \$20,000 of 2020/21 rates, with payment able to be extended to 30 June 2022.

Increased road works

There was a low level of satisfaction (26%) for roads in the 2019-2020 Residents Survey, which was released in May 2020. We decided to approve an additional \$4.5 million to fix potholes and resurface roads prior to winter 2021. This is in addition to the approximately 100 roads that will be improved as a result of the investment case to the Government's Christchurch Regeneration Acceleration Facility being approved.

Residents' Forum

We will establish a Residents' Forum to help identify barriers to engagement and guide the Council in its engagement with residents over issues of city-wide importance, including the Long Term Plan. The Long Term Plan provides a way to discuss and determine the levels of service residents of our city want. In order to achieve this we need to ensure the community is genuinely engaged in this discussion. The Forum will be within the terms of reference of the Council's Sustainability and Community Resilience Committee.

Wings to Wheels Major Cycleway Route and Breens/Gardiners/Harewood Intersection

We resolved to bring forward \$500,000 from financial year 2026 to financial year 2021 for design and consultation on the Wings to Wheels Major Cycleway Route, with the intention of enabling the start of construction of the Breens/Gardiners/Harewood intersection in financial year 2022 as part of this Major Cycleway route.

One-off boost to the Strengthening Communities Fund

We approved a one-off increase of \$500,000 to the Strengthening Communities Fund to acknowledge the challenges faced by community organisations as a result of COVID-19. This will contribute to our social recovery.

Excess water use charge for households

We did not proceed with a proposed excess water use charge for households. A finely balanced debate led to a resolution to seek advice during the development of the Long Term Plan in order to better understand the merits of this proposal. This outcome reflects the concerns of some submitters, particularly regarding impacts on lower valued properties.

Councillors asked staff to provide advice during the development of the Long Term Plan, taking into account issues of equity and fairness, water conservation, and cost recovery.

Increasing our use of weed killers containing glyphosate

The majority of submitters (66%) who gave an opinion opposed a proposal to increase the use of glyphosate. This opposition was largely driven by environmental and health concerns. After considering the submissions we decided to continue with the current policy of reduced glyphosate use in public spaces. This means there will not be an increase in glyphosate use. Advice provided to Council during the debate was that providers are continuing to invest in improving alternative means of weed control.

Lancaster Park and Memorial Gates Repair and Upgrade Project

We acknowledged the importance of Lancaster Park by separating the intended Lancaster Park and Memorial Gates Repair and Upgrade projects as an identified line item in the capital programme of planned works.