



## A word from the Mayor

Welcome to Christchurch City Council's draft plan and budget for 2026/27.

In last year's Draft Annual Plan, I talked about Christchurch being recognised as the 'capital of cool', and as one of the world's great places to live, work, play and invest. In my view, we've only improved since then. Parakiore Recreation and Sport Centre opened in December, and has already welcomed more than 200,000 people in a short space of time. One New Zealand Stadium at Te Kaha is set to open in April, on schedule and on budget, and the first concert is already sold out. The Court Theatre opened in May and has seen almost 90,000 visitors come along to enjoy almost 400 performances.

We've begun work in earnest to replace the fire-damaged trickling filters at our wastewater treatment plant with a state-of-the-art sludge plant. And in south Christchurch, you can see that construction is well underway on the new Ōmōkihi facility, which is replacing the earthquake-damaged South Library and Service Centre building.

It's so satisfying to be Mayor of a city that has seen a flurry of openings and completions – it really does feel like the grand finale to a solid decade-and-a-half of hard work, steady progress, and smart decisions from successive councils. When I was first elected Mayor in 2022, I was committed to maintaining the momentum in the city, and to keeping a level-headed view of what we can actually afford and achieve.

I entered the role in the thick of a worldwide cost of living crisis which we're still in the grip of, and I can assure you that looking out for the average household has been top of mind for me and the councillors I work with. We know things are tough, and we put that lens over every spending decision we make.

It's important to keep in mind though that this is an Annual Plan. The Long Term Plan process, which we go through every three years, sets out our 10-year strategy, and is where we make the major changes that could lead to a significant change in projected rates. That happens next year, as we develop the Long Term Plan 2027–2037. The Annual Plan is where we fine-tune that 10-year strategy.

However, we've developed this Draft Annual Plan with a number of proposed Government changes just around the corner. One that will have a huge impact on us is the plan to introduce a cap on the rates increases local councils are allowed to charge, with a limit of between 2% and 4% a year, which could have big implications for what we're able to deliver.

The Government is also introducing two new pieces of legislation to replace the Resource Management Act, which will give councils less say in how to decide on development proposals, and they intend to remove regional councils and replace them with larger councils that would deliver their work more efficiently. These major changes are set to be introduced over the next year or so, and we'll need to look at the detail and see what they mean for Christchurch City Council.

And as ever, there's the climate to consider – we're producing climate risk assessments this year that will help us as we plan to make Christchurch as resilient as possible in the face of a changing climate.

So, there's a lot on our plate, but we think we've charted a really positive course through it. As we do every year, we've worked hard alongside Council staff to keep the rates increases as low as possible. We've done this without compromising either the services we provide today, or pushing things out to be done in the future.

Of course, it's not all up to me. This document gives you an overview of what we're planning to do, how much it will cost, how we'll pay for it, and a handful of options for how we can make some extra savings – let us know what you think. It's our job to listen to every piece of feedback before we lock in our plans in June.

My colleagues on the council and I are looking forward to hearing from you.



**Phil Mauger**  
Mayor of Christchurch